INTERVIEW BEGINS

Susan: This is Susan Illowsky recording on January 7, 1990, for the Jewish Oral History Project of Atlanta. I am interviewing Mr. Bill Breman.

Susan: Mr. Breman, what is your full name?

Susan: Breman is B-R-E-M-A-N?
William: Right.

Susan: [What is] your current address?
William: Nine eighty-one [981] West Wesley Road, Atlanta.

Susan: Your date of birth?
William: March 13, 1908.

Susan: Where were you born?

Susan: What are the names of your parents?
William: My mother was Sarah and my father was Joseph.

Susan: What was your mother's maiden name?
William: Barnard.

Susan: Any relation to the college [Barnard College—New York, New York]?
William: No.
Susan: Where was your mother born?
William: Chicago [Illinois].
Susan: Do you remember what year?
William: In 1877.
Susan: Where was your father born?
William: Either Russia or Poland, I'm not sure . . . 1875.
Susan: When did your father come to this country?
William: He came when he was a very little boy. I think four or five years old. They went to
Texas.
Susan: Texas?
William: Victoria, Texas.
Susan: How did they end up in Texas?
William: I have no idea.
Susan: How did he meet your mother?
William: When he was a teenager, he went to Chicago to work. He worked with a firm of the
name ‘Fine,’ a Jewish family who knew the Barnards. The Barnards had nine children. Four of
them were girls and five brothers. My mother was the third oldest . . . the second oldest
daughter. That's how they met.
Susan: What was your father’s occupation?
William: He did several things. He was with the Keystone Pipe Foundry Company, a
company that made pipe for plumbing in those days. After that he was in the mail order jewelry
business, which is unheard of today.
Susan: Your mother?
William: My mother was a school girl and housewife.
Susan: What year did they get married?
William: In 1901.
Susan: Where did they live after they were married?
William: They lived in Chicago shortly, moved to Philadelphia, and back to Chicago. Then
they came to Atlanta [Georgia].
Susan: What year did they come to Atlanta?
William: In 1913.
Susan: You said you were born in Philadelphia. Do you have any brothers or sisters?
William: Two sisters.
Susan: Are they still living?
William: Yes.
Susan: Do they live in Atlanta?
Susan: Their names?
William: Helen [Breman Zageir], the oldest, and Estelle [Breman Goldman].
Susan: Who is the youngest?
William: Of the sisters, Estelle. I'm the youngest of all of us.
Susan: You then came to Atlanta when you were about six years old?
William: Five years old.
Susan: Where did you live when you first came to Atlanta?
William: At 515 Washington Street.
Susan: What area was that? Did it have a special name for the neighborhood?
William: It was on the south side of town. That's where all the Jewish people lived, in that area.
Susan: All the Jewish people at that time lived in that general area?
William: Westminster, Capitol Avenue, Pryor Street, that area.
Susan: Washington Avenue is where the stadium is now?
William: Yes.
Susan: What brought your parents to Atlanta?
William: My father was evidently not qualified at what he was doing. He had a sister and brother living in Atlanta. The brother and brother-in-law were in business. They needed someone to help them. They asked him to come down.
Susan: What type of business was it?

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1 Atlanta–Fulton County Stadium, often referred to as ‘Fulton County Stadium’ and originally named ‘Atlanta Stadium,’ was built to attract a major league baseball team. In 1966 it succeeded when the Milwaukee Braves relocated from to Atlanta. The stadium was built on the site of the cleared Washington-Rawson neighborhood, which had been a wealthy area and home to much of Atlanta’s Jewish community. The Braves continued to play at Fulton County Stadium until the end of the 1996 season, when they moved into Turner Field, the converted Centennial Olympic Stadium originally built for the 1996 Summer Olympics. The stadium was demolished in 1997. A parking lot for Turner Field now stands on the site.
William: Scrap metal.

Susan: What was the name of the company?

William: Stein & Company.

Susan: What position did your father have?

William: He was the office manager.

Susan: Around that time was the Leo Frank case. Do you have any memory of that?

William: Yes.

Susan: What do you remember?

William: We moved to Atlanta just about a month before it happened. My recollection of it is . . . the only recollection I really have except what I learned later . . . that at one time my father stayed home from work. He was warned not to go out, because of his resemblance to Leo Frank. He was of the same build. He wore the same kind of eye glasses. For safety's sake he was warned to stay home for several days.

Susan: It's amazing. Is there anything else that you recall?

William: No. Whatever else I know I found out later.

Susan: What kind of elementary school were you attending at that time?

William: I went to Pryor Street School.

Susan: Was that a public school?

William: Yes.

Susan: Did you have any problems being a Jewish child at Pryor Street School?

William: No.

Susan: Was that a neighborhood school?

William: Yes.

Susan: Were most of the children Jewish?

William: No. Most were not Jewish.

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2 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. This enraged a group of men who styled themselves the “Knights of Mary Phagan.” They drove to the prison, kidnapped Frank from his cell and drove him to Marietta, Georgia where they lynched him. Many years later, the true murderer was revealed to be Jim Conley, who had lied in the trial, pinning it on Frank instead. In 1986, Frank was pardoned although they stopped short of exonerating him.
Susan: What about the teachers?
William: None of them were Jewish that I remember.
Susan: Did you encounter any antisemitism?
William: No. We moved to Washington Street after only a few years at Pryor Street.
Susan: Then?
William: I went to . . . we were there for two years. Then we moved from Washington Street to Jackson Street.
Susan: How close is Jackson Street to Washington Street?
William: Jackson Street is . . . do you know where the Georgia Baptist Hospital is now?
Susan: I believe so.
William: On Boulevard?
Susan: Yes.
William: We lived right behind where the hospital is now. There was no hospital there then. Atlanta had had a big fire. This was 1918. There had been a big fire that extended from Edgewood Avenue all the way to Ponce de Leon Avenue, about three blocks wide. It wiped out the whole area. The rumor at that time was that the Germans set it, but I don't know what set it. [Fire trucks came from] Griffin, Georgia; Macon, Georgia; Gainesville [Georgia]; and all around. It was a tremendous fire. The next year after the fire, they started rebuilding. They built a lot of new apartment houses. We moved from . . . to a new apartment house.
Susan: How close was your house to the fire?
William: It was built where our house had burned down.
Susan: Where was Stein & Company located?
William: On Grant Street.
Susan: You said you moved to . . . what was the name of the street?
William: Jackson Street.
Susan: How long did you live there?
William: Until 1922.

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3 The Great Atlanta Fire of 1917 began just after noon on Monday, 21 May 1917 and was finally extinguished by 10 p.m. The fire started in a warehouse at Fort and Decatur Street and rapidly spread. It burned whole blocks of homes so quickly that people couldn't even get anything out of the buildings. Fire fighters came to Atlanta from across the southeast and soldiers arrived to dynamite buildings to try to stop it. The area continued to burn for a week. 300 acres had been burned, 1,938 buildings were destroyed and 10,000 people were made homeless. Property loss was $5,500,000.
Susan: Where did you move then?

William: To Asheville, North Carolina.

Susan: You then attended elementary school near Jackson Street?

William: Yes. I went one year to Boulevard School, which is no longer in existence. There’s a black church there, by the way. The last two years of grammar school I went to Forrest Avenue School.

Susan: Was Jackson Street also considered a Jewish neighborhood?

William: No.

Susan: Did you feel any different moving from a Jewish neighborhood to a non-Jewish neighborhood?

William: No. Actually, our neighbors at . . . on both sides were not Jewish. The Atlanta Jewish population was not that big to where it would consume the whole neighborhood, but a lot of Jewish people lived there. Not everybody was Jewish. As I said, on one side they were not Jewish. The Roberts lived on the other side, two young boys who were friends of mine, about my age.

Susan: Were you friends with Rueben Garland in your neighborhood?

William: No. I was friends with Bart, the younger brother. Bart was my age. Rueben was older. He was already in high school when I was in grammar school.

Susan: You were telling me before we started taping about a fight you had with the Garlands. With Rueben, or the brother?

William: The brother. I had a fight with the brother. I think his name was Ed. Rueben saw us and joined his brother. The two of them managed to rip my eye out . . . not out, but it was bleeding. My mother rushed me to the doctor.

Susan: That was in the Candler Building?

William: The doctor was in the Candler Building.

Susan: When you were living on Jackson Street and Washington Street, did your family belong to a synagogue at that time?

William: Yes.

Susan: Which one?
William: The Temple.  

Susan: What made them choose the Temple?  

William: We belonged to the Temple when we lived on Washington Street. We always belonged to the Temple. I don't know what the childhood upbringing of my parents really was. but as long as I can remember we were Reform [Jews].

Susan: Did you attend any Hebrew school or religious school?  

William: I went to Sunday school.  

Susan: You said you moved to Asheville, North Carolina in 1922?  

William: Yes.  

Susan: What was the reason for the move?  

William: My father's health. This was after World War I. The strain and burdens during that period wore him down. He was 35 years old and thought it was time to retire anyway. They moved to what they called then the ‘Land of the Sky.’

Susan: Why was it called that?  

William: That's what it is known as, the ‘Land of the Sky’ [unintelligible].  

Susan: Why Asheville?  

William: Asheville was a health resort, like Saranac Lake [New York]. It isn't anymore. It's a tourist resort now, but it used to be known as a health resort.  

Susan: How long did you live in Asheville?  

William: I finished high school there and went away to college 1925. I finished college in 1929 and never went back.  

Susan: You went to . . . I think you told me . . . Tech High School in Asheville?  

William: Here in Atlanta.  

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4 The Temple on Peachtree Street in Midtown Atlanta is the city’s oldest synagogue, dedicated in 1877. The main sanctuary, constructed in 1931, is on the National Register of Historic Places. The Reform congregation now totals 1500 families (2014).

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

6 The Land of the Sky is a novel by Mrs. Frances Tiernan, under the pseudonym Christian Reid published in 1876. The name refers to the Blue Ridge Mountains and Great Smoky Mountains in western North Carolina. The title of the book has come to be used as a nickname for North Carolina, but has more recently been the adopted name of the city of Asheville, North Carolina, which lies between the Blue Ridge and Great Smoky Mountains.

7 Location of the Trudeau Sanitarium which was well-known for curing tuberculosis patients.
Susan: In Atlanta?

William: Tech[nological] High School in Atlanta... one year. Tech High School is now [unintelligible]. Boys' High and Tech High were the two male high schools in those days. They merged and they’re now Henry Grady High School.

Susan: You went there one year and then you moved?

William: We moved to Asheville.

Susan: Were you bar mitzvahed?\(^{10}\)

William: No. The Temple wouldn't have *bar mitzvahs* until about ten years ago.

Susan: Did you ever get *bar mitzvahed*?

William: No.

Susan: Did you have any Hebrew lessons . . . Hebrew school?

William: No.

Susan: That was a Reform type of synagogue?

William: Very. The rabbi, Dr. David Marx,\(^{11}\) at that time, was a rather extreme Reform rabbi. In fact, he was . . . later when Council of Judaism came into existence . . . are you familiar with Council of Judaism?\(^{12}\)

Susan: No. What is it?

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\(^8\) Atlanta Public Schools began in 1872 with three elementary schools, and Boys' High and Girls' High for white students, along with two elementary schools for black students. A department of manual training slowly developed at Boy's High. Some considered it a better idea to create a separate school. In 1909 the Technological High School (Tech High), opened for boys interested in applied sciences in electricity, automobiles, aviation, and manufacturing. The school closed in 1947.

\(^9\) Boys' High School was founded in 1924 and is now known as Henry W. Grady High School. It is part of the Atlanta Public School System. It has had many notable alumni, including S. Truett Cathy, the founder of Chick-fil-A. It is located in Midtown Atlanta.

\(^10\) 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.

\(^11\) 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.

\(^12\) The American Council for Judaism (ACJ) is an organization of American Jews committed to the proposition that Jews are not a nationality but merely a religious group, adhering to the original stated principles of Reform Judaism. The ACJ was founded in June 1942 by a group of Reform rabbis who opposed the direction of their movement, including, but not limited to, the issue of Zionism.
William: It was an organization similar to the American Jewish Committee, but opposed to Jewry . . . it was an American Jewish organization being opposed . . . It was [unintelligible]. It was opposed to Israel. It was a very non-Jewish Jewish organization founded by a rabbi in Philadelphia.

Susan: What was the purpose?

William: To fight Israel.

Susan: When was it formed?

William: In the 1940’s, I'm not sure exactly when. In the 1940’s, when there was talk about a homeland for Jews.

Susan: That's interesting. What college did you go to?

William: University of North Carolina [Chapel Hill, North Carolina].

Susan: What degree did you get?

William: B.S. [Bachelor of Science] degree in Commerce.

Susan: What did you do after graduating?

William: Went to New York [City]. Worked for an insurance company.

Susan: Which insurance company?

William: Ocean Accident & Guarantee Corporation.

Susan: What made you decide to do that?

