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MEMOIRIST: STANLEY PERRY BRICKMAN
INTERVIEWER: SHIRLEY MICHALOVE
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INTERVIEW BEGINS

<Begin Tape 1 Side 1>

Shirley: This is Shirley Michalove interviewing Perry Brickman on January the 25th, 2002, for the Jewish Oral History Project of Atlanta, co-sponsored by the American Jewish Committee, The Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta, and The National Council of Jewish Women.

Shirley: Perry, let's start with your full name.

Perry: Stanley Perry Brickman.

Shirley: Where were you born and when?

Perry: I was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee¹, on December 23rd, 1932.

Shirley: Tell me a little bit about your background, where your parents were from. First, let's talk about your mother. What was her full name and where was she born, and when?

Perry: My mother's name was Ida Brickman, Ida Siskin, actually, S-I-S-K-I-N. She was born in Chattanooga. She and her older brother Abe, were both born in Chattanooga. Both of their parents, came from Lithuania².

Shirley: Do you know where?

Perry: I'm told that the father comes from Kamai. I'm not sure where my grandmother is from. But I do know that the Siskins came from a place called Kamai. It's up in the northeast part of Lithuania, about a hundred miles from Vilna, maybe twenty or thirty miles from the Latvian border.

¹ Chattanooga is a city in the state of Tennessee, located in the southern portion of the United States. The city is set along the Tennessee River in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains.

² Lithuania is the most southern of Europe's Baltic states and a former Soviet bloc nation which borders Poland, Latvia, and Belarus.

Shirley: Tell me a little bit about your mother. Did she work outside the home? Did she work with your father?

Perry: My mother was raised there by her parents, both of whom were European. She and her brother—being born in Chattanooga, and like so many other first generation [Americans]—really wanted to be “Southern,” and they were, they really were! If you heard them speak, they had real southern accents.

Both of them went to high school, but neither finished because they needed to work. They needed to work because their father, my grandfather—for whom I’m named—owned a little grocery store, and he was murdered³. He was killed in the grocery store there in Chattanooga, just a few blocks away from where they lived. It was a robbery attempt. My mother couldn’t have been over three or four years old, and her brother was about three years older. So, they were orphans, and their mother was a widow. Their mother remarried and they had three other children, but they didn’t really have things real great. So, it was important they go to school. They both got as much as they could get, or wanted to get, and then they wanted to go out and make some money, earn a living.

Shirley: Was she active in the Jewish community before she married, or after she married?

Perry: Before she married she was working and she was a very unusual person at that time. She played golf back then, and she played cards, and she smoked. (laughs)

Shirley: In that day and age, that was very unusual. (laughs)

Perry: Yes, it was unusual to do all that. She had a few girlfriends, Jewish girlfriends, who did the same. They were very, very independent—and not because of a movement or anything like that. That’s just what they wanted to be. But, she stayed at home until she got married. I don’t really know if she did anything as far as organizations or anything [like that], until she was married. Once she was married, she belonged to *Hadassah*⁴, and [Jewish] Sisterhood⁵, and things like that.

³ Simcha Peretz ‘Sam’ Siskin was born in Lithuania in 1875 and shot in his Chattanooga grocery store, in March 1913. His wife was Rebecca Siskin Nash.

⁴ *Hadassah*, the Women’s Zionist Organization of America, is a volunteer service organization founded in 1912 by Henrietta Szold. It currently has over 300,000 members and supporters worldwide.

⁵ Jewish Sisterhoods are philanthropic organizations with a focus on service to their synagogue, to Judaism, and to their respective denominations.

The Siskins were pretty well recognized there, principally my grandfather's brothers. They came from Europe, as did my grandfather, from Lithuania. But the two Siskin brothers⁶—one particularly—he was a peddler of just, junk. He opened a junkyard, and the junkyard lead to scrap iron . . .

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: . . . and then to iron and steel, and then recycling, and then finally just steel. But, they were very well to do, and they were very, very, active in the *shul*⁷ and very dogmatic. Whatever they were involved in, they really ran it.

My grandfather, I don't know anything about him. My mother never told me anything. She was still so young [when he died]. I even have a picture of his father, my great grandfather, from Europe. I have it downstairs here. When I got older—much older—I really started asking questions, and nobody knew [about my grandfather]. Nobody has any pictures of him, and I presume that my grandmother, when she remarried [lost the pictures]. I guess it went in steps. I guess all the pictures [were passed] down, and with another man there, probably they went into a drawer someplace and eventually they were gone.

I asked my aunt [Frieda Siskin]—my mother's older brother [Abe's] wife—who just died, we just buried her in Chattanooga last week. I had asked her on several occasions if she ever saw any pictures of her husband's father, and she said, no. So, he was gone, he was killed and buried—he's buried in the cemetery there [BNai Zion Cemetery⁸]⁸—and that was it. I'm told by my aunt and by my mother, that the Siskins—and I say this because I think it's pretty well known—they were very controlling. Essentially, they didn't want her [Frieda] to get married, that's what I've heard. But, I think what that means is that they didn't want her to marry anyone they didn't approve of, because I can't believe they didn't want her to get married. Apparently, there was a *shadkhan*⁹ someplace, and a man came from New York. He had come from Europe, and he came down and she married him. So she was really on their list! My mother was—to a certain degree—on their list too. Although, by the time I came around, my mother was in very good favor with her cousins. They were very nice, and their children—who are my

⁶ Robert Hyman Siskin, a Jewish immigrant from Lithuania, founded the Siskin Steel company in Chattanooga in the 1890s. After his passing in 1926, his two sons—Mose and Garrison—took over the family business. The brothers became successful businessmen, and ultimately, major philanthropic donors to the Chattanooga community.

⁷ Yiddish word for temple or synagogue.

⁸ BNai Zion Cemetery in Chattanooga is often referred to as “The Old Jewish Cemetery”.

⁹ Yiddish word for a matchmaker who arranges a Jewish marriage.

counterparts—we're extremely close. We are really very close today, we talk all the time, e-mail, and I see them, and go to all their *Simchat [Torah]*¹⁰ and likewise. So, it worked out, but at that time, that was not the case. So, they were pretty poor, I guess. They did have a grocery store. Actually, I don't know if they . . .

Shirley: Did your mother work in the grocery store?

Perry: I don't know. She went to work. I think she took some courses in secretarial work and then she worked for a man named Mr. Moore, who owned a coal yard. She did his books [bookkeeping], she was the office person there. Coal yards were very small and only had one person to do the books, and probably answer the phone. The man who owned it did it, so she learned that business. My father, when they got married, he and his uncle—who was just a year or so older than he was—had a grocery store. My mother convinced him to open a coal yard because she knew the coal business. So they got married in 1931, and that was a horrible time to open a business of any kind, but they did. They got into the retail coal business.

Shirley: Let's talk about your dad for a minute. Tell me his name and where he was born.

Perry: My dad is Paul Myer—M-Y-E-R—Brickman. He was born in 1905 (my mother was born in 1907). He was born in Rokiškis—or they call it “Rockashik”—Lithuania. He came over to this country with his family¹¹. He had one older brother, and he had a younger brother who was born here, I think, and two sisters who were born here, and another brother—six [children]. So the older brother and he were born in Europe. They came over when he was about three or four years old. There were some relatives up in Massachusetts, and they settled in Worcester, Massachusetts. His dad—my grandfather—among other things, was in the shoe business, he repaired shoes. One of my daughters is our [family] genealogist, and she actually went out to the Mormon Temple¹², where they have all the records, in Utah. She found exactly where his store was in Worcester. And it was interesting, somebody else who was on the trip, it turned out that his parents bought the same store, it was the exact same location, and they bought it immediately after he left Worcester.

¹⁰ The *Torah* is the law of God as revealed to Moses and recorded in the first five books of the Hebrew scriptures (the Pentateuch). *Simchat Torah*—a Jewish holiday marking the conclusion of the annual cycle of public *Torah* readings and beginning of a new cycle—is a component of the Biblical Jewish holiday of Shemini Atzeret.

¹¹ Joseph Herschel Brickman was married to Reitze Michel Brickman (maiden name Levin). Their children were Isadore Brickman, Lewis Brickman, Rose Lillian Scheib (maiden name Brickman), Theodore Brickman, Frances Brickman, David Brickman, and Paul Myer Brickman (Perry Brickman's father).

¹² The Family History Library is a genealogical research facility in Salt Lake City, Utah. It is open to the public and operated by FamilySearch, the genealogical arm of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons).

What happened was, there were a whole bunch of kids, six kids, and in 1919 his mother died in the flu epidemic¹³ which was a worldwide epidemic. She is buried in Worcester. That left [my grandfather] with six kids. [My grandmother] was a Levin, and she also was known in Lithuania. She had family in Chattanooga. They—very, very nice of them—they offered to help him take care of his family if he would move to Tennessee, which he did. I think my dad must have been about ten or so when he came down. I’m not sure about that, but he was a young man. Even when he was older, he didn’t have a southern accent, but he certainly didn’t have a Jewish accent. He had sort of a neutral [one]. But, you know, you think your dad is the smartest man in the world. He didn’t know how to say aunt [pronounced “ant”], he said aunt [pronounced “ahnt”]. (laughing)

Shirley: With a Boston accent. (laughing)

Perry: Yes. That was about the only thing that he said that was different. He said “ahnt” because he was raised in Massachusetts.

He came down to Chattanooga and—I never talked to him about what he did as a boy—I mean, we just really didn’t. We should have, but we didn’t. He was friends with my mother’s older brother, and one day, the older brother said, “Come on over to the house,” and he met my mother there. That’s how they met, and ultimately got married.

Shirley: She talked him into opening a coal yard?

Perry: Yes. Actually, his dad, as I said, was in the shoe business and when he came down to Chattanooga—I have a picture of him, a *great big* picture, of my grandfather in a shoe store in Chattanooga where he repaired shoes, you can see this tremendous amount of shoes—he was in that business. But, when I knew him, as a young boy—I remember him—he was in the grocery business, a small little grocery store. And my dad had another grocery store with his uncle, who was his mother’s younger brother, who came to this country a lot later than the rest of them. He was a Levin like them—Uncle Nathan¹⁴. The two of them were friends and remained friends until my uncle died and my dad died. So, that’s how they got married. They met in Chattanooga.

Shirley: Did they ever speak Yiddish, Russian, Lithuanian?

¹³ The 1918 influenza pandemic, known as the Spanish Flu (January 1918 – December 1920) was the first of two pandemics involving the H1N1 influenza virus. It infected 500 million people worldwide, killing 50-100 million (3-5% percent of the world's population), and making it one of the deadliest natural disasters in human history.

¹⁴ Reitze Michel (Levin) Brickman was sister to Izrael Shavel Levin; Leybe Levin; Abe Levin; Joseph Levin; Fannie (Levin) Brody; Isadore Levin, and Nathan Levin.

Perry: Yes. Here's the way it went. I don't want to say anything I'm not really sure about. Some people remember things better than others, and I'm terrible, I'm just really bad about that. But I can say that I certainly learned a lot of Yiddish¹⁵ words. I knew a lot of Yiddish words, so I had to have learned them someplace. I know I learned them a few different places, and I know a lot more Yiddish now. I can't understand everything. I can write and read, but it's really, principally, because my wife is totally fluent in Yiddish and she really taught me to understand [it]. Because she speaks to me, and leaves me notes—most of the time—in Yiddish, even now. She went to a Yiddish school. I went to Hebrew School.¹⁶ One year we did have a teacher in *cheder*¹⁷ who taught us how to read and write Yiddish.

My dad was a fluent Yiddish speaker. My mother, she understood *every single thing*, but refused to speak Yiddish. I think my dad spoke to her in front of us, probably, for the same reason. I do know that every Sunday or so, when we would go over to my grandparents—my mother's parents'—house, my dad would sit . . . I have a vision of him right now, sitting over on the sofa with my grandmother. They would go for each other right away, and they would sit there and talk in Yiddish. He spoke a really pretty Yiddish, they both did, because they were Lithuanians. That's supposed to be like [Yiddish spoken in] Iowa is to English, in the United States, it's free of a lot of accent. You hear a Polish person, or Germans, they speak a very different kind [of Yiddish]. You know Betty Goodfriend?

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: She speaks this perfect Lithuanian Yiddish. In Chattanooga, most of the people were from Lithuania. When my wife first came up there, she thought she would score big points by talking to them in Yiddish, which she did. But, I think it almost fractured their eardrums, because she was speaking in a Polish Yiddish, and (laughing) they had to get used to it.

Shirley: They had to get used to her accent just like people do [with] the southern accent.

¹⁵ Yiddish is a language used by Jews in central and eastern Europe before the Holocaust. It was originally a German dialect with words from Hebrew and several modern languages. Today it is spoken mainly in the U.S., Israel, and Russia.

¹⁶ Hebrew school can be either the Jewish equivalent of Sunday school (an educational regimen separate from secular education, focusing on topics of Jewish history and learning the Hebrew language), or a primary, secondary or college level educational institution where some or all of the classes are taught in Hebrew.

¹⁷ A *cheder* is a traditional elementary school teaching the basics of Judaism and the Hebrew language.

Perry: And when I started talking with them, I was really talking to them more like she talked, and they couldn't understand that either. So I didn't understand why my dad said, "All right, get up." (telling him it was time to leave). So, everything comes around, you know.

Shirley: Right.

Perry: So, that's the Yiddish part. It was not [spoken] at home very much, no.

Shirley: Tell me a little bit about your sister.

Perry: Well, I was raised in a little apartment in downtown Chattanooga. A lot of people lived in downtown, and the *shul* was maybe three blocks away from our apartment. My cousins lived in a house—a pretty house—right on the Tennessee River, which was maybe six blocks away from where we were. By now in Chattanooga, where we were is where the University of Chattanooga expansion is, and it's near a lot of the real pretty places where they have art shops and stuff like that. But back then, it was just a little apartment. A lot of people lived over there. It was nice.

I was born [when they lived in that apartment]. Then they moved from there, when I was about three and a half years old, to the north side of town where a lot of people were moving. It was across the river. There was a bridge there, and then another two or three miles, and there was a really nice house! They got it, I'm told, on auction. You know, everybody lost everything . . .

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: . . . in the Depression¹⁸. So, I think the city—or whoever owned it—the bank [auctioned it], and they got it for . . . Well, nobody had much money, but if you had *anything*, you could get really great values, so, they did. My sister, when she was born, that's probably one of the few things I remember from back then. I remember her coming home. They brought her home with my mother in the ambulance. That's the way they brought people home, and I was there. I remember seeing her for the first time. She was brought home to that new home which we had been in for a couple of months, I guess.

Shirley: How much younger than you?

Perry: Three and half years, about three and a half years.

Shirley: Let's put her name . . .

¹⁸ The Great Depression was the worst economic downturn in the history of the industrialized world, lasting from 1929 to 1939. It began after the stock market crash of October 1929, which sent Wall Street into a panic and wiped out millions of investors.

Perry: Her name was Rita—she’s not living—Rita Brickman Golden, G-O-L-D-E-N. She later married someone from Columbus, Georgia, whose parents were from Chicago [Illinois]. His name is Sid Golden, that’s her husband’s name. They live in Tampa, Florida, and they have three children, three girls. She died at age 42; she had malignant melanoma¹⁹. She was *the* sweetest person!

Shirley: Were you all very close growing up?

Perry: Oh yes, and she—you know—being a girl, we didn’t have any sibling rivalry or anything like that. We were very close, and she could handle me, because she could handle anybody. She was just so sweet. She was able to have anything she wanted, just by being nice, which she was.

We had a maid who came to us when I was six weeks old. Everybody seemed to have a maid back then.

Shirley: Black²⁰?

Perry: Black lady, and her name was Evelyn. She came [to us] when I was six weeks old, from my dad’s uncle and aunt, who lived in Chattanooga. They fell on hard times and they just couldn’t afford to keep her. In fact, they had three boys; the younger one who is about a year or so older than I am, we still are in touch. He married a girl from Chattanooga, but he lives up in Massachusetts. They had to send him to an orphanage in Louisiana. Back then, Jewish orphans, they had a lot.

Shirley: We had a Jewish Orphanage²¹.

Perry: He was sent there. Actually, he was taken care of very well, because most of them were sent to the best schools—private schools—down there. His two older brothers stayed with family. But, they had to give up the maid. It’s almost like, you know, a slave.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: . . . you trade your slaves. But, she [Evelyn] was brought up on a farm in Tennessee. Her mother owned a farm. She knew how to read and write, and she was very, *very* refined. She was like my mother (a mother to me). I mean, she didn’t live in the house . . .

¹⁹ Melanoma is a type of cancer that typically occurs in the skin.

²⁰ African-American

²¹ Many Jewish orphanages were established in the mid-nineteenth century in U.S. cities with significant Jewish populations. Jewish philanthropists founded child-care institutions to accommodate growing numbers of dependent Jewish children who, it was feared, would otherwise be reared in non-Jewish asylums and lost to the Jewish community.

Shirley: She raised you.

Perry: . . . but she raised me. My mother went to work, and she raised us and cooked for us. She could cook Jewish food. She learned how to do that over at my aunt and uncle's house. She was a jewel, she really was. But she and my sister—I was talking about my sister—I mean, they were [very close], it was incredible. My sister was always promising her that when she got married she would buy her a house and give her a car and all. You know how . . .

Shirley: . . . kids are.

Perry: Yes. But, she really loved us, because she had no children. She had a first marriage that didn't work out, with no children. Then later, when I was already about 15 or so, she married a nice man who used to come pick her up in his car. He taught me how to drive, as a matter of fact, he let me drive his car. So, she was really great.

We'd get on the bus and go with her to town, and back then the seating arrangements on buses were such that, there was separate seating²². But a lot of people don't realize that they did allow the Blacks and Whites to sit together, *if* the children would sit in the back. They allowed that, so we'd sit with Evelyn in the back of the bus. That happened a lot.

Shirley: Tell me a little bit about the kinds of things you did as a boy in Chattanooga. When she took you downtown, what did you do?

Perry: I don't remember exactly, it wasn't to shop or do anything like that. It wasn't that often that she took us, but when she did, it was probably to take us down to my dad's coal yard, which was just a couple blocks off the main street. Coal yards had to be on a rail line, and the railroads in Chattanooga had two stations that were gorgeous back then. Stations were great because that's the way people traveled. One of them was just like Europe, like the *Bonnhaupt* [*Bonn Hauptbahnhof*]²³, the huge place. Right now it's where they have the Chattanooga . . .