William: That was my major.

Susan: Insurance?

William: Insurance. I contacted many insurance companies in my senior year and went to New York. After talking with several companies, I selected them.

Susan: What year did you graduate?

William: In 1929.

Susan: Auspicious year.  

William: Yes.

Susan: Why did you decide to go to New York?

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13 The American Jewish Committee (AJC) was founded in 1906 to safeguard the welfare and security of Jews worldwide. It is one of the oldest Jewish advocacy organizations in the United States.

14 The time of the Great Depression varied across nations, but in most countries it started in about 1929 and lasted until the late 1930’s or early 1940’s. It was the longest, most widespread, and deepest depression of the twentieth century.
William: That's where the company was that I was going to work for. That's where the action was, New York.

Susan: How long did you stay in New York?

William: About two or two-and-a-half years. That was when all of the [unintelligible] for about two . . . two-and-a-half years. I was finally let go by the insurance company, as were just about everybody in the company. It almost closed. When I was unemployed I was living with friends from Atlanta. One of them I still see. Joel Heyman. Do you know Joel Heyman?

Susan: No.

William: Very few of us left, but he's one of them. He's a very fine man. You know the Financial Center on Peachtree?

Susan: Yes.

William: Across the street they just built a big beautiful new high-rise office building.

Susan: Yes.

William: That was the Heyman’s home property . . . behind that . . . from Peachtree Street all the way back . . . their home was sitting way back. They had a tennis court and a basketball court. In those days, to get to their house you had to ride the street car which stopped in Buckhead. You had to pay an extra fare to go over there.

Susan: That was . . . to get to their house?

William: Yes. [unintelligible] There were a lot of jobs then. I did several things, one following another. I went to Macy’s and applied for their training squad. I was too old. I was 22 years old, maybe 23. Macy's told me that you had to be born with the desire to go on this training squad. Since I had been in the insurance business, there wasn't much hope, but I could try. In the meantime, they would give me a job selling towels in the towel department.

Susan: In their store?

William: Yes, which I took. Every couple of weeks or so I went back to the training office and was turned down. No openings. After a couple of months of that, I got the feeling that I never was going to get on the training squad. I didn't like selling towels, so I quit there. I got a job selling Tom Collins Gin Mix.

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15 Macy's, originally R. H. Macy & Co., is a chain of department stores. Macy’s was founded by Rowland Hussey Macy, who between 1843 and 1855 opened four retail dry goods stores, including the original Macy's store in downtown Haverhill, Massachusetts. Macy moved to New York City in 1858 and established a new store named R. H. Macy & Co. on Sixth Avenue between 13th and 14th Streets.
Susan: Gin mix?

William: This was during Prohibition.\(^{16}\)

Susan: Where did you sell it?

William: In Georgia. I went from drug store to grocery store. I didn't like it. I wasn't having any success either, so I quit that. Joel Heyman, one of my roommates . . . he was the one who got a good job on Wall Street [New York, New York]. He said that one of my roommates from Harvard Business School is opening up a new moving picture [theater] called Trans-Lux.\(^{17}\) Have you ever heard of Trans-Lux?

Susan: Yes.

William: Showing nothing but movies. That's all they showed was movies. They were opening up this new theater on Lexington [Avenue−New York, New York]. I forget where, maybe 49\(^{th}\) Street or 50\(^{th}\) Street, somewhere around there. [Joel said,] “Go see him and maybe he'll give you a job.” I went to see him. He gave me a job getting the place ready for opening next week. He was going to be the manager. He said, “You'll be my assistant.” I said, “Fine.” We worked diligently getting the theater ready for opening. The night of the opening, I saw him talking to a man who I didn't know. Later, he came over to me. I said, “Who was that man you were talking to?” He said, “That was my boss, the owner of the theater. He asked who you were and I said that you were my assistant.” He said, “You don't have an assistant.” After about 10 days, I was without a job again and didn't get paid for the 10 days. About that time my sister had married and lived in Rochester, New York. [unintelligible] . . . see my parents for the holiday. I went home for the holiday. My brother-in-law talked me into coming back to Rochester. He had a nice job there with Messner Brothers, a chain store. He got me a job there. [unintelligible] . . . a couple of boys, one who still lives in Atlanta and one who is deceased who I knew from Asheville.

Susan: What were their names?

\(^{16}\) Prohibition is the legal act of prohibiting the manufacture, storage, transportation and sale of alcohol including alcoholic beverages. The first half of the twentieth century saw periods of prohibition of alcoholic beverages in several countries. Nationwide prohibition did not begin in the United States until 1920, when the Eighteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution went into effect. Prohibition became increasingly unpopular during the Great Depression along with a demand for increased employment and tax revenues. The ratification of the Twenty-first Amendment brought an official end to prohibition in the United States in 1933.

\(^{17}\) The Trans-Lux Movies Corporation, in partnership with RKO (Radio-Keith-Orpheum) Studios, was created. Using Trans-Lux as its trade name, it began a theater-building program. The first Trans-Lux theater at 58\(^{th}\) Street and Madison Avenue in New York City was converted from retail space, and featured larger seats, more leg room, and wider aisles than the average theater of the day.
William: The one in Atlanta is Charles Christian. You won't know his name. He's Larry Bogart's father-in-law. You may know Larry Bogart.

Susan: I don't but . . .

William: [Larry Bogart] is with Powell, Goldstein.\textsuperscript{18} Anyway, in Asheville . . . I mean in Rochester . . . I worked for Messner Brothers, first in the stock room, then as a floor worker, managing several departments on the floor. There is where I met my wife [Sylvia Goldstein Breman].

Susan: Did she work there also?

William: No, she was in college.

Susan: At which school?

William: She had done two years at Connecticut College for Women [New London, Connecticut] and was home that summer because her father . . . for two reasons, really. Her father didn’t like the life she was leading there and the Depression, too. She finished at the University of Rochester.

Susan: How did you meet?

William: In temple at a Rosh Ha-Shanah\textsuperscript{19} service. I was there with my sister and brother-in-law. I saw a family walk down the aisle, a mother, a father, a sister . . . two sisters . . . and a brother. I asked my sister, “Who is that one in the middle?” She told me. I said, “That's going to be my bride.”

Susan: You said that straight out?

William: Yes.

Susan: That's amazing. How did you arrange to meet her?

William: A friend had a party which I was not invited [to], but a friend was invited . . . a friend of a friend was invited. I went there. She was there and I met her.

Susan: About what year was that?

William: In 1932.

\textsuperscript{18} Powell, Goldstein, formerly known as Powell, Goldstein, Frazer & Murphy, combined with the international law firm of Bryan Cave in 2009, creating a firm of more than 1,100 attorneys and other professionals and 26 offices around the world.

\textsuperscript{19} Hebrew for “head of the year”, i.e. New Year festival. The cycle of High Holidays begins with Rosh Ha-Shanah. It 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. These decisions may be revoked by prayer and repentance before the sealing of the books on Yom Kippur.
Susan: Did you stay in Rochester?
William: I stayed in Rochester about a year-and-a-half and was transferred to Buffalo [New York].
Susan: Same company?
William: The same company. That was March 1933, when [President Franklin Delano] Roosevelt\(^{20}\) was elected and closed the banks.\(^{21}\) Buffalo was the worst place I've ever lived in, not only because the banks were closed, but the store was in a 100 percent Polish neighborhood. I couldn't be understood or understand most of the people who talked to me. The street signs were in Polish. The newspapers were in Polish. I didn't like it. The weather was terrible there.
Susan: Were you married at that time?
William: No. I waited for every Saturday night to catch a train to Rochester which was about an hour-and-a-half away. The train didn't stop in Rochester. It stopped at Rochester Junction. I had to jump off. The train would slow down and I would jump off. [On] Sunday I had to go back and go to work. I was in Buffalo for about maybe six or eight months. They transferred me to Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania which was a little better. This was before wage and hour [laws]. We worked so long that it wore me down, really. I took a leave of absence and went back to Asheville. My uncle, who was in Atlanta and former partner of my dad, had just gotten married at the age of 55. He was in Asheville to introduce his wife to the family. A couple of days later he was driving back to Atlanta and asked me to come with him. I said, “What for?” He said, “You haven't been to Atlanta in a long time.” I was his favorite nephew, his only nephew. He was my favorite uncle. I said, “I have a job in Wilkes-Barre.” He said, “You can go back if you want to.” I said, “Alright, I'll go with you.” We drove back to Atlanta and the next morning he said, “Drive me down to the shop,” I said, “Alright.” He didn't drive. I drove him down and I've been here ever since.
Susan: That's amazing. Did he offer you a job?

\(^{20}\) 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.

\(^{21}\) Following his inauguration in March 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt set out to rebuild confidence in the nation's banking system, first declaring a four-day banking holiday that shut down the banking system, including the Federal Reserve. Within a few days, the Emergency Banking Relief Act was an act passed by the U.S. Congress in an attempt to stabilize the banking system. Among other measures, the Act broadened the powers of the President during a banking crisis. The nationwide bank holiday and the Emergency Banking Act were designed to put an end to the bank runs during the Great Depression.
William: He didn't offer me one. I just hung around. At the end of the week he gave me $25.
Susan: Just for hanging around?
William: I tried to be helpful. Actually, he wasn't very interested in running the business. He spent most of his time playing pinochle.\textsuperscript{22} My chief duty was going to the delicatessen every day and buying and bringing back sandwiches and cokes for . . . he had several cronies that came by every day, had lunch, played pinochle, and drank schnapps.\textsuperscript{23} I would look after the business, what little I knew about it. I had been in an entirely different field and didn't have anything to do with that business. I could have gone into it direct from college, but I didn't choose it. The more I hung around it the more I liked it.
Susan: What type of business was it?
William: Junk business.
Susan: Junk business?
William: Junk metal.
Susan: What did they do? Did they collect it?
William: Collected it, sold it, took care of it, and shipped it to the mills in Ohio.
Susan: Where was it located?
William: At 329 Decatur Street.
Susan: Was that in Decatur [Georgia] or in Atlanta?
William: In Atlanta. It's a mile and a half east of Five Points,\textsuperscript{24} just past the police station.
Susan: What was your uncle's name?
William: Max.
Susan: Max Stein?
William: Max Breman.
Susan: Max Breman. This was your father's brother?

\textsuperscript{22} Pinochle is a trick-taking card game for 2 to 4 players using a 48-card deck. It was very popular with American Jews in the first half of the twentieth century.
\textsuperscript{23} The German term 'Schnapp's refers to any kind of strong alcoholic drink, but technically falls into the category of liqueurs because of the added sugar content.
\textsuperscript{24} A district of Atlanta, Georgia. The name refers to the convergence of Marietta Street, Edgewood Avenue, Decatur Street, and two legs of Peachtree Street. Until the 1960’s, Five Points represented the central hub of Atlanta. Five Points went into decay but by the twenty-first century, the area was revitalizing, mostly due to the expansion of Georgia State University, which maintains a large footprint in Five Points.
William: My father's brother. The Stein name came from Mose Stein who married a sister [Sarah Breman Stein]. He was the founder of the company. He died in 1918 in a flu epidemic. By that time we had moved to Asheville. My only memories of him were as a child when we lived on Washington Street. They lived on Capitol Avenue. It was two or three blocks from where we lived. In 1918 I was ten years old. I remember my parents were in Chicago visiting. [Uncle Mose] got sick. I remember, an ambulance came and wheeled him out of his house.

Susan: Was that a wide-spread flu?

William: Yes, they called it the epidemic of 1918. The Spanish Influenza, they called it.

Susan: Did it hit the whole country?

William: Maybe the world. You've never heard of it?

Susan: No. I take it there were no shots or anything at that time.

William: No. People died.

Susan: Did it continue to be called Stein & Company after he died?

William: It was Stein Junk Company originally. It later became Stein & Company. After he died, in 1922, my dad moved to Asheville. Uncle Max was the sole survivor of the three [brothers] for the business. He wasn't interested in the business. He had what he wanted in living and wasn't even married. He enjoyed playing pinochle, hanging around with the boys, and having parties at the Round Top Hotel where he lived. Uncle Mose Stein had two brothers, Albert and Jack. Jack came from Pittsburgh [Pennsylvania]. Alfred was from Atlanta and worked for my two uncles. It gets kind of complicated. Uncle Max sold the business to Albert and Jack Stein.

Susan: Before you came down?

William: Yes, this was about 1926 or so. They ran the business until Jack Stein died in 1933 or 1932. I'm not sure exactly. My Uncle Max took the business back and relied on a trusted black employee, Nathan Edwards. He'd been with him for years. He really took care of the warehousing [unintelligible] material. As I said, Uncle Max was only interested in having a place to go to. He didn't care about the business. That's why he, I guess, asked me to join him. I looked after it for him.