Shirley: Chattanooga Choo Choo²⁴.

²² Segregation is the practice of requiring separate housing, education and other services for people of color. Segregation was made law several times in 18th and 19th-century America as some believed that black and white people were incapable of coexisting. The Civil Rights Movement in the mid 1950s to late 1960s, and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, helped to fight segregation in public places and banned employment discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin.

²³ *Bonn Hauptbahnhof* is a railway station located on the left bank of the Rhine River, and the principal station serving the city of Bonn, Germany.

²⁴ The Chattanooga Choo-Choo Historic Hotel is a former railroad station currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places. *Chattanooga Choo-Choo* is also a song written by Mack Gordon in 1941 and composed by Harry Warren, originally recorded as a big band/swing tune by Glenn Miller and His Orchestra.

Perry: You know how beautiful that open place is, that was our railroad station then. They had one on the other side of town and the railroads came by there. So she probably just took us to the coal yard or something. Later we did it by ourselves, we were able to do that. Our family only had one car, so my dad left early in the morning, about 5:30. In the wintertime you have to get there early so you can get all the coal out for peddlers. But she [Evelyn] was really great.

We lived in a neighborhood that we moved over to in north Chattanooga. Looking back, there were quite a number of Jewish people on that block. One of my best friends lived there. I'd say there must have been about six or seven families, on both sides of the street.

Shirley: Was it near the synagogue?

Perry: No, no, it was several miles away. So you couldn't walk by then. There were a couple of Catholic families, three Catholic families, on that block. That was, I think, more unusual than the Jewish thing. Because, I tell people this now and they just don't understand, unless they were raised in the South. When they ask how we were treated as Jewish people . . . we had our little things, I mean, a few fights, beat up a few times going to school. Names didn't mean anything to you . . .

Shirley: . . . that, you heard all the time.

Perry: They got tired of even saying it probably. But, it was *not* difficult at all being Jewish. I'm sure there was *no way* my parents—not that they were going to—but they could not get into any clubs, or country clubs, or anything like that. But, there was not that expectation, so you didn't feel let down. We were not treated bad. They think, well, who would be the ones [who were treated poorly]? The Blacks? Yes, to a certain extent. But they wouldn't be [bothered] if they “quote” *minded their own business*. They didn't have a problem. The ones that were disliked more than anybody else were the Catholics. The Protestants *hated* the Catholics, and that's theological, I mean . . .

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: . . . the Mary thing²⁵, you know. So Catholics, Blacks, and Jews. So we really didn't have a bad time at all.

Shirley: What did you do for recreation?

²⁵ Members of the Catholic Church honor the Blessed Mother (Mary, the mother of Christ) and consider her the model of perfect love and obedience to God.

Perry: Oh, we had fun. We played in the streets. We threw rocks, we had rock fights (chuckles) and rode bicycles and skates. And my best friend and I, we played a ballgame.

Shirley: What was his name?

Perry: His name was Shelton Ableman. He lives here in Atlanta. He goes by Mark now, but we called him Shelton. They were a nice family, and they came to Atlanta too. But we played a baseball game where he was the National League and I was the American League²⁶, and we just played forever and ever, for years. His folks ran a little ready-to-wear store²⁷ downtown. That whole family did. Their cousins, they all had stores. Some in Chattanooga, some in Lafayette, Georgia, and Ringold and Dalton. They brought him home the comic books. I never had a comic book in my life. My folks did not spend money frivolously. We didn't at all. His folks gave him every *Batman*, *Captain Marvel*, *Superman*²⁸, [comic], everything. So I would go down there on the swing and just read them all. (laughing). So that's what we did for fun, we played ball.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: And I played what they called Model Baseball, it was Little League²⁹, that's what they call it now. We'd play down at the ball fields, and on Sundays later on, the Jewish people would play ball. It was sort of a mixed crowd, boys and men, and we'd play softball on Sunday. Then later, they had a Jewish Community Center³⁰ and we'd play basketball and all the things that you do there.

Shirley: Any clubs?

Perry: AZA³¹, yes, and the girls had BBG. There was only one chapter, so the young boys were in with the older boys. It's that same old thing, is it good or bad? They change all the time, you know how they do.

Shirley: Right, yes.

²⁶ The American League (AL) and National League (NL) are the two professional baseball leagues that make up Major League Baseball (MLB) in the United States and Canada.

²⁷ Ready-to-wear (or in France, prêt-à-porter), is high-end clothing available to purchase in store fronts or department stores. Ready-to-wear is a more affordable alternative to custom made designer clothing.

²⁸ Batman, Captain Marvel, and Superman are popular superhero characters from the two major comic book publishers in America, DC Comics and Marvel Comics.

²⁹ Little League Baseball is a non-profit organization and the world's largest organized youth sports program.

³⁰ A Jewish Community Center offers programs, events, and classes for Jewish families.

³¹ Aleph Zadik Aleph (AZA) is an international youth-led fraternal organization for Jewish teenage boys. Its sister organization for teenage girls is B'nai B'rith Girls (BBG). B'nai B'rith Youth Organization, now BBYO, is an umbrella organization including Jewish teens in both AZA and BBG.

Perry: It was like girls and boys in school. There can be good reasons why they should be [together] and good reasons why they shouldn't be. So you could say that we were influenced by the older boys, by hearing what they said or what they claimed they did. (laughing). On the other hand, when they were debating or anything like that, you also were influenced by people who knew how to express themselves.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: So, it was good for that.

Shirley: Tell me about your education. You went to Baylor?

Perry: Well, actually, I went to public schools. My first six years, I went to a place that was about two miles away. We caught a bus halfway there and walked the rest of the way. When it was really bad weather—snow or something like that—my dad would send a coal truck over and a few of us would get into the truck and go to school. So, it was six years in grade school . . .

Shirley: Do you remember the name of it?

Perry: Oh yes, Normal Park Elementary School. It's still there, it's still a school. We just had a 50-year reunion of the high school there. It turned out there were 21 of us who were in the first grade [together]. It wasn't our reunion, but there were 21 people who were in the first grade at Normal Park. That's unbelievable.

Shirley: It is.

Perry: So, it was great.

Shirley: Tell me about high school.

Perry: It was a good school. I have really good memories of that. I really enjoyed it.

Shirley: Any special teacher?

Perry: Oh, all of them, they were good. I've written them down. You know, finally I decided that whenever I think of a name I'm going to write it down, so I have all the names of the teachers there. But, my teachers were all good. I liked them, and I liked school. We had a lady who was our principal and she would, if you misbehaved or something, you'd get sent there and she'd whack your hand (chuckles) or something like that.

Shirley: And how many times did your hand get whacked? (chuckles)

Perry: Not too often. I would get picked up at school there after 3:00 o'clock to go to *cheder*. That was not . . .

Shirley: Who picked you up?

Perry: Well, it was a taxicab, and Huey was the taxicab driver. Huey's wife worked as a maid for one of my cousins. Everybody . . .

Shirley: Everything was related.

Perry: Everything was related. He would pick me up, and I'm not sure whether there was another one going there or not, it seems like I was the only one. You've got to picture that, getting out [of school] and all these people walking around and they see a black taxi come up with a Black man to pick me up. They didn't know, they thought it was a chauffeur or something like that. Anyway, then we proceeded to go all over town to the different places where people went to school, and picked them up. Then he delivered us to *cheder*, which was just across the street from a *shul* which was a few blocks from where I was born and raised for years. So that's what we did.

Shirley: Describe the *cheder*.

Perry: Little room, there may have been ten people in the class. It was mostly memory [work], and they emphasized speed and accuracy. You learned the *Shema*³². You learned to say it as fast as you could and as correctly as possible. We did study a little bit together. My main advocate was a girl. Back then it was so small, and there weren't restrictions about girls and boys learning together. It was Orthodox—she lives in Memphis [Tennessee] now—we're all Orthodox. It was an Orthodox *shul*, no question about it, men and women were separated.

Shirley: Did they have *Atifah*³³, or did they have a balcony³⁴?

Perry: They had a balcony. Everybody who drove would drive to *shul* on *Yontif*³⁵ and they would park about three blocks away. It was not to hide anything, everybody knew, it was out of respect. You usually didn't park in front of the *shul*, if you drove, so you walked. You walked to *shul*, the three blocks.

Shirley: Yes.

³² The *Shema Yisrael* prayer is the first two words of a section of the *Torah*, and is the title of a prayer that serves as a centerpiece of the morning and evening Jewish prayer services.

³³ *Atifah* is the act of wrapping the Talit (a fringed garment traditionally worn by religious Jews) around oneself.

³⁴ A *mechitza* is a physical divider placed between the men's and women's sections in Orthodox synagogues and at religious celebrations. In some synagogues, a balcony (usually with a 3-foot wall) where women sit, serves the same function as a *mechitza*.

³⁵ *Yontif* refers to a Jewish holiday, especially one on which work is prohibited, and is a term most commonly used among Orthodox Jews.

Perry: So this girl, her folks had a little grocery store, and they lived over the store. And who knows, I started to say [her father was a] *shamus*³⁶, but I don't know what they did in their house. Anyway, they had a *kosher*³⁷ place. She later married a boy from Memphis [Tennessee]. She had a ton of kids and they were in AZA, BBG, and that's how they met. Most of them live in Israel now, and she has about—I don't know—50 grandchildren (chuckles) or something like that. So she was my *havruta*³⁸, she was my person I studied with.

Shirley: Your partner.

Perry: My partner. Most of the time we didn't treat the teachers very nice. The teachers who came were not major league because, who would come to Chattanooga? The biggest and best ones, I'm sure, were up in New York and around where they had large populations. Maybe once in a while we would get somebody who was from Palestine³⁹ and they knew how to speak Hebrew, but they never really taught us much. They probably could have taught us everything we learned in those six years in one year. It was not high quality stuff, but we didn't know any better. So we didn't treat the teachers very well. I didn't treat them bad, but I was part of the gang, and they'd throw things at them and all kinds of things. It was not good. (chuckles) I always liked the teachers, and I learned pretty well in Hebrew.

Shirley: You mentioned that [your partner's] family kept *kosher*. Did your family keep *kosher*?

Perry: No, my mother wouldn't. My dad would have, I'm sure, because my grandparents had. But my mother was just a really interesting person and I'm sure, as I told you before, she just went against the grain. She was extremely independent, not to show off or anything, she just was. People (chuckles) never called her before 10:00 o'clock in the morning. Her friends—they didn't dare—because if she wanted to sleep late, she'd sleep late. She didn't go to funerals, like a *Kohen*.⁴⁰ If you're a man, a *kohen* doesn't go to a cemetery.

³⁶ Yiddish term meaning "sexton of a synagogue," or a potent person next in influence only to the President.

³⁷ *Kosher* foods are those that conform to the Jewish dietary regulations of *kashrut* (a set of Jewish religious dietary laws). In a *kosher* kitchen there are separate dishes and utensils for dairy and for meat.

³⁸ Often, Jews study Jewish texts in pairs, a method known as *havruta* ("fellowship").

³⁹ Palestine is a sovereign state in Western Asia claiming the West Bank and Gaza Strip with East Jerusalem as the designated capital. The Israeli–Palestinian conflict is the ongoing struggle between Israelis and Palestinians that began in the mid-20th century. The origins to the conflict can be traced back to Jewish immigration and sectarian conflict in Mandatory Palestine between Jews and Arabs.

⁴⁰ A *Kohen* is a member of the priestly class in a Jewish synagogue. *Kohen* are prohibited to be defiled by coming in direct contact, or being in an enclosed space, with a dead body.

Shirley: Right.

Perry: Well, first of all, her daddy wasn't even a *kohen*. Everybody knew she didn't go to funerals, she just didn't like to. She'd go to the home afterwards, but no, she didn't come. I'd kid her and ask if she thought she was a *kohen*. Her dad was a *Levi*⁴¹—my grandfather was a *Levi*. That did not come to me because that comes through your . . .

Shirley: . . . father's side.

Perry: Incidentally, when her father was killed and her mother remarried, she also married a second *Levi*. So, all the Siskins are *Levites*, and that fits them real well. (laughing) So that was my mother, and no, she didn't have a *kosher* home. She had *treif*,⁴² actually. She had shrimp and she had bacon, but she never would have pork chops or anything like that, I mean, there was . . .

Shirley: . . . she had her line that she didn't cross.

Perry: A lot of people, as it turned out, did that. There were certain people that would not cross that line, but they had *schmaltz*⁴³, (laughing) that they got . . .

Shirley: . . .from the chicken. (laughing)

Perry: But they made all the Jewish stuff, so go figure.

Shirley: Tell me about high school.

Perry: I went to junior high school and that was only two blocks away from my house. That was great, and I enjoyed that. Then I went to a public high school and most of the Jewish kids went to that particular high school, or maybe one other. It was called Chattanooga High School. It was also not very far from where the *shul* was. I went there for three years of high school.

Shirley: Six, three, and three.

Perry: Elementary, three and three. So I went the first year and it was already in the late 1940s. My dad told me he wanted me to go to summer school. He wanted me to graduate early so I could get into college early, and the reason for that was the “winds of war” were already

⁴¹ A *Levi* is a Jewish male descended patrilineally from the Tribe of Levi, which descended from Levi, the third son of Jacob and Leah.

⁴² *Treif* is the Yiddish word for any form of non-kosher food.

⁴³ *Schmaltz* is clarified chicken or goose fat used for frying or as a spread on bread in Central European and Jewish cuisine.

here. It was post World War II⁴⁴, but the Korean War⁴⁵ was already brewing. He was kind of a pacifist⁴⁶, particularly for me. His idea was that if you get into college, you're going to be deferred.⁴⁷ [We thought] they weren't going to take anybody out of high school, but you never knew.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: So he encouraged me to go to Baylor⁴⁸, which was a military school, a boy's school. They had a summer school and it was a real good summer school. There were no uniforms or anything during summer school—nothing except school—and most of the teachers there earned extra money by teaching summer school. They were the first-line teachers. So, I did [go], and it was good, it was very challenging. I did real well in the first year. So I went to Chattanooga High School for a year, but I went to summer school the summer before I started there. Then I went the summer after my first year. Then, all of a sudden, I had enough credits to move from being in the 10th grade to the 12th grade. In other words, I'd be one year ahead of everybody I had ever gone to school with. It gave you kind of a funny feeling, being ahead. I think probably that's what played into my mind. But I did go, and I felt a little funny doing that.

Shirley: Did you go to Chattanooga [High School]?

Perry: Yes, I went to Chattanooga, and I showed up there for the first day, so I matriculated⁴⁹.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: Then my parents got a phone call from Baylor, the military school, and they said a boy dropped out for the senior year, would I like to come for my senior year? So when I came home, my parents told me that if I wanted to do that, they'd send me to Baylor. I knew a bunch of boys, my friends, who went there the whole time. So, in the back of my mind I thought I was

⁴⁴ World War II was a global war that lasted from 1939 to 1945. The vast majority of the world's countries eventually formed two opposing military alliances: the Allies and the Axis. By the end of the war, more than half of the Jewish population of Europe had been killed by the Nazis (political party of the mass movement known as National Socialism, an extreme racist and authoritarian group) in the Holocaust.

⁴⁵ In 1950 communist North Korea invaded South Korea. The United States came to the aid of South Korea and Communist China and the Soviet Union supported North Korea. The war ended three years later in a stalemate.

⁴⁶ A pacifist is a person who believes that war and violence are unjustifiable.

⁴⁷ In relationship to the draft, deferment means the act of delaying or postponing military service.

⁴⁸ Baylor School is a private, coeducational prep school in Chattanooga, Tennessee for students in grades 6-12, including boarding students in grades 9-12. Baylor was a military school until 1971 and became co-ed in 1985.

⁴⁹ Matriculation is the formal process of entering a university, or of becoming eligible to enter by fulfilling certain academic requirements.

showing off a little bit. Maybe going would have been a little uncomfortable. I did like it over there. So, all of a sudden I just picked up and left. I hadn't been [at Chattanooga] but for a couple of days, and I went.

I didn't know but a few of them, but I was a senior in a military school. You have to understand, these boys had gone there six years or so. They had earned their stripes and even, maybe, had become officers in the military. And there I was, I didn't even have a stripe. So that was kind of strange because I always was challenged. I tried to do as well as I could in almost anything, and obviously, I was at the bottom of the totem pole there. But what could you expect? I just learned how to march with the rest of them. They had rifles and you learned how to clean your rifle and do all that. But in the classroom there wasn't a problem at all, and before you knew it, the year was over.

There were a couple of very difficult things there that I think it's worth noting. One of them was that they had chapel. When I was in junior high school, I remember when we took Bible, if there was Old Testament we took it, and when it was New Testament⁵⁰, it was just not a problem. My parents sent a letter and they put us in another room.

Shirley: What did you do during that time?

Perry: Study or read.

Shirley: Like a study hall?

Perry: Yes. But I do remember they had a radio station out in Chattanooga and they had a contest where all the schools battled. I was chosen to represent the school in the Old Testament part. You'd come home with a loaf of bread and all the things that sponsors gave you. So I had been accustomed to being in classes. and you live through the Christmas stuff. You know, everybody handles it.

Shirley: It was part of it.

Perry: It was just part of it, and you knew every song, and whatever. (laughing).

Shirley: Did you say The Lord's Prayer⁵¹ in elementary school?

Perry: Yes, I'm sure we did, but I didn't know what that was.

Shirley: You didn't know what it was? It was part of . . .

⁵⁰ The Christian Bible has two sections, the Old Testament (the original Hebrew Bible, the sacred scriptures of the Jewish faith written between 1200 and 165 BC), and the New Testament (books written by Christians in the first century AD). Christians study both Old and New Testament, while Jews only study Old Testament.

⁵¹ The Lord's Prayer is a venerated Christian prayer which, according to the New Testament, Jesus taught as the way to pray.

Perry: Yes, but I thought it was Old Testament, to tell you the truth.

Shirley: (laughing)

Perry: Anyway, by the time we got to military school, they had chapel every day, and then vespers, or whatever it is. So you had to sit there, and then one student cadet was asked each day to read a certain thing. All of a sudden, I became aware that it was going to be my time. But I don't think I ever did get up there. I must have said something to them and I was exempt from having to do that. They didn't give me a hard time.

Shirley: Where there other Jewish students?