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25 The 1918 flu pandemic (January 1918-December 1920) was an unusually deadly influenza pandemic, It infected people across the world, including remote Pacific islands and the Arctic, and killed 50 to 100 million of them—three to five percent of the world's population—making it one of the deadliest natural disasters in human history.
Susan: About what year did you come back to Atlanta?

William: In 1933.

Susan: At the end of the first week he gave you $25.

William: He gave me $25. I could live on that. We lived at the Atlantan Hotel.

Susan: Where was that? Is that the same downtown . . .

William: . . . yes, Luckie Street, Cone Street and Luckie Street. It's still there. He had a suite there. He had gotten married. He had a suite there and his wife [unintelligible]. I told him that I wasn't very happy. I said, “I have a girl in Rochester that I would like to marry one day and I can't do it on $25 a week.” He said, “What will it take?” I said, “At least $40.” He said, “Call her up and tell her.” I did. She had told me before that she couldn't exist on $25 a week. When I said $40, she said, “Okay.” That's when we got married.

Susan: Were you married in Rochester?

William: Yes.

Susan: What were you doing for your $40 a week?

William: I was taking care of everything in the office . . . also making contacts on the outside trying to develop new business . . . running a small little business.

Susan: Basically you had taken over from your uncle?

William: Yes. At that time, when my uncle [Max Breman] took it over again, at that time it became Breman Iron and Metal Company. Albert Stein left, went up the street, and started his own company. He called it Stein & Company.

Susan: Same type of business?

William: Yes.

Susan: You were competitors?

William: Yes.

Susan: While you were single living in Atlanta, were you ever a member of any of the social clubs, Standard Club,26 or . . .?

William: No. I joined the Standard Club in 1936 after we were married.

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26 A Jewish country club that started as the Concordia Association in 1866 in Downtown Atlanta. In 1905 it was reorganized as the Standard Club and moved into the former mansion of William C. Sanders near where Turner Field is now located. In the late 1920s the club moved to Ponce de Leon Avenue in Midtown Atlanta. In 1940, the club opened in what is now the Lenox Park business park and was located there until 1983. In the 1980’s, the club moved to its present location in Johns Creek in Atlanta’s northern suburbs.
Susan: Did you have much of a social life before you were married?

William: Yes. I grew up in Atlanta. I knew a lot of people here. I was busy with friends. A lot of them belonged to the Standard Club. I would go to the Standard Club, but I wasn't a member.

Susan: Were most of your friends members of the Standard Club?

William: Yes, kids that I had gone to Sunday school with and high school with.

Susan: Were you friendly with any of the refugee kids at that time?

William: No, I really didn't know them.

Susan: Just the way the two circles were.

William: Yes.

Susan: Any problems bringing a Yankee27 down to Atlanta?

William: No. She had a few problems.

Susan: In what way?

William: One day she came home and said she had been to . . . I think, Davison’s28 or Rich’s29 . . . shopping downtown. She said she went to the drinking fountain and a crowd gathered around her. She was afraid. I said, “You must have drunk from the wrong fountain.” She said, “What do you mean?” I said, “There are two fountains, one is for white and one is for colored.” [She said,] “I haven't noticed that.” I said, “You undoubtedly drank from the colored one.” She continued to drink from that fountain.

Susan: On purpose?

William: Yes.

Susan: Her own form of rebellion, I guess.

William: Yes, but really she was accepted really well.

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27 ‘Yankee’ has several meanings, all referring to people from the United States. In Southern American English, ‘Yankee’ refers to a Northerner.

28 Davison's of Atlanta was a department store chain and an Atlanta shopping institution. Davison's first opened its doors in Atlanta in 1891 and had its origins in the Davison & Douglas Company. In 1901, the store changed its name to Davison-Paxon-Stokes after the retirement of E. Lee Douglas from the business and the appointment of Frederic John Paxon as treasurer. Davison-Paxon-Stokes sold out to R.H. Macy & Co. in 1925. By 1927, R.H. Macy built the Peachtree Street store that still stands today. That same year the company dropped the ‘Stokes’ to become Davison Paxon Co. Davison’s took the Macy's name in 1986.

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

William: We stayed on at the Atlantan Hotel where I was living. Shortly thereafter we found a small apartment on Ponce De Leon [Avenue], which is now the Chelsea [unintelligible]. We lived there for a couple of years. Then we moved to an apartment on Briarcliff Road.

Susan: A bigger apartment?

William: Yes. She got pregnant with Carol [Breman Nemo] and we moved to a bigger place.

Susan: Still an apartment?

William: No, this was a duplex on St. Charles Avenue.

Susan: Before she became pregnant was your wife working?

William: No.

Susan: Just keeping house? What kind of hours were you keeping at that time?

William: From 7:30 a.m. until 6:30 or 7:00 p.m.

Susan: Long day.

William: Most of it was not working. Most of it was waiting for my uncle to finish playing pinochle so I could drive him home. That was the long hours.

Susan: That's why? Because you had to wait to . . .?

William: . . . yes, business ended around 5:30. Before I got home it was 6:30 or 7:00.

Susan: What year was Carol born?

William: In 1938.

Susan: Did you rejoin the Temple when you moved down?

William: Yes, we joined The Temple.

Susan: When you got married?

William: Yes.

Susan: Was that where all your friends were still members?

William: Yes. We had been members in Asheville [unintelligible] . . . [Sylvia mentioned] . . . the religious question of whether you belonged to another temple or . . ?

William: . . . no, cut and dried.

Susan: What changes did you notice in Atlanta from when you had left to when you came back?

William: Not much happened in that period of time.

Susan: Pretty slow city still?
William: Yes. I guess one change was when I left where Underground [Atlanta] is now was really a working depot. The viaduct had been built, but it was still . . . that's where trains came in, that's where Underground is. When I came back, that had changed.

Susan: What was it then?

William: It was nothing. The station had moved to Spring Street. They had built a new station. There were two, really two. There was Union Station and Terminal Station. The station we have now is Brookwood Station.

Susan: Was Atlanta then still a transportation center?

William: Yes, Atlanta started out . . . actually, the history of Atlanta was railroads.

Susan: When you were with . . . I guess it was still called Breman Iron and Metal Company?

William: Yes.

Susan: Who were your customers?

William: Mostly peddlers, people who went out in their own trucks. In the old days it would have been wagons, but it is trucks now. People went out and collected the material and would go to them. Some industrial places but very few. That was at the beginning. After a couple of years I changed it to a steel company.

Susan: What do you mean by a steel company?

William: It became a steel fabricator and a steel warehouse. A steel fabricator is one who furnishes steel for a building. Later it became . . . the business is certainly different. We furnished steel for office buildings, schools, and churches. We would buy the steel from steel mills and fabricate it. That is, take it from a raw stage, cut it up, put holes in it, and weld it together so it would fit the architectural drawing. That was one phase. The other phase was warehousing where we re-sell steel in the form that we bought it.

Susan: Without making any changes?

William: Right. The other company would use the steel for their own purposes.

Susan: What made you change?

William: I saw more future to it. I liked the class of people that I would deal with better than what I had been dealing with. In the business I changed to we had customers [who were] high

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30 A shopping and entertainment district in the Five Points neighborhood of downtown Atlanta, Georgia near the intersection of the east and west MARTA rail lines. First opened in 1969.
class people, architects, contractors, and private people, who wanted to build something or build a house of their own rather than [unintelligible] . . .

Susan: Where did you learn this?

William: I took a course in blueprint reading at Georgia [Institute of] Tech [nology–Atlanta, Georgia] at night, which didn't help me too much. I just found it from experience, dealing with things as they came up. I hired people who knew more than I did in the field. I was able to manage them even though they knew more than I did.

Susan: Did you stay in the same location?

William: Yes, but a new location. We had two locations. The new location is the present location.

Susan: Where is that?

William: It's on Marietta Road in Atlanta.

Susan: What did your uncle think of all of these changes?

William: Actually the change was gradual. It started in 1936, and gradually [changed]. We maintained the scrap metal business, also. He died in 1940. I maintained the scrap metal business until about 1977 as a sideline, and developed the steel business. I sold the whole ball of wax in 1979.

Susan: Who did you sell it to?

William: To an English company.

Susan: You were saying before the tape ended that you had sold the company to an English company?

William: Yes, Dunlop Limited.

Susan: What reason to sell it?

William: I was [unintelligible].

Susan: What ever happened to Nathan [Edwards]?

William: Nathan died. [unintelligible]. He'd been an employee for 50 years.

Susan: That's amazing. Who were your other employees? Just drawn from economy?

William: Yes, we gradually got a reputation . . . [unintelligible] jobs. Built up a nice little business.
Susan: That's great. What effect did World War II have on your business?

William: During World War II, we were a defense supplier. For that reason I was exempt from the army, being a defense plant. If the war hadn’t ended when it did, I had just been notified that I was going to be reclassified as 1A, which meant that I was going into the service. Luckily the war ended before that happened.

Susan: It must have helped your business.

William: Yes, it did. During that time . . . during the war we had government work only. I mean everything was under control. We had to account for all inventory. [unintelligible]. Just like the points to buy gas for your automobile. It did help our business, because after the war . . . I remember as soon as the war was over we had sources of suppliers that were valuable. I remember a Chrysler\(^{31}\) automobile dealer in Alexander City, Alabama had just lost his building to a fire. He came to Atlanta looking for steel to build a new one. He came to us. We had the steel. I said, “I've got the steel, but you've never been a customer before. What can you offer in exchange?” He said, “I'm a Chrysler dealer.” I said, “I need a new automobile.” He said, “I can get you a 1947 New Yorker.” We made a deal. My wife and I rode a bus to Alexander City, Alabama. We picked up the car, and drove it back. We delivered our steel. He got a new building.

Susan: Nice deal.

William: Word gets around. We got to be known in our trade. We furnished a lot of steel for buildings in Atlanta. The Candler building, incidentally, I guess maybe 30 years ago remodeled their elevators. I bought all of the material that came out of that. All the doors that used to be hand operated . . . beautiful material that came out of there. I bought it all from a contractor that had the job.

Susan: What did you do with it?

William: We salvaged what we could. Salvage means to use it for resale as is. The rest we put in our scrap operation. We chopped it up and sold it to the mills.

Susan: That's amazing. You said your daughter Carol was born in 1938?

William: Yes.

Susan: Did you have another child?

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\(^{31}\) Chrysler is an American automobile manufacturer. It sells vehicles worldwide under its flagship Chrysler brand, as well as the Dodge, Jeep and Ram. (2015)
William: Yes. Jimmy [James Breman].

Susan: When was he born?

William: In 1943.

Susan: Two children?

William: Right.

Susan: Where did they go to school?

William: Carol went to Ohio State [University—Columbus, Ohio]. Jimmy went to Tulane [University—New Orleans, Louisiana] for undergraduate and Emory [University—Atlanta, Georgia] for graduate.

Susan: Does Jimmy still live in Atlanta

William: Yes.

Susan: We discussed that you were in a duplex apartment on Ponce [de Leon Avenue]. Was that it?

William: No, St. Charles [Avenue].

Susan: St. Charles.

William: We stayed there until Jimmy was born. Then we bought a house on Oakdale Road.

We moved there in 1942, just before we knew Jimmy was going to be born . . . a beautiful house.

I wish I'd never sold it.

Susan: When did you sell it?

William: We sold it when we came here, 1951. That area has enhanced in value. It's the Emory [University] area, in Druid Hills. It's one of the few areas that has really enhanced in value tremendously.

Susan: That's true.

William: The house that we sold in 1951 is worth probably five or six times what I sold it for.

Susan: What made you move?

William: Most of our friends there had moved over to this side of the city. The house we had was a two-story house. My wife just . . . it didn't have an attached garage. Those were the two things that she complained about. We found a one-story house that had an attached garage, and moved.