Perry: A few but not a lot. I can remember two other things I'll mention that are unique. One was, we went to school on *Pesach*⁵². But even at that military school, *Pesach* was . . . I had never in my life eaten *chametz*⁵³. To this day, I've never eaten *chametz* on *Pesach*. Even though I lived in a non-kosher home, my folks would never have anything like that. They had *matzo*⁵⁴ and stuff like that, and we did all the holidays—there was no question that *Pesach* was a big thing. We'd go to my grandparents, and all that. Anyway, they packed me a lunch. Even when I was in the first six grades, I took my lunch to school. On *Pesach* it was *matzo*, but in military school, I did not. I remember they had chicken ala king and the first day of *Pesach*. I just didn't eat it at all because it was on the bread. I just didn't.

Shirley: Yeah.

Perry: I just drank whatever they had, tea, or whatever it was. And the next day, everybody in that school was sick except me.

Shirley: (laughing)

Perry: The chicken was so spoiled, or something, or it could have been the bread.

Shirley: Oh my goodness.

Perry: But because of the bread, I didn't eat the chicken. I can remember thinking, that was really a message to me.

Shirley: (laughing) Keep *Pesach*.

⁵² *Pesach*, also called Passover, is a major, biblically derived Jewish holiday. Jews celebrate Passover as a commemoration of their liberation by God from slavery in ancient Egypt and their freedom as a nation under the leadership of Moses.

⁵³ *Chametz* are leavened foods that are forbidden on the Jewish holiday of Passover.

⁵⁴ *Matzo*, or *matzah*, is an unleavened flatbread that is part of Jewish cuisine and forms an integral element of the Passover festival.

Perry: Yes. I think most of the Jewish boys ate the chicken and they got sick too, but I didn't.

The other thing was that, maybe six weeks in—it was in the fall of that one year I was there—a horrible thing happened at school. There was a polio⁵⁵ epidemic, and we had small classes. It was a great school, a fabulous school. Great teachers, small classes. My first year of college, if I had wanted to, I didn't even have to crack a book. It was the same thing repeated, at Emory [University]⁵⁶.

So it was a terrible thing, and a few boys in my English class came down with polio. We were sitting right near them, right next to them. Everybody who got sick was on the football team, the varsity football team, which I was not. The boy who was an officer in the Cadet Corps, he was captain of the football team, and president of the class—he died. They sent him home to Knoxville [Tennessee]. His dad was a physician and they thought he had meningitis, and he did, but he had polio too, and he died. About five of them became paralyzed to a certain extent. Three of them were post graduate students. What they did at Baylor was keep them an extra year. They were taking an extra year to prime them to go to Georgia Tech⁵⁷. They had an arrangement, and a lot of boys went there. Tech gave them their scholarships anyway, if they had signed up. But we had a few that were sick, so they sent us home and we took at least six to eight weeks.

<End Tape 1 Side 1>

<Begin Tape 1 Side 2>

Shirley: This is Shirley Michalove speaking with Perry Brickman on January 25th. This is side two of the first tape.

Shirley: Perry, we were talking about when you were at Baylor and many in your class got polio.

Perry: Yes, at least five or six did. It was terrible. The president of the class died. So they sent us home, and we learned by correspondence. There was not e-mail then, and they just sent

⁵⁵ In the 1940s and 1950s the polio epidemic caused 2,720 deaths in the U.S. and 42,173 cases in Canada and the U.K. Polio is a crippling and potentially deadly infectious disease that affects the brain and spinal cord, causing paralysis. Jonas Salk discovered a vaccine for the disease in 1955.

⁵⁶ Emory University is a private, coeducational research university in Atlanta, affiliated with the United Methodist Church.

⁵⁷ The Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech), is a public research university in Atlanta, Georgia, and is part of the University System of Georgia.

your lessons to you by mail. You learned by your textbooks, and you sent your mail back to them and that's how you did it. Finally, we reconvened.

Recently the Baylor boys somehow convened, a lot of them. Correspondence, not between us, but official correspondence was from the school to the families and the kids. It was a really poignant thing.

It was touch and go because some people got really ill, and back then, polio was feared. We didn't have vaccines or anything like that. You didn't go swimming in the summer time. What happened was these boys were all football players and they practiced on the playing field. Baylor was a sprawling campus and it was probably previously pasture land. There were horses in an adjacent field, and they think that the flies from the horses brought the disease over to the boys, and they got it that way. An epidemiologist⁵⁸ nowadays [would have no question]. I think that's what happened.

Shirley: So, you . . .

Perry: We graduated on time.

Shirley: What year?

Perry: I graduated in 1949. That was a year earlier than I would have graduated. My natural class would have been 1950. I went to their reunion—the 50th reunion—a couple of years ago, and that was really great. I've not seen most of those people for a long, long time. I really felt, to be honest with you, I was *much*, much closer to them than I was to the boys at Baylor. The boys that I went to school with were probably in three categories. We had day students like I was, and most of them were pretty well-to-do, prosperous families, non-Jewish mostly. There were boarders, boys that were sent—some from South America, some from small towns—by well-to-do people in small towns in Mississippi [for example] where the public schools were not all that good, so they sent them there. So we had boarders, and some of them were good and some of them were bad. Then we had boys that were probably sent there because of management reasons.

Shirley: Military school was supposed to be the answer back then.

Perry: That was supposed to be the thing, yes. I didn't live in the dormitories. I knew the teachers and the professors there. But they did things, I'm sure, equivalent to what the kids do now. They did have a smoking area, I remember, at school. It was little, maybe four people could

⁵⁸ An epidemiologist studies the distribution and determinants of health and disease conditions in defined populations.

stand in this exposed area in the quadrangle. It was open, and you could get in there and smoke. But there was a requirement to get in that. It was unofficial because the school couldn't have had this, but they turned their heads I'm sure. To be able to smoke, you had to let someone put a cigarette out in your stomach, on your skin.

Shirley: Oh, wow.

Perry: So, from time to time you'd see these boys—when we were in gym—with a big terrible scab, where they burned themselves.

Shirley: From cigarettes.

Perry: Yes, but if you wanted to smoke, that was the manly thing to do. I didn't. I didn't like the idea . . . (laughing).

Shirley: . . . of the cigarette in the stomach or the taste of the smoke? (laugh)

Perry: Well, I didn't much care for the smoke either. My mother smoked, and I tried a couple of times. We'd go out in the woods and get some rabbit tobacco and things like that, but I couldn't do it.

Shirley: I want to backtrack for just a minute. Tell me about your *bar mitzvah*⁵⁹.

Perry: Well, I tried to find something that I still have, and I can't put my fingers on it—I've got to find it—it's my speech. It was typed out, and it was in 1945. It's funny, I have selective memory, I guess. The boys in *cheder* were all *bar mitzvahed*. Chattanooga was not a big town, but there was a very Reformed, Classic Reform Germans, and then Europeans⁶⁰. I don't think there were any of the Temple people in AZA, for instance. They must have had their own youth club, and you knew a few of them through school, but we didn't play ball, they didn't come to the Center, I don't think. We just didn't know them. My dad, I remember, delivered coal to a few of the people so, in commercial things you might have known them. But there was almost no marriage between the two, there wasn't any intermarriage between the Reform and [Orthodox⁶¹], so we really didn't know them. I don't think those boys had *bar mitzvahs* at all.

But all of us were *bar mitzvahed*. I mean, even the worst boy, the one in a million, they were all *bar mitzvahed*. Don't ask me what we had to do for the *bar mitzvah*. I know I did a

⁵⁹ *Bar mitzvah* is a Jewish coming-of-age ritual for boys, aged 13. *Bat mitzvah* is the corresponding ritual for girls.

⁶⁰ Reform Judaism is a liberal strand of Judaism characterized by a lesser stress on ritual and personal observance, a regard for Jewish Law as non-binding and the individual Jew as autonomous, and an openness to external influences and progressive values. The origins of Reform Judaism come from 19th-century Germany.

⁶¹ Orthodox Judaism is the traditionalist branch of contemporary Judaism. Theologically, it regards the *Torah*, both written and oral, as literally revealed by God on Mount Sinai and faithfully transmitted ever since.

*haftorah*⁶² because I remember going downtown to the *cheder*, the special teacher, and he was in a little apartment. I can remember that. Most poor people didn't have much at all, and I can remember that it was not a pleasant memory of what he had to live in. So I know I did a *haftorah*, and I know the date that it was on.

I was born on the first day of *Hanukkah*,⁶³ so if you figured out what it should have been, I probably should have been *bar mitzvahed* about three weeks before when I was *bar mitzvahed*. But, being that I was born on December 23rd, and because in my 13th year the thing would have come out the first of December or late November . . . my mother had an aunt in Syracuse [New York] who was a caterist⁶⁴ and she was close to the family. She was *very* frugal, very much so. She was a great caterist and she agreed to come down to do everything. She could come during Christmas time because she wasn't going to be busy. So I'm sure they just decided to have it around Christmas time. Since the 23rd is my birthday, that sounded okay, and they had it on *Shabbat Vayechi*⁶⁵.

So, that was my *bar mitzvah*. I don't know whether I did the *Torah* reading at that time. I just can't remember. I don't know if they taught us how to read *Torah* then, but I know I did a *haftorah*, and I had the speech. It was really incredible. I'm sure the rabbi helped me with that because it was not me, and it was not my parents either. There were some interesting things. It was 1945, and that was right after the war was over, and there were mentions of the State of Israel⁶⁶. There wasn't even a State of Israel yet, but there were a number of references to hope for a place for the Jewish people. It turned out this rabbi was a top line guy. He left Chattanooga and got a better job up north and then he made *aliyah*⁶⁷.

Shirley: What was his name?

⁶² *Haftorah* is publicly read in synagogue as part of Jewish religious practice. The *haftorah* reading follows the *Torah* reading on each Sabbath and on Jewish festivals and fast days.

⁶³ *Hanukkah* is a Jewish festival commemorating the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem at the time of the Maccabean Revolt against the Seleucid Empire. It occurs sometime between late November to late December and is also known as the Festival of Lights.

⁶⁴ A caterist (also called a caterer) provides food service for functions like weddings, conferences, and parties.

⁶⁵ *Shabbat Vayechi* is the twelfth weekly *Torah* portion in the annual Jewish cycle of *Torah* reading and the last in the Book of Genesis. It is usually read the twelfth *Sabbath* after *Simchat Torah*, generally in December or January.

⁶⁶ Israel, a Middle Eastern country on the Mediterranean Sea, is regarded by Jews, Christians, and Muslims as the biblical Holy Land. Its most sacred sites are in Jerusalem. In 1948, David Ben-Gurion, the head of the Jewish Agency, declared "the establishment of a Jewish state in Eretz-Israel, to be known as the State of Israel."

⁶⁷ *Aliyah* is the immigration of Jews from the diaspora to the Land of Israel and Jerusalem. "Making *Aliyah*" refers to moving to the Land of Israel and is one of the most basic tenets of Zionism.

Perry: Israel Gerstein, and he moved later to Israel and both his children are still alive. His wife just died. But Mordecai is a physician, and his daughter, Hadassah, who was my age . . . It turned out later that I was with Rabbi Riskin . . .

Shirley: Schlomo . . .

Perry: Schlomo Riskin⁶⁸ over in Efrat. He's the chief rabbi, and it turns out his son married Hadassah's daughter.

Shirley: Wow.

Perry: Yes. Because when he was telling me about Chattanooga, he says, "Oh, did you know my Hadassah?" and I said, "Yes, I did." It's a small world. But I didn't get to meet her over there.

Anyway, he [Gerstein] must have helped me, because there were a lot of allusions and there were a lot of *barukh hashems* ("thank God")⁶⁹ and a lot of Hebrew expressions that weren't things that were said around my house. So it was really interesting, it was a pretty good speech.

Shirley: Back then, it seems to me, sometimes the rabbi would write the speech and you would read it. Do you think that might have happened?

Perry: Yes, it may have been, because occasionally the boys will do it, but they'll be high type and they'll be very good, be really good *haftorahs*. But other places I know, and not to mention any names, but all it is is, "Oh, I thank my folks who were always there when I needed them . . ."

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: ". . . and my little sister who . . .", you know, all these trivial things. It doesn't mean anything, it's just social. But this was a really good speech, I've got to put my hands on it again. But my *bar mitzvah* was pretty neat.

The *shul* was great. I went every *Shabbos*⁷⁰, even when my folks worked, I went to *shul* on *Shabbos*.

Shirley: Can you describe the inside?

⁶⁸ Rabbi Shlomo Riskin is a Modern Orthodox rabbi and founding chief rabbi of the Israeli settlement of Efrat in the West Bank.

⁶⁹ Hebrew for "Thank God", or more literally, "blessed be the name [of the Lord]."

⁷⁰ *Shabbos* or *Shabbat* is the Sabbath, Judaism's day of rest and seventh day of the week.

Perry: Oh yes I can. I remember on a Saturday night afterwards, we had a party downtown. It wasn't at the *shul*, it was at a Chinese restaurant. So all the boys and girls came, and that was a nice thing. They had a reception at my house and my Aunt Gertie, she did all the fancy New York stuff there, and it was really neat.

Shirley: Was this Saturday or Sunday?

Perry: That was Sunday, must have been, and at the *bar mitzvah*, they always had *kiddish*.⁷¹ I can remember, the *shul* was magnificent. It was a two story type and on the street it was on—which was in the University area—you walked up these large steps to go through the main doors which were open wide to the street. When you came in you could see all the lights, the outside lights, when you first came in. Then you went around and entered into the *shul*, and it was deep. It was a pretty good-sized *shul*. They had a balcony for the women. They had an elevator that nobody used on *Shabbos*, but that went from the basement—the bottom floor where the kitchen was, and also the daily *minyan*⁷², so you'd enter from the side there—but the elevator went from there to the upstairs. It must have been, maybe for people who couldn't walk? But I can't imagine they did that on *Shabbos*, and any other day, they wouldn't have been there. They wouldn't have had an event upstairs because the events were downstairs, so, I don't know. I'll have to ask that question. Maybe it was a *Shabbos* elevator, I don't know.

Shirley: (laughs)

Perry: All I can remember is, we had the typical Orthodox *shul*. The *bimah*⁷³ was in the center of the *shul*, just like AA⁷⁴ used to be. That's another story too.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: When I came here, I came from an Orthodox *shul*, and when I came to Emory, AA was downtown, and it was Orthodox. So I went to AA when I was a student here, and I was very comfortable there. Later on, when we came back, AA had already changed. But, I had sort of

⁷¹ *Kiddish* is a celebratory meal after synagogue or is a blessing to sanctify the *Shabbat*. A celebratory meal after synagogue is an example of *kiddish*.

⁷² A *minyan* refers to a quorum of 10 Jewish adults required for certain religious obligations. A Jewish boy of 13 may form part of a *minyan* after his *bar mitzvah*, and according to many non-Orthodox streams of Judaism, adult females can count in the *minyan*.

⁷³ The *bimah*, in Jewish synagogues, is a raised platform with a reading desk from which the *Torah* and *haftarah* are read on the *Sabbath* and festivals.

⁷⁴ Ahavath Achim Synagogue (AA), located in Atlanta, is one of the oldest Conservative synagogues in the region.

taken a hiatus from *shul* anyway. Being in the service⁷⁵ we didn't do it. So when we came back, it was already Conservative⁷⁶.

But, you asked me about the *shul*. So, I always sat with my Daddy and my Grandpa on *Yontif*, and a lot of the men wore hats. People in the street—I could see them in Chattanooga—anytime you walked on the street with a hat and a woman came by, you tipped your hat. And I remember, as soon as they got to “*Yismechu . . .*”⁷⁷ —I love that song even today—when they sang (sings: “*Yismechu . . .*”), I could smell the herring, wafting up from downstairs. And by that time, it was going to be *kiddish* pretty soon. So that's my favorite song because I can relate it to the smell. We'd go downstairs and they had a nice *kiddish*. They had a family—the Hasdens—Mr. Hasden, they called him a *shamus*, he and Mrs. Hasden, their house was sort of back of the *shul*. I think there was a *mikveh*⁷⁸ up above there too. We didn't know too much about that then. My mother, I'm sure, didn't know about that.

So Mrs. Hasden made the herring, and they had really *gehakte*⁷⁹ herring. It was chopped, not . . .

Shirley: It wasn't out of the Cuisinart⁸⁰ . . . (chuckles)

Perry: (chuckles) . . . it wasn't out of a can or jar. And she always had sprinkled eggs over the top of it, and they had *kichel*⁸¹—they were great *kichel*. I think my Aunt and Uncle owned a bakery there, so they may have provided the *kichel*. It was Manhattan Bakery, and they had it here in Atlanta. His father owned it here, but he had one in Chattanooga. So they had real *kichel*, and I mean they were big. They don't have them like that now.

Shirley: Yes, they don't make it now.

Perry: They make little half-sized sugary things now. But those were great. And then we'd play a little ball after *shul* was over. The boys would go off to the side and we'd play a little ball. Then I would walk over to my cousins' house, across on the west side of town. It was a good three-quarters of a mile. My folks were working at the coal yard and I'd walk over there. They

⁷⁵ “Being in the service” refers to actively serving in some branch of the military (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, etc.).

⁷⁶ Conservative Judaism regards the authority of Jewish law and tradition as emanating primarily from the assent of the people and the community through the generations, more than from divine revelation.

⁷⁷ Singing *Yismechu* is a reminder that observance of *Shabbat* is not a burden but rather a source of joy and delight.

⁷⁸ *Mikveh* is a bath used for the purpose of ritual immersion in Judaism to achieve ritual purity.

⁷⁹ *Gehakte* herring is chopped herring.

⁸⁰ Cuisinart is a brand name for a food processor.

⁸¹ *Kichel* is a popular sweet cracker or cookie in Jewish cuisine commonly made with egg and sugar rolled out flat and cut into large bowtie shapes.

kept a *kosher* home, my cousins. My mother's first cousin was a Siskin too. Her brothers were the sons of the man who had the big scrap iron place. Her name was Prigoff. She had married a man from Syracuse (New York) and I'd go over there and we'd have a good *Shabbos* lunch. Those were good times, I enjoyed that. My folks really did provide for me, I had the Jewish training and all.

Shirley: Okay, let's skip ahead. How did you choose Emory?

Perry: I think my mother was friends with some people here in Atlanta, and Emory was a big deal for the Atlanta people. I think they didn't want me to go too far away, but they wanted me to go to a good school. And they had already decided I was going to be a dentist. Because my dentist, Dr. Connell in Chattanooga, was my grandmother's—my mother's mother's—dentist when she came over. He was an elegant guy. My mother went to him, and I went to him, and I loved him. So they said, "Well, you've got to do something, so that's what you'll do."

Shirley: You had no say in it?