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32 One of Atlanta’s most affluent neighborhoods with a linear park and parkways designed at the turn of the twentieth century by Frederick Law Olmsted. On the National Register of Historic Places.
Susan: Were most of your friends the same friends that you had in college?
William: More or less.
Susan: It must have been nice to have that continuity.
William: Yes. There were some new ones that my wife made when she came here. Her best friend that she made immediately was Carolyn Holland. You may not know who she is. Her husband is an attorney, Jack [J. Kurt] Holland with Powell, Gold[stein]. About two months ago she was killed in an automobile accident.
Susan: I'm sorry to hear that.
William: You never heard about it . . . [unintelligible].
Susan: Breman Steel became fairly prominent in Atlanta.
William: Yes.
Susan: What were your relations with non-Jews in the business community? Did you have any . . .?
William: . . . never did. I really have never suffered from antisemitism, except I know that I wasn't wanted certain places. Is didn't go there.
Susan: Did you resent that?
William: To some extent, yes, but I didn't make a big deal out of that.
Susan: That was the way things were.
William: Yes. It wasn't too important. I couldn't belong to the Piedmont Driving Club.\footnote{Prestigious private social club located adjacent to Piedmont Park that was founded in 1887. New members have to be vouched for by three current members. The club restricted Jewish and black membership.} I didn't want to belong to the Piedmont Driving Club. If I were ever invited to go there for a luncheon, I'd say, “I'm sorry. I don't care to go there.”
Susan: Even when you were invited, you decided not to?
William: Yes. Things are different now, I guess.
Susan: Not so much. We still can't go to the Piedmont Driving Club.
William: Yes, they have two or three Jewish members. The city council passed a law that no clubs can be restricted. They all have a few Jewish members.
Susan: Would you want to become a member now?
William: No.
Susan: You were a member of the Standard Club?
William: Yes.
Susan: Is that still in existence?
William: Yes. It's a beautiful club.
Susan: Where is it?
William: It's near Duluth [Georgia], north of here. From our house it's about 25 miles north.
Susan: Did you send your children to private high schools?
William: Yes, they both went to Westminster.\textsuperscript{34}
Susan: What made you pick that school?
William: We thought it was the best. The children liked it. They knew about it and wanted to go there.
Susan: You belong to the Temple?
William: Yes.
Susan: Did you become involved with the Temple?
William: Yes.
Susan: In what way?
William: I'm a past president. I'm still active there.
Susan: When were you president?
Susan: Who was the rabbi at that time?
William: Jacob Rothschild.\textsuperscript{35}
Susan: When did he become rabbi?
William: Dr. [David] Marx retired about . . . shortly after World War II, 1946 or so. He came from Pittsburgh [Pennsylvania]. He'd been in the service and had been an assistant rabbi in Pittsburgh.
Susan: Dr. Marx had been, I guess, an anti-Zionist\textsuperscript{36} as we were discussing before.
William: Yes, he was and Rothschild was pro[-Zionist].\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{34} A private school founded in 1951 as an affiliate of the North Avenue Presbyterian Church.

\textsuperscript{35} 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.

\textsuperscript{36} Anti-Zionism is opposition to Zionism, broadly defined in the modern era as the opposition to the ethnonationalist and political movement of Jews and Jewish culture that supports the establishment of a Jewish states as a Jewish homeland in the territory defined as the historic Land of Israel.

\textsuperscript{37} Zionism is a movement which supports a Jewish national state in the territory defined as the Land of Israel.
Susan: Was that in changing the community at the Temple, or the membership?

William: He had to work hard at changing the membership, Rothschild did. He finally succeeded.

Susan: Did you take a stand?

William: Yes, I was pro.

Susan: All the time or did you change at some time?

William: From all the time. I was chairman of our Federation\textsuperscript{38} drive early on. I think in 1952... shortly after the State [of Israel]. If I hadn't been pro[-Zionist] then I wouldn't have been chairman.

Susan: Why were you pro[-Zionist]?

William: I thought that we needed a homeland for people who couldn't go anywhere else.

Susan: What involvement did you have in pro-Zionist work?

William: I belong to the B'nai B'rith,\textsuperscript{39} Anti-Defamation League,\textsuperscript{40} American Jewish Committee. I just belong to organizations... I supported organizations that were pro-Israel.

Susan: What involvement did you have in the Temple before you were president?

William: Before I was president, I was vice-president, and I had been on the board. I was active on committees. I really didn't want to become president, but Jack Rothschild talked me into it.

Susan: How come?

William: He just persuaded me to accept the challenge. After I had been nominated, I talked to him about whether I should accept it or not. I really didn't feel that I wanted it.

Susan: How come?

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

\textsuperscript{38} The Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta raises funds which are dispersed throughout the Jewish community. Services also include caring for Jews in need locally and around the world, community outreach, leadership development, educational opportunities.

\textsuperscript{39} B'nai B'rith International (from Hebrew: ‘Children of the Covenant’) is the oldest Jewish service organization in the world. B'nai B'rith states that it is committed to the security and continuity of the Jewish people and the State of Israel and combating antisemitism and bigotry. Its mission is to unite persons of the Jewish faith and to enhance Jewish identity through strengthening Jewish family life, to provide broad-based services for the benefit of senior citizens, and to facilitate advocacy and action on behalf of Jews throughout the world.

\textsuperscript{40} The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) was founded in 1913 “to stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all.” ADL fights antisemitism and all forms of bigotry, defends democratic ideals and protects civil rights.

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William: It was the first leadership role I had, except for Federation chairman. I didn't know that I could spend the time that was necessary, with my business. He persuaded me that after I got into it I would find ways to do it, which I did.

Susan: Did he want someone more with his point of view as president? Was that one of his reasons?

William: No, I don't think that was it particularly. I had been nominated and there wasn't anybody else to take my place. I was it. I wasn't sorry. In fact, the most beautiful testimonial I ever got was one year when I was selected ‘Man of the Year’ by B'nai B'rith and he introduced me. I reread his speech just the other day. It made me cry.

Susan: That's wonderful. What did he say?

William: He just said so many complimentary things about me. I've got his speech. It'll go down in my archives. He was a good rabbi and a great friend. Not the most beloved by everybody.

Susan: How come?

William: He was a man who couldn't care what other people thought about what he said. He spoke from his heart. Lots of times it wasn't what people wanted to hear, especially when it came to civil rights.

Susan: In what sense was he controversial?

William: Civil rights mostly. He was very strong for civil rights when Atlanta was not accepting. He was a great friend of Martin Luther King when King was just starting. In fact, he introduced Martin Luther King to a bi-annual meeting in Chicago. What kind of religion do you belong to?

Susan: Monotheist.

William: The Reform Movement is known as the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

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41 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. King helped to organize the 1963 March on Washington, where he delivered his famous “I Have a Dream” speech. On October 14, 1964, King received the Nobel Peace Prize for combating racial inequality through nonviolence. In 1965, he and the SCLC helped to organize the Selma to Montgomery marches and the following year, he took the movement north to Chicago to work on segregated housing. King was assassinated on April 4 in Memphis, Tennessee. 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.
Every two years they'd have a bi-annual [convention]. I used to be active in it. I used to be on the board of the Union [of American Hebrew Congregations].[42] Carol and Bob [Nemo] are active in it now. One year when it was in Chicago we attended. Martin Luther King was the secret speaker. [Rabbi] Rothschild introduced him. That wasn't very acceptable to Atlanta. Martin Luther King had . . . after he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize[43] they gave a dinner for him here.[44] It was hotly contested by different groups, whether or not it should be held and who should go to it. [Rabbi Rothschild] also introduced him there.

Susan: Was it a Jewish community type of dinner? Or was it . . .

William: It was the city of Atlanta recognizing him as a Nobel Prize winner. Still, there were many people who did not accept him. We went to the dinner. There were people boycotting the dinner. You had to cross the picket line to get in.

Susan: Really? Who was boycotting it? What areas or groups were they representing?

William: One was a man who just died last week, Charlie Leb [Lebedin], who had a restaurant [Leb’s] which he didn't want to integrate. He had a lot of trouble. He died in the Jewish Home[45] this past week. There are a lot of rednecks[46] and narrow-minded people. I guess the same kind of people who demonstrated yesterday at the capitol. There are still some of them left.

Susan: Unfortunately. I can see that you took a pro-civil rights stand. Was that difficult for you to take a stand?

William: Yes it was.

Susan: In what way?

William: I had been brought up in the South and was used to considering black people subservient. We worked with a lot of black people. They all bowed to me as a boss that was a

[42] The Union for Reform Judaism, formerly known as the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), is an organization which supports Reform Jewish congregations in North American. In 1875 they created the Hebrew Union College (HUC) in Cincinnati, Ohio to train rabbis and later cantors and other Jewish professionals.

[43] The Nobel Peace Prize is one of the five Nobel Prizes created by the Swedish industrialist, inventor, and armaments manufacturer Alfred Nobel, along with the prizes in Chemistry, Physics, Physiology or Medicine, and Literature.

[44] 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.

[45] A nursing home in Atlanta, Georgia providing short and long term dementia, Alzheimer’s, and nursing care. The Jewish Home was renamed The William Breman Jewish Home in 1991 in honor and recognition of William Breman, its third president and the prime motivator of the modern-day facility.

[46] A term primarily used for a rural poor white person of the Southern United States. It can also be used as derogatory slang referring to white Southern conservatives. It originally characterized farmers who had red necks caused by sunburn from hours working in the fields.
white man. I remember when they all sat in the back of the bus. It was a change for someone who's been brought up in one way and have it change. I've gotten over it.

**Susan:** What led you to accept this change, or led you to this change?

**William:** My wife, for one, and friends. I could see where I was wrong. In fact, we went to *Shabbos* 47 dinner at Carol’s Friday night. Her daughter, who just went back to school today, was telling us how she's involved in sports medicine. She's involved in all that at school. One of her best friends is a black wide receiver. She's dating him.

**Susan:** What was the family reaction to that?

**William:** I kept quiet. Her mother and father seemed to accept it.

**Susan:** Interesting changes.

**William:** Yes.

**Susan:** In what ways did your wife help you to change your mind?

**William:** She was much more liberal than I am. It's rubbed off on me.

**Susan:** You've also mentioned that some friends were often involved in the civil rights movement. Which ones were they?

**William:** By name?

**Susan:** Yes.

**William:** Josephine [Joel] Heyman, who's a sister-in-law of Joel Heyman; Barney Medintz; Mike [Max] Gettinger, a past director of the [Atlanta Jewish] Federation; and Bill Kahn, a past director. If I had time to think more I could think of more people. It was just my observance of how the world was changing. I felt that it was better to change with it, because the old way was not right.

**Susan:** Did you have any problems with the company because of the stands you were taking?

**William:** The only problem that we had . . . no, we didn't have any problems with the stands we were taking. I had a problem with my leadership. I think I was too weak. We used to have a company picnic every summer. We had a white picnic and a black picnic. When integration

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47 *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.
started changing, we didn't have any more picnics. I was told that there would be too much trouble to integrate so we discontinued the picnics.

**Susan:** Did you ever start them up again?

**William:** No, never did. If I had been stronger I would have taken a stand.

**Susan:** You never know if you could have been hurt. You just can't tell. Did the Jewish community split in the civil rights movement, or did the leadership take a stand?

**William:** Yes, I think the community split and the leadership took a stand. I think it's still split to a degree.

**Susan:** In what way?

**William:** There's still people that can't accept integration personally. I think that will probably last another generation or two until all of the old folks die off.

**Susan:** I saw the play, *Driving Miss Daisy*.\(^{48}\)

**William:** Did you?

**Susan:** There was a scene where they went to a dinner for Martin Luther King. Was that the dinner that you were expressing?

**William:** Yes. Remember the line when Miss Daisy was driving to Temple and she heard that the Temple was bombed?

**Susan:** Yes.

**William:** She said, “Hoke, why do you think they burned the Temple? We're not Orthodox.”\(^{49}\) He said, “Miss Daisy, you can be a light-skin nigger or a dark-skin nigger, [but] you're always a nigger.” Remember that line?

**Susan:** Very much so.

**William:** They didn't say it that way in Atlanta, but up in New York they said it that way. Exactly the way I said it. We changed it a little bit in Atlanta.

**Susan:** How did you change it?

**William:** It didn't make it quite as definite as I said, but the idea is the same.

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\(^{48}\) *Driving Miss Daisy* (1987) is the first in what is known as Alfred Uhry’s Atlanta Trilogy of plays earning him the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. Uhry adapted it into the screenplay for the 1989 Academy Award winning film of the same name. The film stars Jessica Tandy (Daisy Werthan), Morgan Freeman (Hoke Colburn), and Dan Aykroyd (Booie Werthan). The story of Miss Daisy, a Southern Jewish widow and Hoke, her black chauffeur, is set in Atlanta between 1948 and 1973 as their 25-year friendship reflects the social changes in the American South.

\(^{49}\) 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.
Susan: Right.
William: We were in the film, my wife and I.
Susan: Really? As yourselves or represented by other?
William: There was one scene in Temple on Saturday morning, and we were in the audience. If they didn't cut us out, we were in it.
Susan: Now I'll have to look for you.
William: They probably cut us out. We're just sitting there as members of the Saturday morning service. We spent a whole day there from 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. It happened to be the day of Jessica Tandy's 80th birthday. There's one scene there, while we're sitting, that she's supposed to be singing *Ein Keloheinu*. She didn't know what *Ein Keloheinu* was, so they were teasing her. There were prompters in front of her out of the view of the camera prompting her how to sing *Ein Keloheinu*.
Susan: That's funny. You were extras in the movie?
William: Yes.
Susan: Knowing when you were president, when you were involved, you were clearly involved when [the Temple] was bombed.
William: Yes, I wasn't president then. Bill [William B.] Schwartz was president.
Susan: You were still quite involved, I take it.
William: Yes.
Susan: What do you recall? What are your memories?
William: It happened very early one Sunday morning. It was a shock to everybody. The only thing we were happy about was that it was before Sunday school started and there were no children there. It could have been devastating. It did do a lot of damage to the building. As I said before, there was a trial. They did arrest somebody and tried them. They were never able to convict them. There were two trials.
Susan: How come two trials?