Perry: No. I never had any say. Emory had a dental school, and it was pre-dental. I remember, there was a man in Chattanooga who was an attorney who was an Emory person. And it was a big deal, they got him to write me a letter. My grades were good and I probably had registered. My mother had a really good friend, a lady here in town, who told her she'd take care of me. So I came to Emory. I was a year ahead, and it was just chosen. I don't even think I applied any place else.

Shirley: For how long?

Perry: Well, I came here and it was pretty nice. There was an interesting thing. There were a bunch of boys who were older because they had been in the Army.

Shirley: They were in on the G.I. Bill⁸² probably . . .

Perry: . . . yes, World War II. Then there were guys about a year older than I was, and then one or two of them were like me, about the same age. They had also skipped a year. But there were a lot of Jewish people. There were two Jewish fraternities⁸³ and almost everybody joined a Jewish fraternity. There was AEPi (Alpha Epsilon Pi) and TEP (Tau Epsilon Phi) and there were

⁸² The GI Bill (Servicemen's Readjustment Act), was signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1944. It provided veterans of World War II, funds for college education, unemployment insurance, and housing.

⁸³ Fraternities (for men) and sororities (for women) are social, professional, or honorary societies which draw their membership primarily from college or university students and commonly use letters of the Greek alphabet as names.

a few who were independents, they just did not join. One of my really good friends now, George Goldman—who lives right near us—he was an independent. But he’s still independent. (laughs)

Shirley: And you joined which?

Perry: AEPi. AEPi was not on fraternity row⁸⁴, it was not even a question. You wouldn’t even get a bid, you didn’t even go to any of the rush parties⁸⁵ of the other [fraternities]. They wouldn’t take you. There were no Jewish boys in non-Jewish fraternities. I think I am correct in saying zero. We had a boy in our fraternity from Macon [Georgia] who was just as Southern, and all of his friends were in KA (Kappa Alpha), and he talked to them all the time. They were friends, but he was in AEPi.

AEPi had a (fraternity) house off the campus on North Decatur Road, and you had to walk about six blocks to get there. All the rest of the guys were on campus. The TEP house was off Lullwater [Drive], I think. We rushed down there, so that was great.

We stayed in dormitories, in Alabama Hall. Then, the next year, in 1950 when we came to Emory, AEPi had a groundbreaking, and we actually lived in the (fraternity) house. They started building in early 1950 and when we came back in the fall, we were able to go into the new house on fraternity row. It was wonderful, it was really great. I loved the fraternity and later, I worked as an advisor when I finally came back in the 1960s. For about 20 years or more, I was one of the advisors to the boys. I see kids all the time now—I can joke—some of them are already retired. (laughs)

Shirley: Yes. (laughs)

Perry: They were my boys, and they became lawyers and doctors and accountants. I still see them. Allen Shaw and I were advisors for a long time, and Arnold Hoffman, he was an advisor for a year. Allen Shaw was really a big fraternity guy and Paul Aronin was active over at Georgia Tech. So, I had two good years at Emory. As a matter of fact, I met Shirley there.

Shirley: I was going to ask you, did you meet Shirley there.

Perry: Well, at that time, there were no girls at Emory—Emory was not co-ed [co-educational]. The only girls at Emory were in nursing school and a few of them would take

⁸⁴ Fraternity row refers to an area on a college campus where fraternities and sororities have houses where members live while they are at school.

⁸⁵ Rush is a series of social events and gatherings that allow prospective and current fraternity or sorority members to get to know each other.

classes with us in English, but most of their stuff was nursing school. Emory was a boy's school, as was Georgia Tech.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: I'm not sure about Georgia State [University], I just can't remember.

Shirley: No, Georgia State was co-ed.

Perry: But I'm not sure whether, I guess there was a Georgia State back then . . .

Shirley: . . . it was the Atlanta Division of The University of Georgia.

Perry: . . . University of Georgia, but when did that start?

Shirley: I don't remember. It was an old parking deck.

Perry: Yes, but I can't remember back in 1949, whether there was a Georgia State.

Anyway, at Agnes Scott [College] there were a couple of Jewish girls. So, you didn't really have any Jewish girls to date, except the high school girls, which the high school boys—Jewish boys—hated, because older boys were their competition.

Shirley: Right.

Perry: So I remember, it was common to go down and maybe crash, or be an observer at some of their parties—AZA, whatever they called it—DOZ⁸⁶. So, one night I decided to go down to the Georgian Terrace [hotel], which is right across from the Fox Theatre. They were having a sweetheart dance of one of the Jewish boys' organizations. I can remember where I was standing exactly, it was in that ballroom. This girl, who was their sweetheart, she was there and all the boys were dancing with her. And I guess I was smitten.

Shirley: Ohh (laughs)

Perry: (laughs) But it was just to see and watch, I wasn't invited, so it wasn't a matter of being able to dance or anything like that. But, this girl was really something!

<End Tape 1 Side 2>

<Begin Tape 2 Side 1>

Shirley: Perry, we were talking about the first time you saw Shirley, and found out who she was. How did you find out who she was?

Perry: I guess that was already in the spring of 1950, that was my first year there.

Shirley: Tell me what her full name was.

⁸⁶ Daughters of Zion (DOZ) is a Jewish social club and service organization for women.

Perry: Shirley Berkowitz⁸⁷. She was in a girl's club. She was not in DOZ, and I'm trying to think of the name . . .

Shirley: She was in BBG #176.

Perry: BBG #176, yes. So, I think—you know, boys don't remember things like girls do—but, I do remember that it was in the fall of the next year, which was my second year. There used to be intramural⁸⁸ football games up on the top level, right in front of where that big gym is now, over at Emory.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: That was a big area, and there was a game—I guess our senior guys were playing another team, and a few of the girls from town came out. That was not unusual for them to come. Shirley had never done it. She tells me that her girlfriends wanted her to come, and she never liked that, because she thought it looked like you were doing . . . what you were.

Shirley: Yes. (laughing)

Perry: (chuckles) But she came, and I saw her, and I walked over there and we had a conversation—she could tell you better than I could—I mean, it was just anything to start things up. It wasn't long after that, I think maybe there was a hayride or something that I invited her to. Then we started dating. Her birthday is in August, so I guess that was 1950. If she was born in 1935, maybe she was 15. I was thinking she was 13 when I saw her and 14 when I met her, but it may have been 14 and 15. She was still pretty young.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: I guess I was almost 18 then—because my birthday is in December—so I was 17. So, we started dating and we actually dated for a long time. We got married in 1955, but it started in 1950. But, that's how we did.

Shirley: How did you court her?

Perry: Well, we had dates, as long as I was here in Atlanta, and of course, she was very popular. I might have dated a few other girls, but she was really the only one. I mean, she was really special to me. But she was very, very popular, so I had to sort of wade my way through all that. (chuckles)

Shirley: You said, “when you were here.” After two years of Emory, what happened?

⁸⁷ Shirley Berkowitz Brickman was born in Atlanta, Georgia to parents Irving and Rose Berkowitz.

⁸⁸ Intramural sports are recreational sports organized within a particular institution, usually a college or university.

Perry: Well, up until then, everything that I'd ever done, I never had a problem with. I applied to dental school, and usually back then, it took four years of pre-dental. You could get in, in two years, but two years was the minimum. At that time, the competition was so great that most people it took three, mostly four, years to get into dental school. But, I did apply to dental school after two years—a bunch of people did—and I applied to Emory. They had a dental school here, and I got in after two years. But then, that was the time you really had to concentrate. I was very young and there were a lot of older people.

So this is the part—the part I'm going to talk about right now—is kind of a difficult part for me to talk about.

Emory is a very diverse school now. To tell you the truth, it's the opposite of what it was back then. When I was at undergraduate school, there is [no comparison]. And what I'm telling you now is not just hearsay. Herb Karp⁸⁹ has talked about this quite a bit. He gave a lot of data to the Jewish Community Service Center⁹⁰ some years ago. He has all the data, and I guess, if you ever had to pick somebody who absolutely no one would ever doubt . . .

Shirley: . . . yes . . .

Perry: . . . there's no question that Herb Karp—when he does something—he does it . . .

Shirley: . . . thoroughly.

Perry: . . . thoroughly. He was professor and chairman of the Department of Neurology at Emory, an Emory person all the way through it. So, when he says something, it's the truth, no questions asked. In this particular thing, he goes through and tells about the tremendous amount of antisemitism⁹¹ that was at Emory University. Actually—the strange thing about it is that—everybody knew about it, and yet, (chuckles) people still applied to the school.

Here's how it worked in the medical school, it worked a little different there. They had quotas⁹², and I'm sure they had quotas in the undergraduate too. By the way, Shirley was just

⁸⁹ Herbert Rubin Karp was a graduate of Emory University Medical School, a prominent neurologist in the Atlanta area, and Chair of Emory's Department of Neurology.

⁹⁰ The Atlanta Jewish Community Center was founded in 1910 as the Jewish Educational Alliance. In the late 1940's it evolved into the Atlanta Jewish Community Center and moved to Peachtree Street where it stayed until 1998. The center then moved to Dunwoody and in 2000 was renamed the Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta (MJCCA).

⁹¹ Antisemitism is hostility toward, or discrimination against, Jews as a religious or racial group.

⁹² Racial quotas are numerical requirements for hiring, promoting, admitting and/or graduating members of a particular racial group. Quotas are often established as means of diminishing racial discrimination, addressing under-representation and evident racism against those racial groups.

reading something recently by [Alan] Dershowitz⁹³—who is younger than I am—and he was talking about how there were quotas and a tremendous amount of antisemitism up in the Ivy League⁹⁴ schools, and how you couldn't get a job in some of them. So, it was all around, and it was known. People just accepted it and you went on and you tried your best, if you could get in.

In the medical school, there were quotas—they would just let two boys in, or whatever. But once you got in, for some reason or another, they didn't give you any problem. It's just that not too many people got in. They had to go down to the University of Georgia. I remember one boy living in a trailer—Stan Jonas—he and his wife were from Miami, and he went to Emory Medical School. That was the way it was in the medical school. If you got in, you would stay there.

The dental school was different. It became apparent that a *huge* amount of boys that went there, didn't make it through. Some of the cases were sad, because they would go one year and they'd make them repeat. So they'd take that over and pass. Then they'd pass the second year, and they'd take the third year, and they'd have to repeat. They'd take the third year, and get to the fourth year, and they'd flunk them out. So they went, maybe six years, and then didn't get through. It was really bad.

Now—you have to know that—to get in, you had to take this test on carving as well as the written test. That was not judged by Emory, that was a national thing. So, the people who got in had the innate skills, but Herb Karp showed the data. And during the worst part—which was in the 1950s —there were about 65% of the Jews who were flunked, and about 1.5% of the non-Jews [who flunked], or something like that.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: [Karp] showed their records before going in, and showed how [qualified they were]. It was terrible. I'm not saying this is the same thing, but we ask questions like, "How did the people in Europe [Jews before World War II] stay . . . why didn't they all leave? They could see what was happening. [The Nazis] systematically wouldn't let [professionals practice]. They gave them plenty of warning, yet they stayed on."

⁹³ Alan Dershowitz is an American lawyer and author known for his writings and media appearances in which he has strongly and often controversially defended civil liberties, in particular those regarding freedom of speech.

⁹⁴ The Ivy League refers to a group of colleges and universities in the northeastern U.S. that are widely regarded as high in academic and social prestige. They include Harvard, Yale, Pennsylvania, Princeton, Columbia, Brown, Dartmouth, and Cornell.

Well, [the Jews] thought it would get better. You know the story, you do that. I guess it's what happens if you're not threatened with your life or something like that. You think it's happening to somebody else.

So, because it was accepted in all the schools, all around [the country], you just dealt with it.

I got into Emory and I started in 1951 and it was a *disaster*. It was a horrible thing. All my life, to have no problem at any schools, but [at Emory] we were harassed from the beginning. The teachers would make antisemitic comments. One of my friends, his name was AJ—his initials—and they called him Abraham Jacob. Well, that's not hitting him, or anything like that, but if you're young, it's devastating to hear stuff like that. You're amongst all these other non-Jewish guys, and they didn't do anything to them.

So, when you're there it's not like having a house mother or anything like that. You're in your own part and you don't have people . . .

Shirley: You don't have a support system.

Perry: . . . well, and the thing about it is, all the non-Jewish boys had fraternities. They had houses, and they had exams—old exams you could study from. They had labs—which was against the law to take anything from school to do—but they all practiced, in the labs. They had older guys to teach them. We just didn't have that. They did have an Alpha Omega chapter there, but you couldn't get into a non-Jewish dental fraternity. You just couldn't, it was terrible.

So, to make a long story short, it was just terrible pressure. One or two of the boys just left after a couple of months. They said, "I don't need this!" and they just left. I wasn't going to be a quitter, but a friend of mine and I—they told us at the end of the year—not to come back. I remember my father came down and talked to the dean, but this dean, whose name was John Buhler⁹⁵, he was a real Nazi. He told my father there was no way I could stay. We asked him for records, and Buhler wouldn't show them to us. So, that was a horrible thing. I had to go home, it was so embarrassing, and that sort of interrupted my relationship with Shirley because I wasn't here. I went back to Chattanooga.

⁹⁵ John E. Buhler (dean of the Emory Dental School 1949 – 1959) implemented antisemitic practices resulting in Jewish students being flunked out of the Dental School or asked to repeat a year, despite their respectable grades. Buhler resigned in 1961 after administrators were confronted with the data, but Emory leaders at the time denied it was the result of his discriminatory actions. Buhler, who died in 1976, later became Dean of the University of South Carolina's dental program. The work of Perry Brickman, and others, was influential in bringing these injustices to light and facilitating change at Emory.

This was happening so much, the Anti-Defamation League⁹⁶ was working on it. And again, it was almost impossible to prove. A lot of it is abstract, it's not something that's easy to define. Particularly, the way they treated us. They [the ADL] was studying it and Emory would deny it. Everybody was in denial. Marvin Goldstein was one who really got busy on this thing, and Herb Karp got most of the stuff. He's got all the data, and there's a book⁹⁷ that was written on it. They finally had so much data that the ADL felt like they had enough to make a case. I know that Marvin Goldstein went to the president of the school, who was Goodrich C. White⁹⁸ at the time. I think they went to Boisfeuillet Jones,⁹⁹ who was a big guy there, and he didn't do much. But finally, they went to Goodrich C. White and he didn't want to acknowledge it. They showed him all the stuff, and said they were going to go public. So, to make a long story short, I think Goodrich White called the Dean [Buhler] in. He denied certain things, which they were able to prove, but he denied them all. They finally fired him. It was the first time ever, in the history of the United States, that a dental school dean was fired for that. They were having these problems at the University of Michigan, and other places. Many people had similar type things, but they never were able to enforce it or to bring it out. I think it was 1956 that finally this reached fruition. It took five years for them to do this, and it was an incredible thing. It was almost an impossible thing to prove, but they finally got this guy.

It's a difficult thing to talk about because there were some—a few, very few—Jewish teachers in the school at the time. There were a lot of things said. A lot of them called these guys quislings¹⁰⁰ and they backed up the dean. For the most part, though, everybody knew it was wrong. It was really bad. There were literally *scores* of guys who had their whole reputations ruined and never got to do anything. It's funny though, there were many cases where a boy was told his hands were no good. "The Jews don't know how to do things with their hands," and so on. But I have a good friend who got into medical school, and he did fabulous there.

⁹⁶ Founded in 1913 in response to an escalating climate of antisemitism and bigotry, the Anti-Defamation League's (ADL) mission is to protect the Jewish people and secure justice and fair treatment for all. ADL is a global leader in exposing extremism, delivering anti-bias education, and training law enforcement.

⁹⁷ Perry Brickman's book, *Extracted – Unmasking Rampant Antisemitism in America's Higher Education* describes the prevalence of antisemitism on college campuses and how it affected the dental profession in twentieth-century America.

⁹⁸ Goodrich C. White was President of Emory University from 1942 – 1957 and Chancellor from 1957 – 1979.

⁹⁹ Boisfeuillet Jones was Emory's dean of Administration, and a Vice President from 1946 to 1960. He was instrumental in creating The Emory Clinic in 1953, worked with President Lyndon Johnson to develop Medicare, and was head of multiple philanthropic foundations in Atlanta.

¹⁰⁰ A quisling is a traitor who collaborates with an enemy force occupying their country.

A number of us were very fortunate—really fortunate—to be able to, with help, get into other schools. That was almost unheard of because most of the schools would go by what the other school said. You had to have transcripts . . .

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: . . . but, through the good offices of different people like Marvin Goldstein and Irving Goldstein¹⁰¹ [we got in]. Taylor Minsk(sp.) <Tape 2 Side 1, 14:30> was already aware of this, so he can tell you about it. People don't like to talk about it nowadays, because Emory has the School of Hematology, all these Chairs of Genetic Study, and things like that. They don't want to talk about it, but the fact of the matter is, well . . . I can just tell you my own story.

I got into the University of Tennessee. I went back to Chattanooga, the University of [Tennessee at] Chattanooga, in 1951 and took a year. Then I got into [University of] Tennessee in 1953, so I only lost a year or so. But they still were a three-year school. All schools were, during the war, but they went all year around—36 months—and Tennessee was still there. So I finished in 1956, where normally I would have been through in 1955. I have a friend, Art Burns, who's from Hudsonville [Michigan]. He was really bright, and they did the same thing to him. He got into Temple University, because there were a lot of Jews there. Then he went to the University of Washington in orthodontics, and he did great. Just a few people were able, or willing, to fight the fight. Most of them gave up, and it ruined whatever they were going to do.

So, essentially, I courted her [Shirley] long distance—from Chattanooga—which made it a little bumpy, because I was under a lot of pressure when I went back to school. I did really well at the University of Chattanooga, it was no problem. Meanwhile, we were working on getting [me] into the University of Tennessee. There was a dean over there named Dr. James T. Ginn¹⁰². He was a Catholic fellow, in the middle of a big Protestant area. He was from Louisiana. I don't know exactly what was said, but there were people that got in touch with him and he gave me a break. I had an interview with him, and he had a real Cajun¹⁰³ accent—he said '*dis* and '*dat* [this and that]. I did great over there, I did just fine. I was very lucky. My dad was really

¹⁰¹ Marvin and Irving Goldstein are brothers who had a dental practice together for many years and are very active in the Jewish community in Atlanta. They also owned several hotels in the city, including the Georgian Terrace.

¹⁰² Dr. James T. Ginn, DDS, served as dean of the College of Dentistry at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center in Memphis. He was also a founding member of the Southern Regional Conference of Dental Schools.

¹⁰³ Cajuns are members of communities, formed by descendants of French Canadians, in the bayou areas of southern Louisiana. They speak with a distinctive accent which is from an archaic form of French.

supportive, very supportive. From the very beginning, he just wasn't going to let up. He got all these people [to help] and it was almost without a hitch.

In the meantime, I was back and forth dating Shirley. I started school in 1953 and she wanted to get married. She wanted to get married and I was in dental school, and I think her parents would have let her. But my mother probably said, "You need to go to college." So, she went one year to the University of Alabama. She said, "I want to be a dental hygienist. I'll do anything. I'll come over to Memphis [Tennessee] and I'll get into dental hygiene school." Nobody thought that would be a very good idea for her to be that far away over there in school and me in school. So, she says, "I'll just forget that, then. I'll work. I'll help support him through school." Of course, my mother said, "How ya'll gonna do it?", and she said, "I'll work!" So we did. We got married in 1955, a year before I finished. She came over there and found a job and worked, and it was great. So, sometimes bad things happen—good things happen, most times—but you just have to keep on going.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: As a result [of all the protests], they fired the Dean [Buhler]. Only bad things happened to him afterwards. There was a tremendous backlash, believe me. There was a huge amount of people who were supportive of him, and felt that this Jewish thing had gotten him, and he was not guilty, and none of them were guilty. Well, what happened was, he had all these little Nazis under him, and some of them were okay guys. I have to tell you, for all these years—40 years I've been in practice, or more—it turned out (laughing) some of the guys that were there even referred patients to me when I got into oral surgery practice in Decatur [Georgia] and acted like it never happened.

But, up in South Carolina [University of South Carolina], they needed a dean, and they hired him. The ADL told them it was the wrong thing, and the South Carolina dentists who were close with the school, pleaded with them not to take him. But they saw how much power they had—none . . .

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: . . . and, he got in up there. But then a series of things started happening to him. His wife got sick, I think, and died. His daughter got cancer, his mother-in-law was killed in an automobile accident.

Shirley: Oh.

Perry: Everything in his life . . . it was like the plagues. It was just like the ten plagues,¹⁰⁴ everything happened to him. This man was horrible. He was an educated person, he had all the trappings of being a scientist, but he had this bitter antisemitism. So that's what happened at Emory.

Emory then ultimately . . . Emory was the school that supported Deborah Lipstat¹⁰⁵ when she had her trial, and they gave her leave. So, it's changed so much over there. But, that's the story. What happened to Emory, though, it was always a very independent school. They said they were better than they really were. They were a good school, but they were *not* Harvard. They always said they were "Harvard of the South," and they even said that Harvard was "Emory of the North." (laughing).

Shirley: Yes. (laughing)

Perry: But, they overbuilt dental schools in this country, number one. Then fluorides¹⁰⁶ came in, and there wasn't much decay anymore, so there wasn't as much need for dental schools. Down at [University of] Georgia, they didn't have a dental school, they had a medical school, and they had a nursing school. At that time, you needed all of those things to satisfy the criteria to get government grants to build. They wanted a dental school down there so bad, they could taste it. But they just couldn't get these grants even though they lobbied for years and worked and worked. Finally, by one vote after all those years, they got permission to build a dental school. So it was the confluence of their getting a dental school, the carry rate going down, and then Emory made a big mistake of moving their dental school from down on Portland [Avenue] and Forest [Avenue]. They owned that property—and it was cheap—there were all the indigent people down there. But they made a mistake and brought the thing to Emory, built a very big school there, invested a lot of money, just at the wrong time—they didn't realize it. Then

¹⁰⁴ The Ten Plagues (or Plagues of Egypt) refers to ten calamities inflicted on Egypt by the God of Israel, in order to force Pharaoh to allow the Israelites to depart from slavery.

¹⁰⁵ Deborah E. Lipstadt, is Dorot Professor of Modern Jewish History and Holocaust Studies, Tam Institute for Jewish Studies and the Department of Religion at Emory University. She created the Institute for Jewish Studies at Emory and was its first director from 1998-2008. Lipstadt authored numerous books about Holocaust Deniers including *Denying the Holocaust*, *The Eichmann Trial*, and *History on Trial: My Day in Court with a Holocaust Denier* which chronicles the libel case involving herself and David Irving — a case which Lipstadt won. Lipstadt also wrote the Forward for Brickman's book *Extracted: Unmasking Rampant Antisemitism in America's Higher Education*.

¹⁰⁶ Fluoride, a naturally-occurring mineral, helps prevent cavities in children and adults by making tooth enamel more resistant to decay.

everything started going bad. They were private, charging way more money than [University of] Georgia—huge amounts more.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: All the Emory graduates even—when their kids started going to dental school—they would send them down to Athens rather than here because of the money. Emory finally had to close their doors, they just closed the dental school.

Shirley: Let's jump to . . . you married Shirley in 1955.

Perry: Yes.

Shirley: . . . graduated from dental school . . .

Perry: In 1956.

Shirley: . . . in 1956.

Perry: Yes, I graduated in June of 1956. Shirley was pregnant already and was going to have a baby in November. I graduated in June. The Korean War was over, and my dad was right, but don't think that he wasn't really nervous. Most of the war was over by the time this other thing [at Emory] happened, and I did get into the University of Chattanooga. So it was seamless.

Shirley: Yes, you were still in college and you got deferred.

Perry: Yes, I got deferments, so by that time I'm already a dentist. Back then, you wanted to get into the service as a dentist or a physician for a lot of reasons. One, you didn't have any money, and you could make a few bucks. You could get some more experience, you could see what you wanted to do. Also, they were still drafting¹⁰⁷, and if you started a practice you could get drafted out of your practice. That would have been devastating, to spend all the money and then [be drafted]. That happened to people. So, you were trying to get into school. I came back to Chattanooga, with my pregnant wife, and I was trying to get in the service. They have a hospital over there, and one of the guys who was an oral surgeon resident—they had a couple of residents over there—he got in trouble somehow or another. He was from Pennsylvania. They booted him out of the program and they needed a guy to do some scut¹⁰⁸ work. They really weren't looking for a resident at that time, just somebody who would extract teeth. They had a huge indigent clinic and they just needed somebody. I found out about it and said, "I'll do that." I would learn

¹⁰⁷ The Selective Service System, an independent federal agency in the U.S., was created to administer the military draft nationwide to conscript troops quickly in the event of war. Founded in 1940, the Selective Service System oversaw the military registration of all draft-age males (ages 18 - 25).

¹⁰⁸ Scut work refers to menial, non-patient care-related activities usually passed to medical students or interns.

to do that because, if I was going to be a general dentist, I would know how to do some surgery, too. Well, once you get into oral surgery—once you see that, and you see all these guys doing fractures and trauma—it was pretty exciting. More so than just filling teeth, if it suits you . . .

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: . . . and it did. It was really good, and I could make some money. In the meantime, I had signed up. It was just a touch and go type thing, and they wanted me and, I was still trying to get into the service, and they understood that. So, I went to . . .

Shirley: What was the name of the hospital?

Perry: Erlanger. Baroness Erlanger.¹⁰⁹ It's a big, huge hospital. So I went to my cousins—these are the Siskins—my mother's first cousin. Their daddy and my mother's daddy were brothers. Mose and Garrison [Siskin] are legendary in the state of Tennessee. They are such philanthropists, and they've done this enormous amount of work, and they were known all over. They ultimately won the Governor's Award. They built a hospital up there—which is like the Shepherd Center¹¹⁰ here—which they started with private funds. They just were really something, and you did them a favor if you asked them a favor.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: I remember going over to my cousin, Garrison, and I told him what I wanted. He says—he talked real fast—he'd say, "You want to get into service? Why do you want to get in the service?" And I explained all that. "Oh, okay," His brother's son-in-law—Mose's son-in-law—Sam Binder, had just come back to Chattanooga to practice. He was from Philadelphia, and he married my cousin. He was going to be an OB/GYN¹¹¹ there [at Erlanger], so they understood some of the things that were going on. By the way, Shirley was his first patient in private practice.

Shirley: Oh.

Perry: Laurie was born as his first private baby.

Shirley: Yes.

¹⁰⁹ Erlanger Baroness Hospital is a non-profit, academic teaching center affiliated with the University of Tennessee College of Medicine and located adjacent to the Children's Hospital in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

¹¹⁰ The Shepherd Center is a private, not-for profit hospital in Atlanta specializing in spinal cord and brain injury rehabilitation along with medical research. Siskin Hospital for Physical Rehabilitation is a similar facility in Chattanooga.

¹¹¹ OB/GYN is an abbreviation for Obstetrics and Gynecology.

Perry: He gets on the phone and he calls Estes Kefauver¹¹²—I never will forget—he was the Senator from Tennessee. He gets right through to him. I was just in shock. (laughing)

Shirley: (laughing)

Perry: I was right over at his house and he called him. He said, “Senator,” and he tells him who he is. “I’ve got this cousin here, and we’ve got to get him in the service. Get him in anything, whatever, Army . . .” and I said, “Air Force,” (whispering).

Shirley: (laughing)

Perry: (laughing) I’m getting greedy, all of a sudden. So he says, “He wants the Air Force. You don’t know if you can do that? Well, I’ll get him in. That’s what he wants if you can get it.” So, he [Kefauver] says, “I’ll work on it. We’ll get something done.” I said, “I can go to Spain.”

Shirley: (laughing) You want to go to Spain?

Perry: Yes, they’ve got great Air Force bases there. And he says, “He wants to go to Spain. Just do it.” So he says [to me], “He says he’ll do what he can do.”

Shirley: (laughing)

Perry: Sure enough, it wasn’t too long before we get notice. It came, and Shirley opened it up, and she says, “Ahhhh, great!” She was so excited. I said, “What are you so excited about?” and she says, “It says you’re going to be in the Air Force and you’re going to be at Dobbins Field right in Atlanta.” I said, “Dobbins?” They have an Air Force base there, but I don’t think they have a dental [clinic]. “Let me see that thing. Where do you see Dobbins?” She says, “It says here, DOB,” and I said, “That’s date of birth!”

Shirley: (laughing)

Perry: (laughing) It says Stoney Brook Air Force Station.

Shirley: That’s on Long Island [New York].

Perry: No . . .

Shirley: Where is Stoney Brook?

Perry: I couldn’t find it. It was nowhere to be found. I called places, and they didn’t know where it was. Stoney Brook Air Force Station, Massachusetts. Couldn’t find it. It’s in Chicopee, Massachusetts, it’s C-H-I-C-O-P-E-E. My middle daughter was born there at the base hospital.

¹¹² Estes Kefauver was a Democrat from Tennessee who served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1939 to 1949 and in the Senate from 1949 to 1963.

So, the FBI¹¹³ starts coming into my neighborhood in Chattanooga, where I was brought up, and getting background checks on me. All the people thought I was in trouble because they didn't know what was going on. All of a sudden, [the FBI] is coming in asking all these questions. They wanted to know everything since the time [these people] knew me, and they wouldn't say why. I finally found out that this was an Air Force station that was attached to Westover Air Force Base, which is huge—they had 10,000 troops there—and that was a SAC base. That was Strategic Air Command¹¹⁴, which was very big then. This was already at the time of the Cold War¹¹⁵, between Russia and the U.S.

Shirley: So, the FBI background check was because of the SAC base?

Perry: No. (laughing)

Shirley: Why? (laughing)

Perry: Well, I still didn't know, didn't understand that, but I didn't care. So Shirley had the baby on November 20, and I got assigned down to Maxwell Air Force Base in [Montgomery] Alabama for training, beforehand. You had to go for about three weeks. Everybody goes there, and there were two air bases down there. So then I came back and I had to leave right after the baby was born—the day after. I saw [Shirley], and I drove up to Massachusetts. She wasn't ready yet to go since it was wintertime. I drove up in December, through New York and Maryland, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. I drove onto this base and I showed them my orders, and it looked like the place was abandoned. This huge SAC base, and not too many people. It was snowing, and I drove my car in, and all of a sudden, I was surrounded by dogs and cars. I had driven onto—apparently they left a gate open someplace—a SAC base. I'm telling you, back then, you have to understand what they were doing. I drove into the wrong place, and I was scared they would kill me or shoot me or something. They were scared too, because they thought I was probably a spy because I didn't have a uniform on. They looked at [my papers] and most of them didn't know where the place was—Stoney Brook on Westover. So one person said, "Oh,

¹¹³ The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is the domestic intelligence and security service of the U.S., and its principal federal law enforcement agency.

¹¹⁴ Strategic Air Command (SAC) was both a U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) Specified Command and a United States Air Force (USAF) Major Command (MAJCOM), responsible for Cold War command and control of two of the three components of the U.S. military's strategic nuclear strike forces, the so-called 'nuclear triad.' SAC had control of land-based strategic bomber aircraft and intercontinental ballistic missiles or ICBMs. The third leg of the triad was submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM) of the U.S. Navy.

¹¹⁵ The Cold War was a period of geopolitical tension between the Soviet Union and the United States following World War II and lasting from 1947 – 1991.

you go out that road there. That's the way you go." So I drove on this road—it was a few miles—and I go into this place, and there were some Air Police there. They looked at [my papers] and waved me in.

There was like *nobody* there—it was Christmastime—and it was a skeleton crew¹¹⁶. I finally found the barracks that I was supposed to be in. There was no heat, there was nothing. It was cold, and I finally found some extra blankets. The Officers Club—they had a skeleton crew there—it was open. I parked my car and went in there. It was so cold, the next morning I couldn't even find my car because it had snowed. I was all by myself, but finally [people] came back after the holiday.

So, I was the dentist there. They had a small little dental clinic, and I was replacing the sole dentist, so I was the *sole* dentist. I had never practiced dentistry, general dentistry, before and I was the head of the Department of Dentistry. I had a lab there—they even had their own lab—so you didn't have to send stuff out. It was incredible, and I was the guy. Then I found out that I was—all this is declassified now—I found out I was the Morgue Officer¹¹⁷.

Shirley: Oh, okay.

Perry: I found out then, that air materials is the part that supplies the bomb to the weapon, to the SAC plane. The planes that you still see—the B-52s¹¹⁸ and the B-47s¹¹⁹—were brand new, and they're still flying today, they're incredible. They were *huge* and they used to taxi and land almost right in front of our building. I had an airman who hated me, because he heard I was from the South. He was from Ohio, he was a Black guy, and he just—ahead of time—knew he was going to hate me, before he even met me. He was a short-timer, he only had about six months left. He wouldn't do anything I told him to do, and he dared me—more or less—so, I didn't take it. I just let him do whatever he wanted to do. But every time a plane would takeoff, he would stand up (stands up, clicks his heels, and salutes) and salute the plane and cross off another day.

So, this was the Air Force base, the SAC base—10,000 troops—and we lived on that base. Well, we didn't at first, we couldn't get on. We had to find a place off [base] to rent, and

¹¹⁶ Skeleton crew is the minimum number of personnel needed to operate and maintain the most simple operating requirements of a facility or organization.

¹¹⁷ Mortuary Affairs in the military is responsible for the search, recovery, identification, preparation, and disposition of human remains.

¹¹⁸ The Boeing B-52 is a long-range, strategic bomber and versions of the plane have been used by the U.S. Air Force since the 1950s.

¹¹⁹ The Boeing B-47 is a retired strategic bomber primarily used as a nuclear bomber capable of striking the Soviet Union.

finally we got into a place [on the base]. They called it Wherry, after a congressman who got the money for all of the bases. Wherry Housing¹²⁰, they called it.

Shirley: W-E-A-R-Y?

Perry: W-H-E-R-R-Y, Wherry. We got in a place of somebody who had been assigned someplace for six months, and we lived there. Most everybody there was Catholic, it seemed, and I remember sleeping and they had crosses over almost every bed. So we had all that extra protection. (laughs)

Shirley: (laughs)

Perry: It was nice for Shirley, although we lived off campus—off the base—for about six months. We had lovely friends that we met off [base] there, but, it's so much cheaper to come on [the base]. We still see some of the people. They came from different walks of life, and they were not military. Shirley couldn't understand, she would say, "Mary Lee, I don't understand why that priest comes over all the time. Doesn't his wife get upset when he's never home?" (laughs)

Shirley: (laughing)

Perry: And she [Mary] says, "They don't get married."

Shirley: (laughing)

Perry: Then she'd [Mary] say to Shirley, "Shirley, how many birthdays do you have in your family? Every Friday night you light candles."¹²¹ (laughs)

Shirley: (laughing)

Perry: (laughing) So, everybody learned.

We moved back to the base and I found out that what was going on was, the Russians would fly up to the Arctic Circle, and the radar would go off and word would get sent to us. When that happened, (snaps his fingers) we had to get our planes off the ground. One out of every three planes had to have a weapon—an atomic weapon—on it. They would head north and over to Russia to bomb them. Then the fighters would go up, but we didn't have that. We had to

¹²⁰ Wherry housing (1949 – 1955) and Capehart housing (1955 – 1962) were two large and influential military housing programs which provided nearly a quarter-million military family housing units. Wherry Housing was named for Senator Kenneth Wherry, a Republican from Nebraska, who authored the Wherry Act to support military families.

¹²¹ *Shabbat* candles are lit 18 minutes before sunset on Friday evenings. It is traditional to light two *Shabbat* candles, but in some homes an additional candle is lit for each child. The lighting of *Shabbat* candles has a dual purpose: to honor *Shabbat* (the Sabbath) and to create *shalom bayit* (domestic peace).

arm the bombers, the long-range bombers. They also had these KC-135s, they were refueling planes. I saw—the other day—where a KC-130 that refuels helicopters, crashed. We had ones that fueled the big B-52s. One of them crashed one time, and the neighbors across the street were killed, but that didn't happen very often. What happened was, the Air Force Materiel Command (AFMC)¹²²—which was what I was sent there for—had the weapons. Nobody on the base knew about it, but we were briefed. When I first got there, they talked to us and said, “You don't ever say anything about it, and if you ever say anything, or if you ever do anything against your country . . .” (laughs) I laugh now, but . . . They gave them all trials, and they said, “You'll be shot, that's it.” So I still remember what they told us. If people asked us, “Where do you work?” [we would say] “I work at Westover [Air Force base], just work at Westover.”

I was a Morgue Officer, and they didn't have things like computers, back in those times. They had strict ways of keeping things, there couldn't be any dust, no nothing. All that stuff was underground, everything was underground, except where we worked in our day jobs.