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50 Traditional prayer sung after *Mussaf* (additional service following *Shacharit* in the Orthodox and Conservative traditions), and at the conclusion of the morning service in Reform and Progressive congregations. English translation: “There is nothing like our G-d.”
51 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.
William: The first trial was declared a mistrial because they made a mistake in a charge. They went for capital punishment. It was too steep a punishment for the case. It was declared a mistrial. The second trial was dismissed because the defense got smart. They went to Milledgeville [Georgia] where the state insane asylum is. They found a prostitute who was there who swore that she and George Bright,\(^{52}\) who was the man in charge, were together that night and it was impossible for him to have been involved. That’s the end of the case.

Susan: That's amazing. Did you believe any of that?

William: No.

Susan: Did you think he was guilty?

William: Definitely. We couldn't prove it, but we know he was guilty. He was no good anyway. He had a bad record. He had a history of that kind of activity . . . antisemitism. That's the way the two trials ended.

Susan: Did you attend the trial?

William: Yes.

Susan: What made you attend it?

William: I was interested. I wanted to see what was going on and hopefully we'd get him.

Susan: Were you a witness?

William: No, I wasn't.

Susan: What was . . . the general question that people tell me was . . . what was the reaction of the Temple members of the community?

William: This was one of the first temples to have been bombed. Today it's not such news anymore. Then it was real news. There was sympathy all over in this community and even the whole country because we got unsolicited donations . . . money from people all over the country. The main auditorium that was rebuilt was named ‘Friendship Hall’ because the money that came in paid for the building of the new auditorium. There was sympathy all over this community and the state, and I think the whole country, and anger that it was done because this was a respected old established Jewish congregation. It was well thought of.

Susan: It seems to be very different now after the [Leo] Frank case. You said your father

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\(^{52}\) Five suspects were arrested almost immediately after the bombing of the Temple in Atlanta. One of them was George Bright. One of the other men arrested accused Bright of masterminding the crime and of building the bomb. Bright was tried twice. His first trial ended with a hung jury and his second with an acquittal. As a result of Bright's acquittal, the other suspects were not tried. No one was ever convicted of the bombing.
was afraid to go to work.

**William:** Yes, much different.

**Susan:** What do you think was the reason?

**William:** I think most people felt that Leo Frank was guilty. The Jewish community wasn't as organized then as it is today. We were not able to take a stand as a community. The rednecks overpowered us. It happened in Marietta [Georgia]. Do you live . . .?

**Susan:** . . . unfortunately in Marietta.

**William:** You do?

**Susan:** Yes.

**William:** Of course, Marietta is different now. You don't live in the old city of Marietta.

**Susan:** No.

**William:** Marietta used to be where the square is . . . you're familiar with Marietta . . . a little country town. The murder took place in Atlanta, but the lynching took place in the square in Marietta. Most of the people that lived around Marietta didn't know who Jews were. They thought they had horns. There's a big difference in the two communities, then and now, in the non-Jewish and the Jewish community.

**Susan:** In what way is the Jewish community different?

**William:** The Jewish community today is an organized Jewish community. They do have people to stand up and talk. We have contacts with the non-Jewish community, and we're respected. In those days, there was very little contact, little organization.

**Susan:** What do you think led to the bombing of the Temple?

**William:** The man that we think was guilty is George Bright. He belonged to a group of antisemites [unintelligible]. Our rabbi had taken a public stance against segregation. It was because of his stand that they attacked him. They attacked him at home, too, by telephone threats. They threatened to bomb his home, but they didn't. Just like the bombs recently that killed the judge in Alabama and the city councilman in Savannah [Georgia]. There's no answer to it . . . people who have hate.

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53 Robert Smith Vance (1931-1989) was a United States federal judge killed by a mail bomb. He is one of the few judges in American history to have been assassinated as the result of his judicial service. As a lawyer, Vance sided with the developing civil rights movement. Walter Leroy Moody, Jr. was charged and convicted of the murder of Judge Vance.

54 Robert Edward Robinson (1942–1989) was an alderman and a black civil rights attorney in Savannah, Georgia killed by a mail bomb. Walter Leroy Moody, Jr. was charged and convicted of the murder of Robinson.
Susan: Did you know Mr. [Alfred] Uhry who wrote *Driving Miss Daisy*?

William: Very well. His mother [Alene Fox Uhry] was one of our best friends. We knew ‘Miss Daisy,’ only her name was Lena [Guthman Fox]. In fact Alfred Uhry, the author, was in our Sunday school group with Carol when we lived on Oakdale Road in Druid Hills. They're from Druid Hills. I used to drive them to Sunday school. One time his grandmother, Miss Daisy . . . he [Alfred Uhry] was older than Carol by a couple of years. She [Carol] said, “Alfred sure is smart.” His grandmother [Lena Guthman Fox] told her [unintelligible], “Carol must be smart to know that Alfred is so smart.”

Susan: Of course you agreed.

William: Yes.

Susan: What did you think of the portrayal of Miss Daisy in the play? What was your reaction to it?

William: I thought it was wonderful. It was a little bit exaggerated, of course. But I thought it was wonderful. We saw it both in New York [City] and here. What's her name . . . Mary Nell Santacroce played it here. Her daughter [Dana Ivey] played it in New York [City]. Her daughter did a better job.

Susan: Do you think it is a very accurate portrayal of Atlanta?

William: Yes, very. The movie is going to be a lot different.

Susan: In what way?

William: It will be much bigger. You'll see a lot more. We're going to the movie on Wednesday.

Susan: The premier?

William: Yes.

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55 Alfred Fox Uhry was born in 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 (2) 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. Uhry wrote the screenplay not only for the film version of *Driving Miss Daisy* but also for the 1993 film *Rich in Love*. He co-wrote the screenplay for the 1988 film *Mystic Pizza*.

56 Mary Nell Santacroce (1917-1999) appeared in films and television movies and played the title role of *Driving Miss Daisy* on the Atlanta stage and on international tour. A graduate of the University of Georgia and Emory University, she taught speech and drama at the Georgia Institute of Technology from 1948 to 1965 and taught at Georgia State University from 1965 to 1972. Her daughter, actress Dana Ivey, won an Obie award for her portrayal of Miss Daisy in New York.
Susan: Were you invited?

William: Yes.

Susan: Let me know if you end up being in it.

William: Alright.

Susan: The line that you quoted to me that Hoke said to her [Miss Daisy] after the bombing, did it touch a chord in you?

William: Yes, it sure did. It hit a chord, sure. You're still a Jew, whether you're Orthodox or Reform. It doesn't make any difference.

Susan: Going back to the time that you were president [of the Temple], what activities . . . what did you do when you were president, aims, or . . . ?

William: A few things stand out. One was . . . this was before I-85 was built. The property to the north of the Temple had been bought by Retail Credit, from where the Temple is all the way down to where the expressway entrance is now. Retail Credit decided that it really wasn't large enough for them to build their building. They were going to sell that and move across the street. That's where they built, across the street. They offered it for sale. The asking price was $200,000 for all that property. We had in our Temple the best real estate people in Atlanta, Ben Massell [and] Sam Rothberg. I called a special meeting and invited them. They were not on the board. I asked their advice on what we should do. They said, “Two hundred thousand dollars is more than that property is worth. It's worth more to the Temple than to anybody else, because you’re next door to it. Offer them $150,000 and see if they’ll bite.” So we did. They said they'd let us know the first thing . . . if they don't get $200,000, they'd let us know. They got $200,000 and then those three buildings were built. We now own one of them. We paid $1,000,000 for one of them. That was one event that wasn’t successful during my administration. The other thing that I remember that stands out so much was Carol's confirmation.57 I was [unintelligible].

I led the confirmation class down the aisle. The reason it was so important is that one of the confirmands was Alvin Sugarman,58 who is now the rabbi [he currently serves as Rabbi Emeritus

57 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.

58 Rabbi Alvin M. Sugarman, now (2015) retired, is the Rabbi Emeritus of the Temple in Atlanta and currently serves with life tenure. He began his rabbinate at The Temple in 1971 and in 1974 was named senior rabbi. A native of Atlanta, Rabbi Sugarman received his BBA from Emory University and was ordained by Hebrew Union College. In 1988 he received his Ph.D. in Theological Studies from Emory University.
as of 2014]. He was in the same class . . . who, incidentally, I play tennis with now. Other than those two things, there wasn't anything outstanding in my administration but just ordinary run of events. We hired a new secretary. We didn't have the establishment then that we have now. We had 900 members. Now we have 1,400. We just had problems with the budget, same problems they have now.

Susan: What were your relations to the other synagogues in Atlanta?
William: Very good. There are quite a few people who have dual memberships in more than one congregation. So do we. The synagogue council now . . . didn't used to be . . . all the rabbis belong. They all speak to each other.

Susan: Were the relations always good?
William: No, I wouldn't say they were always as good as they are now. There was always a feeling that the Temple membership considered themselves a little bit higher class than the other congregations. The leadership really came from other congregations [unintelligible] and still does.

Susan: What is the reason for that?
William: Indifference on the part of Temple members, and lack of concern.

Susan: Do you regret that?

William: Yes, I do. I think it's too bad. The Temple is 120 years old now. It's only had three rabbis.

Susan: That's amazing.

William: Now wait a minute, I take that back. It's only had three rabbis since 1895. Before that it had several rabbis. Since 1895 it's only had three rabbis.

<End Tape 1, Side 2>
<Begin Tape 2, Side 1>

Susan: This is Susan Illowsky reporting on January 28, 1990 interviewing Mr. Bill Breman on behalf of the Jewish Oral History Project sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women, American Jewish Committee, and the Federation. This is the second half of the interview.

Susan: Mr. Breman, when we were finishing up last time, we were discussing the leadership at the Temple and how you feel about steps that members of the Temple did not take in
leadership. What reasons did you see that they did not take steps in the leadership of the community?

**William:** I really don't know what the reasons were. They didn't want to get too involved, I guess, in fund raising. That's where it all starts. Nobody it seemed . . . most people didn't want to get involved in fund raising.

**Susan:** I know that you have been involved in a number of excellent organizations. What organizations, besides the Temple which we have discussed, were you involved in?

**William:** American Jewish Committee, Anti-Defamation League [of B’nai B’rith], the Jewish Home, Louis Kahn Group Home, Georgia State University Gerontology Society. 

**Susan:** What is the American Jewish Committee?

**William:** It's an organization that fights prejudice. [It] upholds freedom for all, not only Jews but all mankind, [unintelligible] justice for all people.

**Susan:** When did you first become involved with them?

**William:** I've been on that board for many years. I don't remember exactly when it started but a long time.

**Susan:** What made you first become involved?

**William:** I think friends of mine, who were already involved, enticed me into it.

**Susan:** In what way?

**William:** Just by following their example, and having an interest in what they were doing. I felt the same way about the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. That's a similar type organization although they vary slightly. They are alike quite a bit, too.

**Susan:** Where do they differ?

**William:** Every once in a while they would take a different position. I can't really recall right now any of the differences. Once in a while they will take a different position. Although fundamentally it's the same type of program fighting antisemitism, supporting Israel, social justice, human rights for all people regardless of race, religion or creed or color. Fundamentally, I'd say they are the same.

**Susan:** What role did you play with American Jewish Committee?

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59 The Louis Kahn Group Home was located in northeast Atlanta and provided assisted living for senior citizens.
60 A course of studies at the University of Georgia called the ‘Institute of Gerontology’ that offers a degree program.
William: Just as a board member. I don't think I was an officer with American Jewish Committee, just a board member.

Susan: I noticed in some of the clippings that you just showed me that there was a dinner in your honor.

William: Yes.

Susan: What year was that dinner?

William: I think that was in 1982 or 1983. I'm not sure.

Susan: This was the dinner in your honor?

William: Yes.

Susan: What were your feelings at that dinner?

William: I was very proud. This was just prior to the time when prices for dinner escalated. I remember this particular dinner the price was $37.50, which is by today's standards very low. Some of my friends said they would like to come, but they didn't feel like spending that much money for a dinner. Since then the price has gone up to maybe five or six times that. Just like the price for [unintelligible] has gone up so much.

Susan: Who attended the dinner? Not specifically names but was every area of the society represented, Jews, non-Jews as well or . . .?

William: Yes, they usually invite naturally all members of the American Jewish Committee. They also invite city politicians, the mayor, city councilman, congressman, and senators if they are in town. It's a wide spread . . . must have been 500 or 600 people at the dinner.

Susan: Do you think that says anything about the clout of the Jewish community that they can invite such . . .?

William: Yes, I do.

Susan: Do you think that has changed over the past years since you first came to Atlanta?

William: Yes, definitely. Both the ADL [Anti-Defamation League] and the AJC [American Jewish Committee] don't have any distinctions amongst the Jewish community, which was not the case many years ago. Many years ago the Reform and Orthodox were rather separate from one another. Over the years this has changed.