Shirley: Yes. Your job for show.

Perry: Yes, it was show, but we did have to have that to support the personnel that were on the base.

Shirley: What was the job of a Morgue Officer?

Perry: In case of . . .

Shirley: . . . death?

Perry: . . . you did all that.

Shirley: You did the autopsy?

Perry: No, we did all the records . . .

Shirley: Oh, the recordkeeping.

Perry: It was all theoretical because, to tell you the truth, if the Russians had come there, well, I don't know. I told my daughters this, later on, and Laurie just loved all that. She told her teenage son that he ought to interview me, to learn about all this stuff. He was fascinated with all these things. He even made up some things. He told the teachers that I was in charge of all the atomic weapons for the Allies.

Shirley: (laughs)

¹²² Air Force Materiel Command (AFMC) delivers expeditionary capabilities to the warfighter through development and transition of technology, professional acquisition management, exacting test and evaluation, and world-class sustainment of all Air Force weapon systems.

Perry: Laurie, on her own, went on the internet and started looking [things] up—she was a baby up there—and she came to me one day and said, “You know, you thought you knew everything about all this stuff.” It’s all been declassified now, and it turns out we *did* have plans for where we would go, if something like that [happened]. We’d have gone underground. If they had dropped bombs there, it would have gotten us. We were almost like in a basement. What she picked up off the internet was that major officers—the generals and the colonels and all that—went about a mile away and they went underground, like the Tora Bora.¹²³ They were deep, deep! We didn’t even know about that. I had no clue about that. [chuckles] If we had known about it, we would have been very upset.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: Because we would have known we were going to die, and they’re not. So they didn’t tell us, and I understand now. You know, what you see is not necessarily what you get.

So, we lived two years up there, and it was good. Teresa was born up there. In the meantime, there was a guy I had heard about, an oral surgeon who worked in Springfield [Massachusetts], which is right downtown from Chicopee. I got to meet him when I was in Chattanooga that year, after dental school. My uncle got me into the Masons,¹²⁴ so I went to something they had up there, and I met this doctor. One thing led to another, and he let me come down on weekends to watch him. I’d go to hospitals with him. That was civilian then . . .

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: I was fascinated, because he was a really good oral surgeon¹²⁵. So I decided I wanted to go into oral surgery. They tried to get me to re-up with the service, and they told me I’d never make a living, and that I could spend 20 years with them. I could have done that, but I didn’t. Instead, I had to decide how to get in different places [to find work], and we just had what we’d saved up there—which we had done—we didn’t spend any money there. So it was a good two years, and fortunately, the Cold War never materialized. It could have. That was the time, in 1956, of the Suez Crisis¹²⁶.

¹²³ Tora Bora is a cave complex in the mountain range in eastern Afghanistan. It was known to be a stronghold location of the Taliban, used by military forces against the Soviet Union during the 1980s. Tora Bora had natural caverns that later were expanded into a CIA-financed complex.

¹²⁴ Freemasons or Masons are fraternal (men-only) organizations that trace their origins to the local fraternities of stonemasons. The earliest known American Masonic Lodges were in Pennsylvania in early 1700s.

¹²⁵ An oral surgeon is a dental specialist trained to perform surgical procedures on the mouth, teeth, jaws, and face.

¹²⁶ The Suez Crisis, or the Second Arab–Israeli War, was an invasion of Egypt in late 1956 by Israel, followed by the United Kingdom and France.

But, we got out and I came back to [University of] Chattanooga, and I got in a year there. Nowadays, when you get into programs, they're integrated, and you spend all your time at one place for four years. Back then, you had to go one year here and another year there. So that started our odyssey. After Chattanooga I went up to the University of Pennsylvania for a year. Then I went to Erlanger, and then I was accepted to the Ochsner Clinic¹²⁷ in New Orleans [Louisiana], which is sort of like the Mayo Clinic¹²⁸ except it's a little smaller. But it's big and well known in that whole area down there, and a real good man was the chief there. So, I finished up the training—three more years—and it was no problem. Then I went to look for a place to practice.

When I was at Tennessee—I graduated from University of Tennessee—I thought I was going to practice in Chattanooga. So, I took the Tennessee Dental Boards.¹²⁹ Every state has their different [exams]. . .

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: So, I passed that. I forgot to say that, before I was looking for a job, I was still trying to get into the service. But, I got a job offering in Birmingham [Alabama] at one of the big steel plants. They had a clinic, so I had to take the Alabama [Dental] Board, a separate board. I took that and I passed, and the day that I finished with it, the steel mills went on strike and the offer was taken back.

So then I decided to take the Florida [Dental] Board, because that was just a challenge. This is all in the context of all that other stuff I told you [that happened at Emory], and by then I was over-compensating . . .

Shirley: . . . for what happened with Emory.

Perry: Yes, I had to show them that . . .

Shirley: . . . that they were wrong and you were right . . .

Perry: . . . they were wrong. So, *nobody* passed [the Florida Board], it's hard passing the Florida Board. So I took it and I passed it. I didn't take the Georgia Board because I was never

¹²⁷ Ochsner Medical Center is a prestigious hospital in Jefferson, Louisiana, a short distance from New Orleans.

¹²⁸ The Mayo Clinic is an academic medical center based in Rochester, Minnesota, focused on integrated clinical practice, education, and research.

¹²⁹ A State Board of Dentistry is an agency of state government created by the legislature. It governs the qualifications for, and practice of, dentistry within the state. The Dental Boards are examinations administered by the state's Board of Dentistry that dentists must pass in order to be licensed to practice in the state.

going to do that. I hated them and I would have had to take it at Emory Dental School, and that was about the time things were happening already, about 1956.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: It was still, it was terrible. I can understand how people wouldn't want to go back to Germany, or something like that. Anyway, then I got into the programs and I finished in New Orleans in January of 1960.

<End Tape 2 Side 1>

<Begin Tape 2 Side 2>

Shirley: This is side two of tape two, Shirley Michalove interviewing Perry Brickman. We were talking about when you finished with your program, and you had passed the Florida Boards.

Perry: Well, actually, I had passed that way back in 1956, and it's already 1960 now.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: So, I had not really done any dentistry—general dentistry—for at least three years. I finished in New Orleans, and I said, “Shirley, I think I'm going to look around Florida.” I had a Florida license, but that's really a big move. So, she says okay. She's pregnant with the third one, and her sister was visiting with us. So we get in the car, and we started driving from New Orleans, all the way to Mobile [Alabama]. Finally we got to the west coast [of Florida] to a place called Fort Myers. They had just had a hurricane there, the year before, and the place was a mess—there were a lot of flies. They [my family] said, “Ohh . . .” and I said, “They might not have an oral surgeon here. Can't you imagine they really need one?” Then we'd go down to another place—too many bugs, it was terrible. When I got to Florida I saw my friend Ed Swig, who did finish Emory. He was practicing in Coral Gables. I said, “How is it down here?” and he said, “You don't want to practice down here.” It's already changing—the complexion of the situation there—and he says, “I'm going to leave here. I'm going into periodontia. I've made a few bucks, so I can go to graduate school, and when I get through, I'm going to come back. A guy's promised me something over on the beach. But this is not where you want to practice.” So, I said okay, and I headed out. I'll never forget going through Boca Raton, and places like that. There were no Jews there—can you believe it—it's really interesting.

We got to Tallahassee, the capital of the state, and there was not an oral surgeon. There had never been one in Tallahassee [even though] Florida State [University] was there. I go out, I meet the dentists, I meet the physicians, I go to the hospital. The hospital administrator was

begging me to come there. The family was out in the car, Shirley's pregnant, it's hot—because the air conditioner [wasn't on]—it's three (two and a half) kids, and her sister. I said, "Shirley," —I opened the car door—"Shirley, this is it. They don't have an oral surgeon here, the dentists want me, the physicians want me, the hospital administrator wants me." And she says, "You know, you're probably right." Then she says, "If that's what you want, that's fine, as long as you don't mind commuting on weekends to see me and the kids in Atlanta."

Shirley: (laughs)

Perry: I looked at her . . . (laughs) I had gone on this . . .

Shirley: . . . whole long [journey]. . .

Perry: First of all—I had known her for so long, we'd been married for so long—I'd gone on this odyssey with her and she never said *a word*. I didn't even have a Georgia Board (snaps his fingers) but I processed that in a millisecond. I heard her, and there wasn't even a hesitation, and I just knew. So I got in the car, turned on the ignition, and headed to Atlanta. I didn't know what I was going to do, but I knew (laughs) . . . isn't that amazing?

Shirley: That is. (laughing)

Perry: So, I get to Atlanta, I don't have the boards, I hadn't practiced dentistry in a long time, and to take all [those tests] you have to fill teeth, and do all this stuff. I went down to the Massell Clinic¹³⁰, and I practiced a little bit because, it's something you don't forget. But, the materials are a little different. Besides which, nobody understood the pressure that I [was under]. My having to take this [Board at Emory] was hard, because I didn't know if certain people would see me, from that old crew, because some of them were still around.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: I finally bit the bullet and I applied and I got up there, and I took the exam. I already was pretty seasoned. I had taken three [boards], and if you've passed the Florida Board—I figured—you could pass any board because it's harder than anything.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: So, I go up there and they have all these people. It's on a Saturday, probably, and I saw Lester Breen. Lester was younger than me and he had been practicing in Atlanta for . . . no, he hadn't practiced, he had just gotten through. Most of the boys had not gone to Emory

¹³⁰ The Ben Massell Dental Clinic (BMDC) was established in 1956 by brothers Marvin and Irving Goldstein as an expansion from the Morris Hirsch Clinic in downtown Atlanta. The 150 volunteer dentists at BMCD provide dental care at no cost to Atlanta's neediest population.

anymore. They would go to the University of Maryland. That was a very good school with a lot of Jewish people and a lot of Jewish faculty. It was like being in the Promised Land.¹³¹

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: A whole bunch of the guys went up to Maryland. So, he didn't go to Emory. He went to Emory as an undergraduate, but nobody would go to Emory [Dental School] by then. They just wouldn't go, because, it was a prescription for death. (chuckles)

Shirley: (chuckles)

Perry: So, Lester had all . . . all these guys had their huge things full of all their instruments that they used in school. Then I came in, and I had a little felt thing that was rolled up and tied. I just undid it, laid out 15 instruments, and that's all I had. Lester looked over there and almost *khaleshed*,¹³² he almost fainted.

Shirley: (laughing) Yes.

Perry: I intimidated him.

<Interruption in tape>

Shirley: We were talking about you taking the Georgia Boards.

Perry: I was already out of general dentistry for quite a number of years, and . . . it's a silly thing, but you have to take the Dental Boards before you can practice. Then, you practice your specialty. So, there we are, a huge amount [of us], we're at Emory, on Courtland [Street] and Forrest [Avenue]. I was telling you about Lester. Lester has always been the kind of guy who wants things exactly right, and that's more or less my personality too. But, again, I don't know if I saw this as a challenge, I don't even know if I wanted to pass—to tell you the truth—because I hated that place. If I hadn't [passed], I wouldn't have practiced in Georgia. We would have gone someplace else. I just don't even know what was on my mind. I can't imagine that I didn't want to pass it, but by the same token, I was doing something that was definitely not me. I mean, I just don't do things that way, but I did.

I had a patient—I had gotten a couple of patients down at the Massell Clinic—who needed fillings, an inlay, and a crown, that kind of stuff. When I had pulled out just that small amount [of tools], Lester was so intimidated, he almost passed out. Because he thought, “This

¹³¹ The Promised Land is the land which, according to the *Tanakh*, was promised and subsequently given by God to Abraham and his descendants. In modern contexts it is an idea related both to the restored Homeland for the Jewish people and more generally, to salvation and liberation.

¹³² *Khalesh* is a Yiddish word for faint.

has got to be the coolest guy there ever was, and I must be a nothing.” (laughing). It was terrible for Lester to have to feel that.

So, it wasn’t long [before] I started on my patient. I was thinking, “I need a certain instrument.” So, I just turned around and said, “Lester, you got a so and so?” He said, “Yes, I always have two pair.” So, I said, “You mind loaning one to me?” He said, “Oh no.” [So I kept saying] “Lester, have you got this? Lester, you got this?” I didn’t have half the things I needed. I didn’t know what was going on, but, Lester was there—Breen, Brickman—it was alphabetical.

This whole thing is ironic, because years later I was named by the governor (Zell Miller¹³³) to be on the Georgia State Board of Dental Examiners. It’s so ironic that I would be the one who was examining people. But, it was all double-blind,¹³⁴ maybe triple-blind, by the time we did that. We didn’t have any idea who the person taking the board was. We didn’t know his name, all he had was a number, and they did everything downstairs before they came up [where we were]. They didn’t know who we were and we didn’t know who they were. We couldn’t know the patient’s name, nobody could talk, and you just graded it and you couldn’t know who the person was. Here, *they all knew who you were*, and I had visions of them knowing my name. So, anyway, Lester and I took that exam (laughing). I had to cast a crown, and did all that, and I passed, I passed.

Then I start looking around [for a practice], and I thought it would be nice if I could go in with somebody, because you need to have hospital privileges. It was very difficult, at that time in Atlanta, [for Jewish people] to get privileges. A lot of people don’t realize that, because now things are so different. [Hospitals] can’t keep you off, if you have all the certifications, everything is politically correct now.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: But there [was] no way back then. Everything was still segregated in the hospitals, and it was just a totally different time. You couldn’t get on staff unless you went in with somebody who was already on the staff . . . except for Crawford-Long [Hospital],¹³⁵ thank God for Crawford Long. We couldn’t get in Georgia Baptist [Hospital], we couldn’t get in St.

¹³³ Zell Miller, a Democrat, served as Lieutenant Governor from 1975 to 1991, Governor of Georgia from 1991 to 1999, and as U.S. Senator from 2000 to 2005.

¹³⁴ A double-blind experiment is an experiment in which information is withheld from participants to reduce bias. A blind can be imposed on subjects, researchers, technicians, data analysts, or evaluators.

¹³⁵ Emory University’s Crawford Long Hospital (renamed Emory University Hospital Midtown in 2009) is a full-service facility in downtown Atlanta.

Joseph's [Hospital], any of those places. There wasn't a Northside [Hospital] then, and DeKalb General [Hospital] had just opened in 1961. So, there virtually were just a few hospitals around. Piedmont [Hospital], (laughs), you couldn't get on there, and not too many Jewish guys were on there anyway. There were about seven or eight oral surgeons in Atlanta, and there were none in the suburbs, not even Marietta, and nobody would take me.

Shirley: No?

Perry: No. Some of them were not nice, and others were nice but still wouldn't take me. So I was faced with having to open up [a practice] on my own. I didn't have a nickel and I was pretty scared because, you don't learn anything about management or anything like that [in dental school]. You just don't know. So I went to see Milton Smithloff,¹³⁶ among other people. Most people promised me they would send me everything, even people downtown. "Oh, I'll send you, I'll give you, I'll send you out . . ." they'd promise you anything. Milton Smithloff said to me, "I'm not promising you anything." (chuckles) If you know him, you know [he'd say that]. "And if I do send you somebody, then you'll be happy, and if I don't, you won't be disappointed." That's what he said because, he's pretty straight.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: I found Decatur didn't have anybody [doing oral surgery], DeKalb County didn't have anybody. I did get a few people who said, "We have to send all of our patients into Atlanta." So, this was 1961, and there weren't any places out there where you could go into an office. There were none. They were building the Decatur Federal Savings and Loan [building] at that time, and there were just no places [for me], because in oral surgery you have to put a fair amount of stuff into the walls.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: You can't just open up with a stethoscope and a blood pressure cuff.

<Interruption in tape>

Shirley: You were telling me about office space in Decatur.

Perry: There was nil, there was nothing. So, they were building this huge bank building and a lot of people signed up. But it was not going to be ready until February of 1962. So, I had to

¹³⁶ Milton Smithloff (1924-1994) was an Atlanta dentist. His parents, Benjamin and Jennie Smithloff, owned a grocery store in Atlanta.

find some things to do around town—a little bit here, a little [there]—and it was a long time to wait. I was ready in 1961. So we had to stay at Shirley’s house.

Shirley: With her parents?

Perry: Yes, we did, for a whole year. They were great—by then we had three kids—but they were great. So, I was able to start in February of 1962. I’m coming up on 40 years in that office and being in Decatur. It was great from the very beginning, I was pretty busy. It started slow, but built up.

Shirley: Did you choose Decatur because there was nobody there?

Perry: Yes, and [DeKalb] is the second largest county [in Georgia]. Actually, back then, it was the third largest county. Chatham County was larger, with Savannah, so we were three then, instead of two. It’s interesting, nobody would believe that.

Shirley: Not today.

Perry: Decatur was the county seat for DeKalb County. Tucker is actually larger than Decatur [now], and it’s in DeKalb county too.

You have to remember, in oral surgery, you see a lot of people with broken jaws and things like that, all kinds of swellings. Back then, the offices—for the most part—were segregated. There were some dentists who would see Black people. They’d let them in the back door, or they’d see them after 5:00 pm. Those were the ones that were a little bit more liberal. Many of them wouldn’t. There were some people downtown that would, in Atlanta. But, [these dentists], if they sent you that Black person that they wouldn’t see—who had a swollen face—they expected *you* to see them. But if you’ve gone through all that oral surgery training, a lot of my patients every place I ever trained—like over in New Orleans—I had all kinds of minority people—Spanish, French, and all that. So, I knew by the way I’d been trained, and also my upbringing. [Through] my daddy’s business at the coal yard, I grew up with it [working with all types of people]. It wasn’t difficult. It wasn’t even a second thought, really.

I just opened my office and it was my intention [that] everybody could sit in the front office. I didn’t realize—I truly didn’t even realize—how revolutionary that was. I wasn’t trying to be a “goody-goody,”¹³⁷ it was just [the thing to do]. I knew that it was a reality that you had to see the patients, and I was not going to have two offices, and see [minority] patients at different times. That was undoable—I was just not going to do that—and, I have to tell you, I never had a

¹³⁷ A “goody-goody” is a smug or obtrusively virtuous person.

problem. The guys who wouldn't see [Black people]—but referred them—they never said “Hey, my patients that I send you aren't White.” They just never said anything. Most of the nurses that I had were used to treating them [everybody].

But, when I would go to DeKalb General, and try to get on the hospital staff . . . I could get on at Crawford Long, and that was it. I couldn't get on at any of the others.

This hasn't got anything to do with the Jewish thing but, this is an interesting lesson in mankind, I think. When this country was formed by the Puritans, when the Pilgrims came over

. . .

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: . . . they came fleeing all kinds of religious bias. That's the reason they came here.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: . . . and what did they turn around and do? They did the very same thing.

Shirley: Exactly.

Perry: DeKalb General was a new hospital, and most of the people there were from Georgia Baptist. Apparently some of the younger ones weren't treated very nice down there [at Georgia Baptist], and didn't have the privileges that the older doctors had. There were a couple of surgeons, and others, there and it didn't take them five minutes to start acting just like the guys did to them. So, when I came over there, I hadn't been there the day they opened, and I wasn't one of the people in town. I had not made a name for myself yet—it would have been different if I'd been there five years and I'd seen all their kids as patients—

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: then it would have been a different story, but I was new . . .

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: . . . and they weren't going to let me [in]. They would let me have case-by-case privileges. I can remember one of them telling me I ought to go buy some good tires for my car because there was going to be a lot of traveling downtown to Crawford Long.

Shirley: Hmm.

Perry: So that [discrimination] was right out there. [They were saying] it's not going to happen. But *if* you happen to have a patient that's one of ours, we *have* to give you special privileges. That wouldn't last five minutes now.

Shirley: Right.

Perry: They'd have a lawsuit so fast it would be over in a day.

Shirley: A day.

Perry: But that was not even an option back then.

<End Tape 2 Side 2>

<Begin Tape 3 Side 1>

Shirley: This is Shirley Michalove interviewing Perry Brickman on February the 1st, 2002, in Atlanta, Georgia, for the Jewish Oral History Project sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta, National Council of Jewish Women and The American Jewish Committee.

Perry, last time when we were talking on the other tapes, we mentioned your children and your grandchildren. We didn't mention your grandchildren, but I want to. So, if you would, please tell me your children's names, their birthdays, where they were born, their children, their spouses, etc.

Perry: Fine. Laurie is our oldest child—Laurie Donna Morse—and Laurie was born in Chattanooga. She arrived on November 20th, 1956. That was soon after I had graduated dental school in June, and just before I had to leave to go to the Air Force. She was delivered by Dr. Samuel Binder, B-I-N-D-E-R, who is married to my cousin. He had just had a career in the Air Force and had come to Chattanooga, where his wife was from, and set up his practice. Laurie was his first private patient. He has her picture in his waiting room, and pictures from when she had a baby, he has all of that. It is really nice.

Shirley: Tell me about her children, and then we'll go to Teresa.

Perry: Laurie has two children. The oldest is Jason, Jason Michael Morse, he was born July 18th, 1985 in Dallas, Texas. Her second is a girl, Jessica Ilene, I-L-E-N-E, Morse. Jessica was born in Dallas also, on August 28th, 1988. They live here in Atlanta, now. They moved here about two years ago, but they lived in Dallas for about 18 years.

Shirley: What's her husband's name?

Perry: She's not married now, but her former husband was Ralph Morse.

Shirley: Okay, now let's go on to Teresa.

Perry: Teresa was married to Paul Finer from Tulsa, Oklahoma. Teresa was born on June 26th, 1958, not two years after Laurie. She was born on our wedding anniversary.

Shirley: That's neat.

Perry: Yes . . .

Shirley: Nice present.

Perry: . . . and later on you'll see, one of our grandchildren—Joseph, who is Jeff's son—was also born on the same day.

Shirley: That's a lucky day for your family.

Perry: June 26th. It really is.

Shirley: What's Teresa's middle name?

Perry: Ellen, E-L-L-E-N. She lives in Orlando, Florida, now. They've lived there for some time. He is an anesthesiologist, and she is a lawyer, an immigration lawyer.

Shirley: And do they have children?

Perry: They have two girls. The older is Elena Jo, E-L-E-N-A Jo, J-O, Finer. And the younger one is Talia, T-A-L-I-A, Rebecca Finer.

Shirley: And when were they born?

Perry: Elena was born August the 6th, 1992, and Talia, September 26th, 1994.

Shirley: Okay, and tell me about Jeff.

Perry: Jeff was born on September 15th, 1961, just after we got through with all my training and got back to Atlanta (chuckles) just in time. He was born just a few weeks after we got back. So, September 15th, 1961.

Shirley: And what's Jeff's middle name?

Perry: Herschel, H-E-R-S-C-H-E-L. He's named after my grandfather—my father's father—and his son is named after my father.

Shirley: And he's married, obviously, what's his . . .

Perry: He's married to Susan Needle of Charleston, South Carolina. They have a son, Joseph Myer, M-Y-E-R, Brickman, June 26th, 1995.

Shirley: Your face lights up when you talk about your grandchildren. You want to talk a little bit about your children and grandchildren, or shall we go on?

Perry: My children, sure! Yes, [my] children were just wonderful children—always good, never any problems.

Shirley: You were lucky! (laughing)

Perry: Yes, *mazldik*¹³⁸.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: Very lucky. Laurie went to Briarcliff High School. She went to Kittredge

¹³⁸ *Mazldik* is Yiddish for lucky.

Elementary School, then Briarcliff. All three of them did, it's just up the street.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: They walked to school. Later, Laurie went to the University of Texas, that's where she graduated. Teresa also [graduated from there]. They went to camp together when they were little girls. They went up north to a camp in Wisconsin.

Shirley: What kind of camp?

Perry: It was a girl's camp. They just are real "woody". They'd go out in canoes, and portage, and do all that stuff. They really love that, and they still go back. They're very, very close to the girls whom they camped with. They meet every other year or so, and go back up there, or other places. They let their hair down and don't wear makeup, and do all the stuff they did when they were girls.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: They went for years. I've told you before that everything I've done—whatever happens—if it's bad, it always turned out good, if it was good, it even got better. But it's just worth noting . . . I came back from lunch one day over in Decatur—in the building where I was originally. A friend of mine, Bob Fine—who is a dermatologist—was on the same floor. We both went into the men's bathroom across the hall there, and he had a friend with him, who was from Little Rock [Arkansas]. He introduced me to the guy, and told me that he headed up a boy's camp in Minong, Wisconsin. It was primarily a Jewish Camp, and I said, "Do you know a good girl's camp?" He says, "Well, I send mine across the lake to the other [one], and it's great! The guy is terrific who owns and runs it." He told me about it, and he said, "Nobody from Atlanta really goes there." So, he said he would contact the fellow and he would come down. To make a long story short, he did, and the girls liked him a lot, and they flew up there. We never did go with them up there. They were very young, and they flew up there, loved it, and they went there for years and even became counselors afterwards. It's Camp Birch Trail. That's how lucky you have to be, you just walk into the men's room, and it wouldn't have happened otherwise, no question. (laughing). They have friends now who live in Atlanta, St. Louis [Missouri], all over, a lot of girls. And they were responsible for quite a number of girls afterwards going there. So that's nice.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: They went to Texas, graduated, and Teresa went on to law school there—at the University of Texas—and graduated with honors. She clerked out there and then came here and

practiced law. Then she went with Paul down to Orlando [Florida]. They were married out there while she was in law school. He's a physician, and he comes from a very nice family in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Shirley: Talk a little bit about Jeff.

Perry: Jeff has always been the favorite of his sisters, and everybody else. He just was born smiling and never did anything wrong. (chuckles) He went to Kittredge Elementary School and Briarcliff High School, and he was active in AZA. I didn't mention [the girls] were very active in BBG and youth groups. Jeff went to the University of Florida, undergraduate, and then went to law school there, and graduated law school at the University of Florida. When he finished, he really didn't know what he wanted to do. He worked a little bit one place or another and it just didn't satisfy him. Luckily, someone suggested that they had program out at Emory—a Masters program in litigation—and he got into that program, and loved it! That just was perfect for him to litigate. He got a job with the DeKalb County District Attorney's office and actually became an Assistant District Attorney there, and was there for about eight years. Then he got the opportunity to go to the U.S. Attorney's Office where he's been for about four years. He's been prosecuting drug dealers and so on, and now it looks like he's going to be going over to the Fraud Division—that's sort of hand in hand. The people he worked for over in DeKalb were really very nice to him, very helpful, and actually got him involved in the Child Advocacy Program for the State of Georgia. He's been on the board of that, and continues to serve. He lectures all over the country on that. The DAs and the U.S. Attorney's [Office] have allowed him to take off and talk to DAs, and other related people, on how to prevent and take measures toward people who do bad things to children.

Shirley: Good. Now, let's go back to talking about Decatur and how you opened an office there with one waiting room. Then you began to talk about your hospital privileges. We discussed DeKalb General, and how they only wanted to give you a temporary . . .

Perry: Sort of ad hoc . . .

Shirley: . . . ad hoc privileges. Talk about how you got to Crawford Long and what else happened.

Perry: At DeKalb [General]—as I told you before—most of those people came from Georgia Baptist. Just like the Pilgrims, when they came to this country they'd been persecuted by the British for religious reasons, and as soon as they got here they did the same thing to someone else. That pretty much was what happened over there [at DeKalb General]. They got a group

over there, and once they got their little bailiwick,¹³⁹ they started acting the same way to everybody else. (laughing) I don't think it was a personal thing, it was just that they were very tough on outsiders. The man who was Chief of Staff made it evident to me that he was going to make it very, very difficult, and they didn't need me anyway. There was also another general surgeon out there—it just so happens—who had been partners with this one guy, but they had separated, not on amicable terms. And just like the old expression, “The enemy of my enemy is my friend.” As a last measure . . . I didn't even know that at the time, but I went to this doctor and I just put everything on the table and told him who I was and what I wanted to do, and so on. I made a nice impression on him, and he told me I could do whatever I wanted to, and he would make sure I was able to do it. It turned out afterwards that he was just trying to show that other guy that he couldn't do that [discriminate] to somebody, and he was—more or less—my guardian. (laughing)

Shirley: What was his name?

Perry: Dr. Smoot¹⁴⁰, S-M-O-O-T. He really took care of me. He was supposed to be in the room when I was operating for the first so many things, and he said he didn't need to do that. He saw my credentials and he said he would be responsible, and he did. He did what he said he would do. That didn't make it easier with the other guy, and it certainly did not give me privileges *yet*, at that time. They dragged it out. It's something they couldn't even do for five minutes now—I mean, it's out of the question—but back then, it was a different time.

In the meantime, I did go down to Crawford Long, and they were very nice. You couldn't get on any other hospitals except a couple that were way out in the west, almost to Birmingham [Alabama]. (laughing) There was a Black hospital out there—it wasn't Black—I'm sorry, it was in a Black area. I think the Catholic church opened that particular one. You could get on there, and do a case way out there. Who would want to go that far? But I did a few trauma cases out there, and things like that. So, you just moved around. Ponce de Leon Infirmary was another place. Really, there were so few beds around Atlanta in the 1960s. A lot of people don't realize—they always think in terms of overbuilding—but the reason there was building was that it was underbuilt. It's like hotels, and anytime you have underbuilding, they have a tendency to overbuild. They built Doctor's Memorial Hospital downtown, which was a private hospital, the

¹³⁹ A bailiwick is a person's sphere of operations or particular area of interest.

¹⁴⁰ Dr. Richard Smoot was Chief of Surgery at DeKalb General Hospital (which became DeKalb Medical and is now Emory Decatur Hospital) in the 1960s.

Ponce de Leon Infirmary, and then the Atlanta Hospital. Out in DeKalb [County], by that time, nobody could get beds. It was so difficult to get patients in because they didn't have enough beds. A number of people started talking about building a hospital, a little private hospital. Then DeKalb got wind of that and came to us, and I was one of the people, and they begged us. They said, "If you will not build at this time, we will support your advocacy for a hospital as soon as we get our Hill–Burton¹⁴¹ funds—government funds— for our hospital to do this. Because, if you build a hospital, there will be enough beds out here and we won't get it." There were a few of the guys who believed that. That was just like believing some of the things that you hear nowadays.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: As soon as they got their Hill–Burton [funds], they proceeded to do everything they could to keep us from building a hospital. So, that's another saga. We did get involved in building a hospital out there, and there were a few of us who got a number of other people involved, and we built Decatur Hospital. We opened it in the early 1970s, and it was a fabulous hospital because it offered—and they still do—practically all the eye work; a lot of the ear, nose, and throat; plastic surgery; oral surgery; mostly outpatient types of things. Now, they have a long-term critical care floor too. It's now part of DeKalb General, they finally bought it. They just couldn't . . .

Shirley: When?

Perry: They bought it about five years ago.

Shirley: 1996?

Perry: Yes, around that time, 1996 or 1997. They finally couldn't stand it anymore, so they run that too. But, we were responsible for a lot of people who practice there now, being able to come to the area, for two reasons. One, those who practiced that type of thing were able to come in and immediately get beds [at our hospital]. Because over at DeKalb [General] they would hardly let them even operate. They just had windows of time. On the other hand, it freed up beds over at DeKalb [General] and there are quite a number of specialists who came in who never would have been able to [work here]. Back in those days, people bypassed Atlanta completely

¹⁴¹ The Hospital Survey and Construction Act (or the Hill–Burton Act) is a federal law passed in 1946 and sponsored by Senator Harold Burton of Ohio and Senator Lister Hill of Alabama. The act provides for the construction of hospitals and healthcare facilities, and was designed to provide federal grants and guaranteed loans to improve the physical plant of the nation's hospital system.

and went to Birmingham, and other places. We lost a lot of really good people for a while. That's when Northside Hospital was built and moved out. Quite a number of other hospitals were built, as a result of that underbuilding. But, we did go ahead, and I was Chairman of the Board of that hospital—Decatur Hospital. We were able to do everything you wanted to do at that time.

Shirley: You went to dental school. You keep referring to surgery. So, let's get on the tape, what is oral maxillofacial surgery?

Perry: The evolution of that is that in dentistry, I guess for over 100 years, there probably have been people who did what they call dental surgery. They used to call them dental surgeons. I think—really when I was going to school, even then—most of the people around called it a dental surgeon. Those were dentists who were more or less self-trained, or were out in the small towns, or had been in the service. They went over to just doing extractions, impacted wisdom teeth, broken jaws, and things of that nature. They finally did actually formalize the training. I forget how many years ago, but back right before I got in, I would say in the 1940s, right after the war [WWII]. It went from one year to two years, and then—by the time I was in training—you had to have three extra years after the four years of dental school. You only practiced your specialty. People are more familiar with orthodontics, but there were about six or seven specialties in dentistry. Oral surgery is probably the oldest, and orthodontics is next. You have the endodontist, the root canal man, periodontist for the gums, and prosthodontist who makes dentures. A lot of general dentists will do a little of everything, or a lot of some of it. Public Health Dentistry is another specialty, and there are not many of those. Oral pathology is another specialty, and there are not many of those. We just have two or three here. They principally look at the biopsy specimens you send to them, and they are hospital-based, they work in a hospital. Oral surgeons work in an office, but work in hospitals also.

Then it changed its name from oral surgery to oral and maxillofacial surgery which was an effort to better define what we were doing as the specialty evolved. We did lots and lots of trauma, as part of your training, and in practice. Broken jaws are probably different than any other bone in the body. People fall and break their hips innocently, and their arms, and you have bad hips that deteriorate—there are exceptions (laughing). As soon as I say this, people will say, “Hey, but I broke my jaw innocently!” But—generally speaking—the ones that we see, a lot of them are [in] fights. That's how you break a jaw. There are many that are not, but, more than any other thing, a lot of our stuff came from the emergency rooms, and they were people fighting, and not up to good things.

Shirley: Car accidents, I would imagine too.

Perry: Car accidents were . . . but, back then—when we started—cars were not going as fast as they [are now], and there weren't the highways that we have, and they weren't anything like what it was, later on.

Shirley: I believe that there's a maxillofacial specialty within medicine also. What's the difference between that and dentistry?

Perry: Well, they don't have that term, oral and maxillofacial. Generally, you're right. Plastic surgery is interesting. During World War I, the dentists who were out in the field were doing the fractures. They were the only ones who knew how to put teeth . . .

Shirley: . . . back together.

Perry: . . . back together. But, they saw that there were a lot of lacerations and burns and things like that. They didn't have the training for that and they had to do whatever they could do. But they felt like it would be a good idea to go back and get a medical degree, and some of them did, very few, but there were some people. They had what you call a double degree. But that, in and of itself, didn't help them because going four years in medical school didn't teach them one thing about burns, or anything like that. It was only the entry, they needed that to get into the training for general surgery, where you did burns. Plastic surgery grew out of this particular thing, where you had a number of these two-degreed people who did that. There were some one-degree [people], but back in the old literature you'll see D.D.S. M.D. They went on and started doing maxillofacial. They did the hair lips, the end of the cleft lips and the cleft palates. But, there were no [insurance] payments for those. They did not have the programs they do now, for those types of things. Once they started being covered, then the plastic surgeons got their training. Many of them took over that. For instance, the noses were all ENT [Ear, Nose, and Throat] men, that was strictly an ENT procedure—it still is, to a great degree. But plastic got in that because it was cosmetics. The function was one thing, but the cosmetics was another. So they got that, too. Essentially, they much preferred to do the cosmetic things rather than waking up in the middle of the night to do an indigent patient. So those fights don't exist. They exist at a certain level, maybe to get the guy to where people see him, and they know who he is. But when it all . . .

Shirley: . . . shakes out . . .

Perry: . . . shakes out, they want to do the breasts, the noses, and they do hands and things that people pay them for. So, yes, they do maxillofacial type of work, but we got the name. There

were, I think, some legal things, but that's our name—oral and maxillofacial surgery. So, if you sit on a plane with somebody and they say, "What do you do?" for a while—because they were proud of that—people would say, oral and maxillofacial. Nobody knew what that was. So, they say, "Jaw surgeon," . . .

Shirley: (laughing)

Perry: . . . or, "I take out teeth and do broken jaws." "Oh, you're an oral surgeon."

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: So, it's a name, that's what it is.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: But, most oral surgeons now do a lot of teeth extractions, impacted wisdom teeth, lots of implants—nobody else does implants but dentists. There's just nobody. They don't know how to do it. It's too dental. They'd have things coming off (laughing) they wouldn't know what to do, so we don't have to worry about that. You do fractures and orthographic procedures. We really developed, where people have great big "Gomer Pyle"¹⁴²-type jaws, and you break them and move them back—or the opposite—you move them forward. Those are done in the hospital, and that 99.9% is [done by] a *dentist* oral surgeon, oral maxillofacial surgeon.