Susan: This clout that both of these organizations now have, what does that say about the Jewish community in Atlanta, if anything?
William: I think it says that the Jewish community is important and is recognized and respected by the general community.

Susan: That wasn't always the case?

William: No, it certainly wasn't.

Susan: What do you think brought about this change?

William: I think it was due to people like Rabbi Rothschild; Mayor [William B.] Hartsfield, who was mayor of Atlanta for about 25 years and a very liberal person, changes in the laws; and Martin Luther King. There's still a ways to go, but there's been a lot accomplished.

Susan: What do you mean by “there's still a ways to go?”

William: There's still a 6 o'clock curtain where Jews and non-Jews don't associate on a big scale after office hours. They don't belong to the same social sets... social clubs, although it is tending to... now it is tending to break down but very slowly. Our city council passed a law last year, I think, that it would be improper and illegal for private clubs to discriminate. To abide by the law, all of the clubs have taken in a few Jews and a few blacks, but it is still very few. The Standard Club, which never did discriminate, still does not allow a black or a non-Jew member.

Susan: What do you think is the reason for that?

William: I don't know. I really don't know. It may be that there have been no applicants. After all, it's not usual for... one person may not feel comfortable in a group of people that he didn't know and is not acquainted with. It's hard to face social barriers.

Susan: Do you think these social barriers will change in the future?

William: Yes, but a long drawn out process. It just takes time. To fight integration it takes time. It's still taking time.

Susan: We've been discussing also the B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation League. Which group are you more involved with, would you say, that or the American Jewish Committee?

William: I don't think there's a difference. I'm involved... I was on the national commission of the Anti-Defamation League, which is the national body that makes all these rules and regulations to follow. I was on that commission for about eight years. I've never been on a national board of the American Jewish Committee, but I've been on the local board. I attend all the meetings of each. I keep in touch with each group.

Susan: What other positions did you hold with the Anti-Defamation League?
William: I was the treasurer for about 10 years of the southeastern chapter. I'm a life member. I'm a life member of both boards. I'm also a life member of the Temple and a life member of the [Jewish] Federation [of Atlanta].

Susan: Were both of these . . . were the membership drives for both the Reform and Orthodox areas of the city?

William: Yes.

Susan: You had alluded to the distinction between the two. If you could describe that some more . . . was that from way back?

William: I would say that the American Jewish Committee, although it was organized I think in 1906 as a result of the pogroms in Russia, appealed more to Reform Jews than it did to Orthodox Jews. The Anti-Defamation League was formed in 1913 as a result of the Leo Frank case. It seemed to attract Conservative and Orthodox Jews as opposed to, overwhelmingly . . . as compared to . . . Reform Jews.

Susan: Was there a division in Atlanta between Reform and Orthodox Jews?

William: There used to be. Strangely enough, the Temple, which until the last ten years was the only Reform temple in Atlanta, now I think there are eight or nine. It goes back to 1867 when it was organized. When it was organized, it was an Orthodox temple. It evolved into Reform by a succession of rabbis that it had. I think probably the most dynamic of those was Rabbi David Marx.

Susan: Did you know Rabbi Marx?

William: Yes, I knew him well. He was the rabbi when I went to Sunday school.

Susan: What are your recollections of him?

William: He was a very well-liked, respected leader in the non-Jewish community, but not very well-liked in the Jewish community outside of his home congregation. He was biased, anti-

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

62 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).
Israel until the later years of his life, and was the national vice-president of American Council for Judaism, an organization that you may not even know of.

Susan: No. What was that?

William: It was an organization created primarily to fight the state of Israel and took the Arab position.

Susan: That's amazing. What was the congregation's reaction to the stand that he took?

William: The Temple was of that frame of mind. It really didn't change until Rabbi Rothschild became the rabbi. The Council of Judaism was started by a rabbi in Philadelphia. There were quite a few rabbis around the country, all Reform rabbis, who supported that point of view.

Susan: Why do you think they had that point of view?

William: They used to think that Jews were not a people, they were a religion. They didn't see the need there in the country for religion. Of course, World War II and the Holocaust changed a lot of their thinking along that line. Prior to that, there was a definite split in the Jewish community throughout the country.

Susan: Where did you stand?

William: I've always been a supporter of Israel, both financially and actively.

Susan: Even in the early days before World War II?

William: I can't say that I was too active in anything before that.

Susan: Did you have feelings one way or another?

William: Yes. Of course the state wasn't formed until 1948. I remember when it was declared a state. I remember where we were and the celebration that took place. We were at the old Standard Club on Ponce De Leon Avenue. We were there playing bridge. I'm not sure of the night but we usually went there Thursday night. It may have been a Saturday night. We went there sometimes on Saturday night. We were playing bridge. Somebody came in and said, “Did you hear about Israel becoming a state?” We hadn't heard. That was the first we'd heard. There was a big outburst of joy. Rabbi Marx and the people who followed his thinking didn't change for many years. Toward the end, he resigned as national vice-president of the Council of Judaism. Although he didn't come out publicly and say, “I support everything that Israel stands for,” it was a message that he wasn't supporting the Council of Judaism anymore. When Rabbi Jacob Rothschild took over, he changed the tone of many of the people in the congregation over the years.
Susan: Did he succeed Rabbi Marx?

William: Yes, he was an assistant. Rabbi Marx was ready for retirement. We were looking for a successor. We found Rabbi Rothschild, who was fresh out of the army. He came as assistant. After a year, I think, the position of chief rabbi was presented to him. Rabbi Marx retired voluntarily and became Rabbi Emeritus.

Susan: It sounds interesting that the congregation would even at that point bring in someone like Rabbi Rothschild. Were there reasons for that switch?

William: Maybe we didn't know, or they didn't know, the radical views that he had. They were radical then, not today. He was a young, attractive, unmarried man. He sold himself to the congregation. He was here less than a year when he married an Atlanta girl, Janice [Oettenger] Rothschild. His son and daughter both go here. His son is a lawyer and a rabbi.

Susan: Which congregation?

William: He doesn't have a congregation now. He did have. I think he graduated from Yale [University–New Haven, Connecticut] last year, and then decided to go to rabbinic school. He went to Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati [Ohio]. I think this is their second or third year, I'm not sure which, in Israel, Jerusalem. He met a sabra [native Israeli] who he married. He had a difficult time marrying her because he was the son of a Reform rabbi. The rabbis in Israel didn't look on him with too much glee. They had to verify the fact that he was a Jew. It took an Orthodox rabbi, particularly. His name was Emanuel Feldman. They approved and they were married. They both go here. You may know her, Hava Rothschild. She teaches at Emory [University—Atlanta, Georgia]. He did have a corporate job and a New York outlying congregation. They gave up that and came back here. He is practicing law.

Susan: Which firm?

William: I don't remember. It's a nice firm though. I don't remember.

Susan: Did you play any role in selecting Rabbi Rothschild?

William: I was on the committee.

Susan: Were you aware of his views?

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Emanuel Feldman (born 1927) is an Orthodox rabbi and Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Beth Jacob of Atlanta, Georgia. During his nearly 40 years at Beth Jacob beginning in 1952, he nurtured the growth of Atlanta’s Orthodox community from a city with two small Orthodox synagogues to a community large enough to support Jewish day schools, yeshivas, girls’ schools and a kollel. He is a past vice-president of the Rabbinical Council of America and former editor of Tradition: The Journal of Orthodox Jewish thought published by the RCA.
William: No. He was just a charming young man.

Susan: Did he encounter any difficulty or resistance from the congregation?

William: Yes, he did. He came in 1946, which was really preceding changing of the laws of integration, segregation, and before the state of Israel. As things changed, he supported the change. That's how his personality and influence developed. As things changed, he supported the change . . . more than supported the change. He encouraged acceptance of the change. In fact, he's responsible for assembling 70 ministers in Atlanta to endorse integration. He was a leader in that regard. He got 70 of the outstanding Atlanta ministers to come to a dinner, which was well-attended. They proclaimed the manifesto supporting integration.

Susan: Did you attend the dinner?

William: Yes,

Susan: What was the reaction of the congregation to this?

William: It was mixed, but mostly favorable.

Susan: Any move to have [Rabbi Rothschild] removed?

William: No. As a matter of fact, after he was here for about ten years . . . it was during the time I was president of the congregation . . . he felt that he ought to be secure. He had no contract. He had no life time contract. He requested to know how he stands. We had several meetings. I supported him wholeheartedly. We finally gave him a life time membership as the chief rabbi at the Temple.

Susan: That's terrific. When did he retire?

William: He died when he was, I think, 62 years old. It was a shock. It was too bad. He died on a New Year’s Eve, I think. I know exactly when it was. Notre Dame was playing Alabama in the Sugar Bowl. We were at a party at a friend’s house watching the game. Somebody came in and said, “Rabbi Rothschild is dead.” The party disbanded immediately. We all went over to their home.

Susan: Was it sudden?

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64 In 1957, when other southern cities were erupting in violent opposition to court-ordered school desegregation, 80 Atlanta ministers issued a statement calling for interracial negotiation, obedience to the law, and a peaceful resolution to integration disputes in the city. The statement came to be known as The Ministers' Manifesto, and marked a turning point in Atlanta's race relations. Although the Manifesto's strong Christian language prevented Rabbi Jacob Rothschild from signing it himself, the rabbi played a role in developing the statement.
William: He'd been in the hospital for a few days. We didn’t think it was imminent, but it was. The only thing we knew that he suffered from was kidney stones. He had several bouts with kidney stones. This time, I don't know what happened, but evidently something happened.

Susan: One of the things that I'm curious about is the reasons that you got so involved in these organizations and why you chose to take a leadership role.

William: I really didn't choose to take a leadership role. I was sort of drafted. I attended meetings. I was interested. Whenever there was a need for something, they elected me. I would accept. I didn't go out seeking anything. I don't know what else to say, if that answers your question or not. The reason for my interest in the organizations was just that I liked the principles of the organization and the comradery of the people.

Susan: The Temple, for example, many people join and maybe go to services, but that's the extent of it. I was curious that you chose to even attend the meetings.

William: The Temple . . . it was a matter of being a member of the board and attending the board meetings. However, the Temple now is much more active than it used to be. Almost every night if you're at the Temple now you'll find some kind of a group, a study group. I was at a meeting last week where I chaired a committee to . . . I don't know if I mentioned this or not . . . to decide what to do about admitting and giving tickets to High Holy Day season . . . services. We have two services every Rosh Ha-Shanah, morning and night; and [two services] every Yom Kippur,\(^\text{65}\) night and morning. For years we've had this. It's always been automatically divided enough so there was never a problem. People would just elect to go to the late service or the early service. It was never a problem. Both services seemed to fill up, but there was no overflow. This year for the first time there was a problem, an overflow problem, at the first Yom Kippur service which was a Sunday night. The president asked me to chair a meeting to discuss it and see what recommendations we could make for it to solve the problem.

Susan: Any recommendations?

William: We made a few. It wasn't approved by the Executive Committee yet, but it will be presented. We talked about a lot of things. We have over 1,400 members. A member is a family. There are close to 4,000 people if you count everybody in the family. We send out

\(^{65}\) 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 \textit{yizkor} for deceased relatives, confessing sins, requesting divine forgiveness, and listening to \textit{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 \textit{shofar} (a ram’s horn).
tickets. We don't have reserved seats in the synagogue. We send out tickets to every member. In addition to the members, we have the young professional group to which you would be welcome if you would like to join. There are about 300 or 400 of those which we give tickets to. There is a young married group which you would also be put in with. We give tickets to them. There are also 300 or 400 members there. For the first time, we had this problem on Yom Kippur with some of the members who thought they should have been able to sit in the sanctuary. They were not allowed in the sanctuary because it was overcrowded. They sent them to the chapel in the rear and the Friendship Hall in the rear. Some of them complained about it. They felt like they were second-class members. Our recommendation is that . . . in addition to the tickets that I mentioned that we give out, we also admit any college student who presents an ID card. Our recommendation was that we continue to admit college students, but direct them to the Friendship Hall or chapel, not the sanctuary. To make the services in the rear more attractive than the way they are because now it's just audio, we suggest that there be a board member to sit on the pulpit in the rear in the Friendship Hall and in the chapel, and have TV [television] broadcast into the Friendship Hall and chapel. It would be visual as well as audio. If you do go to either one of those places, you are not just looking at the wall and hearing something. Maybe that will pass the Budget Committee and that will happen. I don't know what [unintelligible].

Susan: I don't know either, but it's an interesting solution to a sticky problem. We had discussed Driving Miss Daisy, the play, last time. You were going to see the movie. Did you ever go see it?

William: Yes, we did. I can recommend it highly to you if you haven't seen it.

Susan: Not yet.

William: It was playing only in Perimeter but now it's playing in about six or seven theaters here in the city. It's really a good show.

Susan: Did you end up being in it?

William: We're in it, but you really couldn't tell we're in it. We're in the scene of the Saturday morning service in The Temple. We knew where we were sitting so we could see ourselves. It was hard to identify us.

Susan: Just the backs of your heads?

William: No, the fronts. We were so far away it wasn't clear who we were.

Susan: What was your reaction on seeing the movie?
William: I thought it was wonderful. I liked it even better than the play.

Susan: How come?

William: It had everything the play had, plus it was much broader. The play is only limited to the stage and the imagination. In the movie, it shows you the neighborhoods and places they’re talking about. In one scene they’re driving down Oakdale Road and they passed our old house where we used to live. Miss Daisy says to Hoke, “What are you doing?” He says, “I'm trying to take you to this market.” They were going to the Piggly Wiggly grocery store. We saw our old house. It was familiar to us, the whole neighborhood. We lived in that neighborhood for about 12 years.

Susan: Was this when you were married?

William: From 1943 to 1951, eight years. We moved from there in 1951.

Susan: What memories did the movie bring back to you? It covers Atlanta for so long.

William: It brought back many memories. The author of the play and movie, Alfred Uhry, was in our Sunday school driving route when he was going to Sunday school. We knew Miss Daisy and are very friendly now with his mother. Alene [Fox] Uhry is her name. Of course, Miss Daisy wasn't named ‘Miss Daisy.’ Her name was Lena [Guthman Fox]. It brought back many memories. It covered the Temple bombing and the Martin Luther King dinner, which they did when he got the Nobel Peace Prize. It must have appealed to a lot of people, because it's going great. A lot of people are going to see it every night that aren't members of the Temple.

Susan: What were some of your earliest childhood memories?

William: Of what?

Susan: Of Atlanta, growing up, your family?

William: I had a pleasant growing up. I can recall as far back as third grade. That's as far back as I can go.

Susan: What do you recall about your neighborhood, where you were living then?

William: It was just a nice place to live.

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66 Piggly Wiggly, America’s first true self-service grocery store, was founded in Memphis, Tennessee in 1916 by Clarence Saunders. In grocery stores of that time, shoppers presented their orders to clerks who then gathered the goods from the store shelves. Saunders, a dynamic and innovative man, noticed that this method resulted in wasted time and expense, so he came up with an unheard-of solution that would revolutionize the entire grocery industry. He developed a way for shoppers to serve themselves. Today there are more than 600 Piggly Wiggly stores serving communities in 17 states. All Piggly Wiggly stores are independently owned and operated, and though they are located primarily in the Southeast there are Piggly Wiggly stores and as far north as Wisconsin.
Susan: What kind of houses? Were they apartments?

William: No, we had a house. We had a . . . I have two sisters . . . I don't know how many bedrooms there were. I guess three or four bedrooms. It was a nice house.

Susan: Tell me about your father. What sort of person was he like?

William: He was . . . as a father he was very stern. When I grew up and got to really know him, he was a good parent. He retired when he was 45 years old on account of his health. At that time he moved the family from Atlanta to Asheville, North Carolina. He went into business in Asheville. Actually, he was there for a while in the automobile lending and financing of automobiles [business].

Susan: What about your mother? What sort of person was she?

William: My mother was a very beautiful, out-going person. Very warm, very protective. Whenever I was in trouble, she would put her arms around me. I felt secure, which I didn't feel from my father. I was afraid, a little bit afraid of my father when I was young.

Susan: What do you recall about your grandparents?

William: I didn't know my grandparents. I went to one funeral, my mother's father. I think I was about maybe ten years old. I went with my mother to a funeral in Chicago where she was born. All I remember was that I went to a funeral. I didn't know him.

Susan: What other family did you have in Atlanta?

William: When I was growing up my father had a brother and a sister here.

Susan: The brother was Uncle Max?

William: Uncle Max. Uncle Max wasn't married until he was at 55 years old. Sarah was married to Mose Stein. They're both buried in Oakland Cemetery. Mose Stein died when he was 38 years old in the flu epidemic of 1918.

Susan: Did Aunt Sarah ever remarry?

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67 Oakland Cemetery is the oldest cemetery and one of the largest green spaces, in Atlanta. Many notable Georgians are buried at Oakland including Margaret Mitchell, author of Gone with the Wind, Dr. Joseph Jacobs, owner of the pharmacy where John Pemberton first sold Coca-Cola as a soft drink, Bobby Jones, the only golfer to win the Grand Slam, the U.S. Amateur, U.S. Open, British Amateur and the Open Championship in the same year, as well as former Georgia governors and Atlanta mayors. Oakland is an excellent example of a Victorian-style cemetery and contains numerous monuments and mausoleums that are of great beauty and historical significance.

68 The 1918 flu pandemic was an unusually deadly influenza pandemic. It infected people across the world, including remote Pacific islands and the Arctic, and killed 50 to 100 million of them—three to five percent of the world's population—making it one of the deadliest natural disasters in human history.
William: No. She died in 1923, also a young woman. Uncle Max was my boss. I think I told you I came to work for him.

Susan: Right.

William: He got married when he was 55 years old.

Susan: Did Sarah and Mose have any children?

William: No one in the family had children but my father.

Susan: What about your mother's family? Were any of them down here?

William: Yes, there's one second cousin.

Susan: Who is she?

William: He's a lawyer.

Susan: What's his name?

William: Larry Lewy [sp]. He doesn't practice law. He sells advertising for some trade magazine. My mother had . . . she was one of nine. My father was one of several, too, but I didn't know any of the others. I knew all my mother's brothers and sisters. They all had children. The few that are left are friendly with us still.

Susan: Are they in Chicago?

William: Some are and some are in Los Angeles [California]. In fact, we've taken two trips to Los Angeles in recent years. They're nice people.

Susan: How did you celebrate the Jewish holidays when you were a child?

William: As I recall, my mother lit candles every Friday night. On the holidays we had a seder. We went to temple, and stayed out of school. That's about all I can remember from childhood.

Susan: Your mother was born in this country?

William: Yes, in Chicago.

Susan: What sort of ethnic food did they bring to these seders? Was there anything specific? Was it more American food or . . . ?

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69 Hebrew for “order.” The ritual family meal eaten at home on the first and second nights of Passover accompanied by the retelling of the story of the Israelites’ exodus from Egypt.
William: . . . Gefilte fish\(^{70}\) and matzo balls.\(^{71}\) Good Jewish eating. My mother didn't have any foreign upbringing. Her parents were born, I guess, in Russia. She was born in Chicago. All the children, all my aunts and uncles, were born in Chicago.

Susan: I understand Temple membership was mostly drawn from the German Jews. Your family seems to be from the Russian Jews side. What made them decide on The Temple?

William: I don't know. Maybe friends of theirs when they first moved here. I can't think of any particular reason. I was too young to . . . I was only five years old. I don't know.

Susan: You attended Sunday school at the Temple?

William: Yes.

Susan: What was Sunday school like?

William: We had a lot of fun. We raised Cain.\(^{72}\)

Susan: What were the subjects supposed to be?

William: Reading about history, Noah and the Ark . . . the history of the Jews. As a child we didn't take it too seriously. We didn't look on Sunday school as seriously as we did public school. It was a time when we saw our Jewish friends only once a week. We made a holiday out of Sundays. After Sunday school we'd go to each other's house for lunch and then play there.

Susan: Did you attend services at the Temple?

William: Yes, when I was taken. Then I had to go.

Susan: Has that changed over the years, the Temple services?

William: Yes. For 15 years we didn't miss a Friday night, during the time before and after I was president. Now we go once in a while [unintelligible]. There's a reason . . . we're out of town . . . the sisterhood had a regional meeting here. They asked us to dinner Friday night. It was in the Temple. The program was about their convention, the sisterhood.

Susan: How did you observe the holidays after you got married?

William: We did the usual. I stayed home from work on the important holidays. We had a family dinner, and we still do. I didn't fast for Yom Kippur for many years, but I have for the last

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\(^{70}\) Gefilte fish is an Ashkenazi Jewish dish made from a poached mixture of ground deboned fish, such as carp, whitefish or pike, which is typically eaten as an appetizer. They are popular on the Sabbath and holidays such as Passover, although they may be consumed throughout the year.

\(^{71}\) Dumplings made from matzah meal, an Ashkenazi custom. The balls are dropped into chicken soup or boiling water. They are popular during Passover.

\(^{72}\) Because Cain was the first murderer in the Bible, having killed his brother Abel, people use the expression ‘raising Cain’ to mean making trouble or causing an uproar.
few years. I just felt like I needed to. I understood more, the reason for the fast, than I ever did before. My daughter has a much more religious home than we have.

Susan: Does she keep kosher?\textsuperscript{73}

William: No, not yet.

Susan: What reason did she have . . . what were the reasons that your daughter had a more religious home?

William: She's gotten very interested in Judaism. In fact, she's on the Board of Jewish Education. She spends her weekends going from one congregation to another for different services. She's active in the National Organization of Reform Judaism [unintelligible]

Susan: She's still Reform. Is she thinking of changing that?

William: She's still Reform, but she's practices a lot of the Orthodox customs.

Susan: Such as?

William: She has a shawl that she wears when she goes to services, which is not customary in our congregation but she doesn't care. She won't eat any \textit{treif}.\textsuperscript{74} She used to love lobster. She would have killed for lobster, but she won't eat any \textit{treif} now.

Susan: Even outside the home?

William: No. Although she's not kosher, she restricts what she eats to not eating any \textit{treif}.

Susan: What about your son? Has his religious observances changed?

William: Our son is a different matter. He's not well.

Susan: I'm sorry. Is he living in Atlanta?

William: No. He lives [unintelligible]. I can tell you more about it off the tape.

Susan: That's fine. Was there a social life with Jews in other southern cities when you were growing up, especially when you were single?

William: There was, but I moved away from it. As I told you, I moved to Asheville when I was 14 years old. There was a lot of social [inter]action between Birmingham [Alabama], Montgomery [Alabaman], Chattanooga [Tennessee], and Atlanta young people. There were

\textsuperscript{73} Kosher/Kashrut is the set of Jewish dietary laws. Food that may be consumed according to \textit{halakhah} (Jewish law) is termed ‘kosher’ in English. Food that is not in accordance with Jewish law is called ‘\textit{treif}.’ The word ‘kosher’ has become English vernacular, a colloquialism meaning proper, legitimate, genuine, fair, or acceptable.

\textsuperscript{74} Food that is not in accordance with Jewish law such as pork, shellfish, or foods that are not prepared according to kosher.
annual affairs in one city or the other. Everybody from each city would go. I missed those because I was not in the geographical area.

Susan:  You moved just after your first year of high school?

William:  Yes.

Susan:  I guess you were too young before that. Did you get involved politically at all in Atlanta politics?

William:  No, only to the extent of financially supporting some candidates.

Susan:  Who did you support?

William:  It's a long, long list. Not only in Atlanta, but Senators from Iowa or California. I get letters every day from somebody. There's a local PAC [Political Action Committee]. Do you know what a PAC is?

Susan:  Yes.

William:  There's a local PAC that I belong to. My name gets spread out to all the candidates around the country. I contribute to the local PAC. I get letters from Senator [Carl] Levin in Michigan and [Alan] Cranston in California. Sometimes I send them a check. Sometimes I just tear the letter up.

Susan:  What's the name of the PAC?

William:  Georgia Political Action . . . I don't know the full name.

Susan:  Usually these are formed to support either some opinions or specific causes but . . .

William:  . . . no, they're formed to support people based on opinions.

Susan:  What sort of opinions do you look for?

William:  Usually pro-Israel, primarily. We wouldn't support anybody that was anti-Israel.

Susan:  Did you have any involvement in Mayor Massell’s campaign?

William:  Yes. I was at a meeting in his uncle's office—Ben Massell—which was called for the purpose of telling us that he [Sam Massell] was going to run and ask support for him. He had a brother named Charles who was . . . I don't want to be too hard on him but he was a character.

Susan:  In what way?

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75 A political action committee is an organization that pools campaign contributions from members and donates those funds to campaign for or against candidates. It was created in the wake of campaign finance reform in 2002 at the federal level.

76 Sam Massell (born 1927) served from 1970 to 1974 as the 53rd mayor of Atlanta. He is the first Jewish mayor in his city's history. A lifelong Atlanta resident, Massell has had successful careers in real estate brokerage, elected office, tourism, and association management.
William: He was associated with the underground. I don't mean Underground Atlanta, I mean underground people. He was known to be a very liberal. Talk was that he had a mirror on his ceiling of his bedroom over his bed. I remember expressing concern about Sam Massell, if he was going to associate with his brother on his campaign or on his mayoralty. Sam was not there when it was mentioned. Word got to him that I said this. He called me up. He assured me that, no, his brother and he did not think alike and, as a matter of fact, his brother was moving out of town. Which he did. I said, "I'll surely vote for you Sam if that's the case and I'll talk for you." Of course, he got elected. He was the last white mayor that we've had.

Susan: What year was the election?

William: Andy Young served two terms, Maynard Jackson served two terms. That's 16 years. He [Sam Massell] served one or two terms. It was either 20 or 24 years ago. Twenty years would be 1970, wouldn't it?

Susan: Yes.

William: He was elected probably in 1970 or 1974. I don't remember if he served one or two times.

Susan: Did he have the support of the Jewish community?

William: Yes, he was a good man. I think the biggest thing he did was he got MARTA here. For five years he promised the fare would not change from 15 cents.

Susan: Did it?

William: Fifteen cents for five years. Now it's what . . . $1?

Susan: About.

William: Eighty-five cents or $1. Yes, he kept his word.

Susan: Was there any reaction that he was a Jewish man?

William: No, actually he was not very Jewish. He was perceived as Jewish but I mean . . .

Susan: . . . he wasn't very observant or involved, is that what you're saying?

William: Yes. His uncle was very prominent, Ben Massell. Now his cousin is becoming very prominent, Peter Conlon. Do you know that name?

Susan: No, I don't. What is he involved in?

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77 ‘MARTA’ is the common term for the ‘Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority,’ which was created in 1965. During the 1970’s, MARTA began acquiring land in and around the city of Atlanta, Georgia for construction of a rapid rail system. Today, MARTA operates a rail system with feeder bus operation and park-and-ride facilities throughout the metropolitan Atlanta area.
William: In business . . . it's real estate. He also has another company that is called Southern Promotions. He arranges for all the actors that come to town. [unintelligible]. Do you get the [Atlanta] Business Chronicle?

Susan: Yes.

William: There's a big story this week about him.

Susan: I'll have to look for that.

William: He's the immediate fourth president of the American Jewish Committee. He's the current chairman of the Jewish Federation Drive.

Susan: Have you been involved in the Federation over the years?

William: Yes.

Susan: What sort of things have you done with them?

William: I've been on practically every committee over the years: allocations committee, [unintelligible] committee, and nominating committee. I was the vice-president for a little while. I'm a vice-member of the board. I was chairman of the drive for two years, not consecutively. The first time I was co-chairman with Dr. Irving Greenberg. A few years later I was chairman by myself. I still go to all the board meetings.

Susan: You must be out every night.

William: To just meet with friends, usually.

Susan: After you sold your business in 1979, what was your life like?

William: I was relieved. I spent a year as a consultant when I was nothing but a ghost.

Susan: In what way?

William: They didn't need my consulting. All it meant was that I stayed in my office for a year. I was around. I was available. I won't say it didn't amount to anything because there was some unfinished business that I took care of during that year. There was a lot of inventory with nothing to [unintelligible]. After the year, I moved out to another office where I've been ever since.

Irving "Greenie" Greenberg (1911-2006) was born in Poland and came to Atlanta with his family in 1913. He was a graduate of Emory University Medical School. Following his service in the United States Army (1941 to 1946) Greenie he returned to Atlanta where he practiced general surgery for more than 40 years and pioneered Early Ambulation, post-operative care in which a patient gets out of bed and engages in light activity as soon as possible after an operation. He served on the board of almost every major medical and Jewish organization in Atlanta. He cofounded the Greenfield Hebrew Academy, helped establish the first blood bank in Atlanta, and co-chaired the Jewish Federation’s first annual campaign that raised $1,000,000.
Susan: What do you do at this other office?

William: I do my personal involvement, investments, receive telephone calls from DARTS [Dial-A-Ride Transportation Services], the Jewish Home, and American Jewish Committee. I have meetings a lot of time. I had to go over there and [unintelligible] Friday. Just a place for, as my wife says, to get out of the house.

Susan: Where is the office?

William: It's on North Druid Hills in Executive Park . . . about six miles due east from here.

Susan: You said you receive phone calls from DART? What is that?

William: It's a service of the Jewish Family Services. DART is Dial-A-Ride Transportation for people who have no other means of getting to the doctor, dentist, community center, Jewish Family Services appointments, or taking someone to the hospital. We can pick them up for that. We drive for these people. We can pick them up and take them where they want to go. [We] wait for them, or someone else will pick them up and take them back home.

Susan: It's an interesting group.

William: Yes. I only had one unpleasant experience. That was about a week ago. I was asked that I pick up Mrs. ‘So-and-So’ and take her to the doctor, but stop by the Decatur General Hospital and pick up some X-rays so she could take them to the doctor. His office was right around the corner. My appointment was to pick her up at one o'clock. I had made a tennis date of two o'clock. I didn’t see any problem at all. When we got to the X-ray place, I said, “Should I run in and get your X-rays?” She said, “No, I've got to go in and have them made.” That took an hour. When she came out, she said, “The doctor phoned. He has an emergency and I can't go to him. You'll have to take me home.” I was quite upset, but I took her home. I got to my tennis date about a quarter to three.

Susan: Where do you play tennis?

William: It depends on what day it is. Saturday I play at the Standard Club. Thursdays and Sundays I play at Rivermeade, which is about three miles straight out West Wesley Road, near the [Chattahoochee] River, at a private club.

Susan: Do you have a regular group?

William: Yes, we have a regular group. The rule is you've got to come if you want to play.

Susan: Meaning?

William: If you don't come you can't play.
Susan: That's easy.
William: There are about . . . today we had about ten. There are two courts. Luckily two of them had to leave early so, we had two good doubles games.
Susan: How long have you been playing tennis?
William: Fifty years.
Susan: That's wonderful. How did you get started?
William: I just liked it. I liked playing. I liked the exercise. I just liked it.
Susan: What other activities have you been involved with since your retirement, which doesn't sound like much of a retirement?
William: I deliver Meals on Wheels every Friday. That's also a program of Jewish Family Services. The meals are prepared at the Jewish Community Center. I have Route 1, which is around town as far out as [unintelligible], Georgia. On Thursdays I go to the [Louis] Kahn Group Home where senior citizens live. I take them to the beauty parlor, or I take them shopping or just for a ride if they want to go. On Tuesdays I go to the St. Luke’s Church, make sandwiches, and pour soup for the homeless. We serve about 550 people every Tuesday. They do it every week, every day. I just go on Tuesdays.
Susan: That's terrific. Did you say that you're also involved in the Jewish Home? Is that different than the Kahn Home?
William: The Jewish Home . . . the Kahn [Group] Home only takes care of about nine . . . maximum nine people who live there. The Jewish Home is not far from here. It's around the corner. It's a full-service, 120-bed home which is run like a hospital. I was president there for five years, during the time that we moved from we were originally on 14th Street to where we are now on Howell Mill Road. During my tenure we bought the property and built the new home. Dan Garson and I were co-chairs of the fundraising.
Susan: Who supports the Jewish Home?
William: I'm glad you asked because we have memberships. Anyone who wants to can become a member. There's 120 residents. Approximately two-thirds of them are on Medicaid. Are you familiar with Medicaid?
Susan: Yes.

79 A program that delivers meals to individuals at home who are unable to purchase or prepare their own meals.
William: The difference between what Medicaid pays and the full pay is about a $15,000 a year shortfall. That is made up with memberships and the Jewish Federation. This year the Federation will give the Jewish Home approximately $400,000. Memberships and contributions will bring in $500,000 or $600,000.

Susan: You also mentioned the Georgia State [University] Gerontology Association. What is that?

William: That's a division of Georgia State University. It's sort of an orphan. It's not well-placed at the University. It was under the Liberal Arts College, but I just heard this week that the Dean of Liberal Arts said that the budget won't permit continuing to finance it. They're trying to get it placed under the Urban Life School. It's a course at the University which teaches the science of gerontology which is the science of old people. They have undergraduate and graduate degrees in it to doctors.

Susan: What is your involvement in this?

William: I'm on the board. I've been . . . I was the first . . . trying to raise enough money to endow a chair which when we started was $1,000,000. Now they tell me it's about $2,000,000.

Susan: Expensive furniture.

William: I was the first contributor for the chair. I fell short. There's still a chair, but I helped them with one leg.

Susan: What do you see as the future of the Atlanta Jewish community?

William: I think it has a bright future. There are so many young people who are grabbing hold and taking charge. It's encouraging. I used to think that when the generation before me died out, what would happen? Then I got to be that generation. Now I can see that the one following will do a better job than has ever been done.

Susan: In what way?

William: In supporting Jewish education; supporting the Federation; supporting all the institutions, the schools, the Jewish Home, and the Jewish Community Center; supporting Israel; and supporting world Jewry . . . not only Israel, but people in Romania and Soviet Jews. There are a lot of young people who are taking an active hand in seeing that this continues.

Susan: What effect does the geographical spread of the city have on the Jewish community?

William: I don't say it has an effect . . . the effect it's had is that there have been congregations where there never were congregations before, new congregations and new Community Centers.
They just finished, last year, building a new Community Center in East Cobb [County]. In the last 10 or 12 years, there was one started on Tilly Mill Road, the Zaban Community Center, besides the one here on Peachtree Street. The religious schools have moved because of the changes in residences and locations of people. All the religious groups moved from where they were to where they are now because of changes in residency. Other than that, when there is a community affair they all seem to get wherever it's held, whether it's downtown or outside. The transportation system here is good. Almost anywhere you can go in Atlanta is within 30 minutes from there.

**Susan:** Do you see any problem from this spread in the cohesiveness of the community?

**William:** No, I don't. I think it's . . . as I say, the only problem is that people don't know as many people as they used to know. We used to know everybody. Now, we hardly know anybody, because there's so many people that we never see.

**Susan:** Do you still see any divisions between the two communities?

**William:** No, only the division between the ‘haves’ and the ‘won’ts’. . . . those that will do and those that won't do. I don't know how you'll ever cure that, even with education. Some people don't believe in anything and don't want to get involved in anything. I guess there will always be those kinds of people. That's the only problem I see.

**Susan:** What about the relationships among the temples?

**William:** I'd say they're very good. The only one that seems to have a problem is the gay and lesbian congregation.

**Susan:** What was your reaction to that situation?

**William:** It's hard for me to quote, but my rabbi said that if they were not admitted to the Rabbinic Council or the Congregation Council that he would resign. So did Rabbi [Philip] Kranz from [Temple] Sinai. The Orthodox rabbi said that if they [the gay and lesbian congregation] were admitted, he would resign. I don’t know what I'd do, but it's hard for me . . .

**Susan:** . . . what was the resolution of the controversy?

**William:** Controversy? They established recently, within the last year or two, a Congregational Council which is supposed to be representative of all congregations to discuss any problems and to keep harmony amongst the whole Jewish community. Just one congregation applied, which caused a stop. Nobody wanted to talk about this. Do we want to admit them or not? That's the only controversy. I don't know whether they've been admitted yet or not.
Susan: I was wondering if there was a resolution to it at this point, or not?

William: I don't know. The first reason for not admitting them was that they didn't have a rabbi. They considered any group without a rabbi was not a congregation. They employed a weekend rabbi, maybe once a month, some student. They affiliated with the Reconstructionist Movement. They got some student to come here, I think one weekend a month. Theoretically now that can't be a reason to keep them out. But the real reason for the discussion was there is a Bible story and the Orthodox believe it word for word. The Reform define the word in today's language.

Susan: Did Rabbi Sugarman succeed Rabbi Rothschild?

William: Yes, Rabbi Sugarman was Rabbi Rothschild's assistant and selected by Rabbi Rothschild. Rabbi Sugarman had an interesting career. He, like Rothschild, was in business for seven or eight years before he decided to become a rabbi. He got his first job after he graduated rabbinical school somewhere in Mississippi. Rabbi Rothschild knew him because he had confirmed him. He had followed his career. He very strongly recommended that he be his assistant. Of course, not knowing that something was going to happen to him . . . but he was sort of preparing himself for retirement. There was a lot of discussion when Rabbi Rothschild died. Should we give the pulpit to Rabbi Sugarman, or should we look elsewhere? There were several meetings about that. We finally succeeded in convincing the opposition that we wanted to keep Rabbi Sugarman. I'm glad we did. He's developed into a very, very fine rabbi.

Susan: What reasons did the opposition have for not wanting him as a rabbi?

William: That he wasn't experienced enough. That he didn't have the mental capacity of Rabbi Rothschild. But he had other qualities that Rabbi Rothschild didn't have. Personally, he's a much warmer person. One on one, he's superb in personal relationships. In crisis, in weddings, and in funerals, in anything that involves people, he's unsurpassed. He's proven that, and his mental capacity has grown. He just recently became a Ph.D. His sermons are getting better, and he was confirmed.

Susan: His assistant is a female rabbi?

William: Yes.

Susan: When did she become a rabbi at the Temple?
**William:** I think she's completing her second year. There was also a female before her, several years ago. We used to have a rule. I guess we still have it... that assistants can only serve two years. That avoids competition for the rabbi and, in fairness, to the assistant...  

**INTERVIEW ENDS**

<End Tape 2, Side 2>