A number of years ago, the government gave money to schools to get more doctors out, because they needed them. Again, there was underdevelopment. So they did, and then what happened was they *overdid* it. The schools had a lot of faculty, they had a lot of openings for students, and believe it or not, it got to where the medical schools really were looking for some money and some people. So after the oral surgeon, they developed programs where you did your four years of dental school and then you had three—four years now—of oral surgery. So, they developed a fifth year, and so on, and in six years, you could get all of your oral surgery and a cheap M.D. license. Because, we had all the stuff, we do all the histories and physicals, we're trained in the hospital after we go in. So, you get a whole lot of guys now who have two degrees, but they're dentists—they're practicing oral surgery. The M.D., they thought, would get them a leg up somewhere. But—as I told you before—you get the degree and you still have to go and do more, if you want to be a plastic surgeon or a head and neck surgeon, and some do. But the oral

¹⁴² Gomer Pyle was a television character played by Jim Nabors in a spinoff of *The Andy Griffith Show* called *Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C.* in the mid 1960s. One of Gomer's characteristic features was a big, broad, smile.

and maxillofacial surgery is really a dental thing. I don't know what we'll go to next, what the next thing will be.

Shirley: (laughing) Well, let's talk a little bit about dental organizations. Start with Alpha Omega¹⁴³.

Perry: Yes. Alpha Omega was great to me. I'll never forget, when I was here at Emory, they just had a little chapter. Like I told you before, you couldn't get in any other fraternity. They didn't do very much, except that you just knew you had a group. But as far as having . . .

Shirley: . . . a support group . . .

Perry: . . . yes, a support group, to a certain degree. But, you were in a ghetto—practically, is what you were in—so you were easily identifiable. On the other hand, you wanted to identify. Nationally, Alpha Omega was formed for the same reason, for dentists who could not get in any other dental fraternity. And—as I told you before—the need for a dental fraternity was really great, because when you did your lab work, you couldn't go back to the school to do that at night. It really took a lot more work, and they had laboratories in the fraternity houses. They had a lot of exams, and things like that, so Alpha Omega started nationally for that reason. There was one other small Jewish dorm fraternity, but it doesn't really exist to a great extent today. Alpha Omega went on, as most Jewish organizations do, to go well beyond what they were intended for. They became very strong, and the other fraternities were quite strong for a long time, though, you hardly even hear about them anymore. Nobody, I don't think, belongs to any of those others. But, Alpha Omega went on to build a couple of dental schools in conjunction with *Hadassah* in Israel. We have a large endowment fund which gives money every year for scholarships—not just to Jewish students—but we give a lot of money to different dental schools. In a number of cities throughout the world—it's an international dental fraternity—it's become quite a prestigious organization. Just two weeks ago out at the Perimeter Westin [hotel], our local chapter hosted a clinician—it was Ronny Goldstein—who did a webcast, and we broadcast to the world. It was on bonding, on aesthetic dentistry. You could see it in Toronto [Canada]; they had a bunch of people there, seeing it live, and other people who didn't have that could turn on their computer and see it. It was incredible, it really was. We had a huge crowd there, and it went just (snaps fingers) slick. So, that's the type of thing [we do]. We have a great magazine, the *Alpha*

¹⁴³ Alpha Omega (AO) is a professional Jewish dental fraternity and the oldest international dental fraternity. It was founded in Baltimore, Maryland in 1907 by a group of dental students originally to fight discrimination in dental schools.

Omega Magazine, which is a very well-respected, professional [publication]. So, Alpha Omega has been a great thing for me, particularly since—when I got over to [University of] Tennessee—there were only two or three Jewish boys. They did have sort of a cell (chuckles) over there, of Jewish boys. I don't think you could get in the fraternities over at Tennessee at that time if you were Jewish. (chuckles) But, in the meantime, Alpha Omega was working—particularly Marvin Goldstein—was working with the Anti-Defamation League to expose Dean Buhler. I will never forget that, and everything I could ever do for Alpha Omega, I would do. I've come back, and I've been president of the local chapter a couple of times. One time we were having our national meeting here. There's a national meeting every year which is well attended by people [from] all over the world. Alpha Omega is very, very, active here in Atlanta.

Shirley: I believe you are going to be honored by them this coming May [2002].

Perry: Yes. Alan Lease and I are going to get a special award from Alpha Omega¹⁴⁴, and that is really quite an honor. I'm very privileged . . .

Shirley: Do you want to talk a little bit about that? What kind of an honor?

Perry: I don't know, I think they've only had one or two recipients before, but I'm not sure exactly what it is. They asked Alan and me if we would be the recipients, and I we said yes, and whatever it is . . .

Shirley: . . . you'll find out in May!

Perry: It's a special thing. Yes, I did get an honor, an award from Alpha Omega once, in conjunction with Israel Bonds¹⁴⁵. That was a good long time ago and that was a beautiful evening also.

Shirley: Talk about the State Board of Dentistry. You said you were on it. Tell me who appointed you.

Perry: Isn't that something? (laughing)

Shirley: (laughing) That's ironic.

Perry: Yes. The State Board of Dentistry is appointed by the Governor. People recommend to him and he ultimately does the appointments. The State Board is a group which, more or less, oversees the practice of dentistry in the State of Georgia. Every state has a State Board of

¹⁴⁴ In May of 2002, Alan Lease and Perry Brickman were co-recipients of the Marvin C. Goldstein Medal of Achievement of Atlanta Alpha Omega. Lease, an orthodontist, was twice president of Atlanta Alpha Omega Dental Fraternity and headed the orthodontic department at the Ben Massell Dental Clinic.

¹⁴⁵ Israel Bonds is the commonly known name of Development Corporation for Israel, the U.S. underwriter of debt securities issued by the State of Israel.

Dentistry, and Medicine, and Veterinarian Medicine, and all those different things. I think the health ones fall into certain categories under the Secretary of State. It really has changed a lot. Even when I was on the State Board, which was up until about a year or so ago.

Shirley: Who appointed you?

Perry: Governor Zell Miller¹⁴⁶ . . .

Shirley: . . . now, Senator . . .

Perry: . . . now Senator, appointed me. Supposedly, and theoretically, each of the regions in the state is represented. It doesn't always work that way because there are other entities that are supposed to be represented, and it goes over. There's one dental hygienist on the board. There's one non-dentist. That was something that happened also. I think all boards now have a non-member, supposedly to add authenticity. We had an undertaker, I think, on ours. So, he slept most of the time (laughing). He didn't know [about dentistry], I mean, it's ridiculous, really.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: But that's the way politics are. We're supposed to be the ones the governor appointed, so you'd think we would be non-biased. The board has a secretary, who is a state government employee. It's now down in Macon [Georgia]. It was up here in Atlanta [Georgia] for years, and they tried to save money. They were spending so much money on rent, and they could get people to work for them cheaper down in Macon, and also buy property down there. So that's where it is.

Shirley: Are the boards given in Macon now?

Perry: No, no they're not. The board oversees continuing education, for instance, and ethics. We're in charge if a patient complains, or if a dentist complains, or if the public complains. It goes to a committee, it's received and reviewed. There's an Investigation Committee that takes care of a lot of that. If it doesn't, we sometimes have what amounts to a trial. I think the complainant has a chance to either be tried there or in a regular court.

Shirley: Does the State Board of Dentistry have the power to revoke a license?

Perry: Yes it does. The board has its own attorneys. It works different in the State of Georgia. The attorney, is not our attorney really, it's the State's attorney. So, in Virginia, the board has their own attorney, and that's much better because, he doesn't owe his allegiance to the governor, or anybody else. It's really for the board. It works a lot better. At one time, for

¹⁴⁶ See footnote 133

instance, we were in charge of whether or not people could stick up a sign making claims that they were better than anybody else. There are certain things you can't do. Signs can [only] be so large. Advertising used to be very, very strict—very proper. You couldn't have a sign over a certain size. You couldn't advertise in the Yellow Pages¹⁴⁷ and claim that you do all these things. It's disgusting now—if you look in the Yellow Pages—lawyers, doctors, and all that, it's ridiculous.

Shirley: That's why the Yellow Pages are so big now. (laughing)

Perry: That's right. So, as it evolved, I was there to really see how that changed so much. At one time we were telling people, "No, you can't say you're so and so." And they'd bring in their lawyers, and after a while, they'd beat us up in court. I think they don't even handle that part any more. I think that's just the Secretary of State. You trade names and you can [be] "Doing Business As" . . .

Shirley: . . . DBA.

Perry: Yes. It's also for violation, a person who is caught doing drugs, or things like that. We do try to rehabilitate, do some things to try to get them in programs, and we oversee that. We have to go in and check and be sure that they are indeed taking those things. Sometimes, we get them back into the practice and they're not able to write prescriptions—for instance—for a few years, because they might get some of [the drugs for] themselves. It's pretty complicated, much more than I thought it would be. There had never been an oral surgeon before on the board. That was a big thing and oral surgeons were really excited. But I didn't act as an oral surgeon on the board. You just act as a dentist. An interesting thing, they used to have their exams down at Emory, and they had them down at Augusta where the dental school is.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: Emory is not in existence anymore, so we had to go down and give the boards in Augusta. They don't have any surgery on the boards. There are fillings, inlays, things like that, cleanings. I told them I didn't really do that. I had the training, but I wasn't that up on that. But I did and it was okay. Then they moved it, when we became a part of the program which included about seven states. So you recognize those other states, and they started having them on weekends. I would have to go out of town, and get in a hotel that was within walking distance of

¹⁴⁷ The Yellow Pages refers to a telephone directory of businesses in which advertising is sold. The directories were originally printed on yellow paper, as opposed to white pages for residential listings.

the boards. I'd have to walk over there while everybody else is camped out at the nice hotel. They'd come home afterwards, after the day, and they'd go out. I couldn't do that because of *shabbas*. Then, when I get in there, when you grade somebody you'd have to write things down, and I wouldn't do that. I told them they had to give me a secretary. So, they got tired of that.
(laughing)

Shirley: (laughing)

Perry: They said, "Can't we work a deal?" (laughing) I said, "I'll do all the conscious sedation." There is another license in Georgia where you have to have special training to put people to sleep or to sedate them. So, the deal was that I was in charge of that—the entire State of Georgia—for conscious sedation, general anesthesia. I didn't have to give any more of the boards, so it worked good for everybody, really.

Shirley: Worked out for everybody.

Perry: Yes.

Shirley: You brought up something here that we haven't talked about, and that was, your orthodoxy—the fact that you're *shomer Shabbat*¹⁴⁸.

Perry: Yes.

Shirley: Let's talk a little bit about your synagogue affiliation, your activities in the Jewish community.

Perry: Okay. Before we do that, there are, probably other dental societies. I have been active in the Oral Surgery Society. Back in those years when I was, maybe, the eighth guy in Atlanta, there were just eight [oral surgeons]. There must be close to a hundred now, but there were very few in the state. The national organization really wanted the states to start developing state organizations. We didn't even have them. You were just out on your own, more or less. So again, being in the right place at the right time, I was the youngest one. There were some really nice, seasoned, older people, but I was the secretary for that first group that formed the Georgia Society of Oral Surgeons.¹⁴⁹ Later on, I became president, and most people do, after they go through the chairs.

Shirley: Yes.

¹⁴⁸ Under Jewish law a person who is *shomer Shabbat* conforms to the prohibitions against certain forms of creative acts (*melacha*) beginning at dusk on Friday and ending after sunset on Saturday. The observant Jew does not cook, spend money, write, operate electrical devices, or carry out other activities prohibited on *Shabbat*.

¹⁴⁹ The Georgia Society of Oral Surgeons (GSOS) is a professional organization promoting awareness of the qualifications and functions of dentists specializing in Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery.

Perry: That was really a key thing. Georgia is really one of the best states in the country. We were the second, I think, in the entire country to have voluntary examinations for general anesthesia. I mean, we really are strict on that. We just did some study of the data from all the way back to the beginning of the organization, which was back in the 1960s. There has never been anybody who has been examined by our board—of our group—there’s never been a fatality in the State of Georgia by anybody, with any patient, who has been taken care of by somebody who has been examined by us.

Shirley: That’s a pretty impressive number.

Perry: Yes, zero, and that’s not really true around other places where people are doing things that they shouldn’t do, and they haven’t been examined. So, that was something that I was happy to be a part of.

So, as far as the orthodoxy, I was raised in an Orthodox synagogue, as you remember.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: My house was not an Orthodox house.

Shirley: We didn’t put the name of the synagogue you were raised in.

Perry: It’s called the B’Nai Zion Synagogue. It’s now a Conservative synagogue, and it’s an active synagogue in Chattanooga [Tennessee]. It’s been there over 120 years, I guess. But it was Orthodox when I grew up, all the time I was there. I was accustomed to that, and actually, when I came to Atlanta, when I went to *shul*, it was at AA, which was Orthodox . . .

Shirley: . . . Ahavath Achim¹⁵⁰ . . .

Perry: . . . which was Orthodox also. So, again, that’s what I was. Then we went off on our journey, training and all that, the Army, the Air Force, and back. We were married by Rabbi [Harry] Epstein¹⁵¹. There wasn’t a *shul*—they were in transit, so to speak. They were not yet into the big *shul*. So we were married at the Progressive Club¹⁵² in 1955 by Rabbi Harry Epstein. When we came back, Shirley’s parents had continued at Shearith Israel¹⁵³ for a long time—but

¹⁵⁰ See footnote 73

¹⁵¹ Rabbi Harry Epstein took the rabbinate position at Ahavath Achim (AA) Congregation in Atlanta in 1928, where he served for more than 50 years. Under his leadership, the congregation transitioned from an Orthodox orientation to Conservative Judaism, where he introduced a Sunday school, mixed seating of men and women, and the *bat mitzvah* ceremony for girls.

¹⁵² The Jewish Progressive Club was established in 1913 by Russian Jews who felt unwelcome at the more exclusive and expensive Standard Club that had been founded by German Jews in 1867. Located on Pryor Street in Atlanta, the Progressive Club included a clubhouse with a hall for dances, a billiard room, and a swimming pool.

¹⁵³ Shearith Israel is a Conservative synagogue in the metro Atlanta area.

they had belonged to AA for a good, long time. They went there, so we went there. It was a very traditional, conservative, *shul* at that time. They did have mixed seating, which was a difference from what I was accustomed to.

Shirley: Well, I believe when they moved from Washington Street to Northside and Howell Mill . . .

Perry: . . . yes, I think that's what happened . . .

Shirley: . . . or Northside and Peachtree Battle, they integrated their seating.

Perry: Well, that was part of the deal. They had agreed to go into the Conservative¹⁵⁴ movement and apparently a lot of people welcomed that. That was not something I had done before, but that was done, and as far as I could tell well, we went because her parents were there. They had a traditional service, and it was very similar—to a great degree at that time—to what we had had, with those exceptions. I was already accustomed to driving to *shul* because that's where we had lived after we had moved. When I was a kid, we moved to a place where we had to, it was just too far to walk. That was something you just accept. It's interesting now—when I think about it—why they did that and how they thought they could make the laws or rules, but it was done. I've done a lot of study on that and the evolution of all that. Most of the people who were the *shul*-goers were not involved in those decisions. They didn't know really, where it came from. They didn't know the movement, how many people really went to national meetings, or did anything like that. You just went to *shul*.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: I think the churches have had the same type of thing. Most of the time, you don't question that, nor do you know the history of the movements. It's really interesting, because the history of the Conservative movement is not like I thought it was, and it's not like most people thought it was. I thought—because every *shul* I'd ever seen that was Conservative had been Orthodox—I assumed that the Conservative movement came out of the Orthodox movement. That seemed natural to think.

Shirley: It did.

Perry: Because every *shul* that I'd ever seen in the south—and I'd only been in the south—that's the way it was. So, logically, you would think that. Well, that was not the case at all. The

¹⁵⁴ See footnote 71

Reform¹⁵⁵ movement was really the first movement in this country. Orthodox¹⁵⁶ came in the 1870s, 1880s, 1890s, and then later. Mostly up north, but there were *shuls* in the south, too. The Conservative movement, when it started, came strictly out of the Reform movement.

Shirley: It was a move back towards more tradition.

Perry: What happened was, there were a lot of the young, first generation people, whose parents were Orthodox. They were traditional, but they wanted to be modern. They saw this new movement, they went for it, and then when they realized—it was pretty dramatic. They, as I read it, had their first banquet of the graduate class of the Reform movement.

<End Tape 3 Side 1>

<Begin Tape 3 Side 2>

Shirley: This is Side B, Shirley Michalove interviewing Perry Brickman on February the 1st, 2002. We were talking about the origins of the Conservative movement.

Perry: I think there probably were a number of things. What we have—it's striking—from the history, is that they walked out of that banquet, went up to New York, and started the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.¹⁵⁷ That's really how the Conservative movement started. These people were respectful, they were brought up Orthodox. You've been to the place up there, they have an incredible library. They were big *talmudists*.¹⁵⁸ They could talk the talk. But, if you look back where they came from, their intentions—intellectually—they were Reform already, they had already been Reform. So, I think what happened, Solomon Schechter¹⁵⁹—all those people—all those giants that I always thought, “Hey, Solomon, [and] those people really were believers! They were real believers.” If you really go back and look into it, they were not. They were proud Jews who had already made the decision in their mind that they were not going to adhere to all the rules and regulations, and they were going to be a modern type of Jewish

¹⁵⁵ See footnote 55

¹⁵⁶ See footnote 56

¹⁵⁷ Jewish Theological Seminary of America is a Conservative Jewish education organization in New York City. It is one of the academic and spiritual centers of Conservative Judaism and a major center for academic scholarship in Jewish studies.

¹⁵⁸ A talmudist is a student of, or expert in, the *Talmud* (the body of Jewish civil and ceremonial law and legend) and/or a person who accepts the authority of the *Talmud*.

¹⁵⁹ Solomon Schechter was an American rabbi, academic scholar and educator, most famous for his roles as founder and President of the United Synagogue of America, President of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, and architect of American Conservative Judaism.

movement. So, as those things started evolving, and women started coming in, that could have been predicted from the very beginning, if you knew what it was.

Shirley: If you knew the history.

Perry: Yes, and those in the know really did know the history, they did. But they were going to do it slowly, and it happened. Anyway, the way it came down to me—talking about me—is that Rabbi Epstein retired, or he left. He was no longer . . .

Shirley: . . . he became Emeritus.¹⁶⁰

Perry: . . . he became Emeritus. They had another rabbi who came in there. Again, if you had just taken the time to go back and see where he was from, and what he had done, and what he was for, it was all written down, you could have seen it. He was an extreme egalitarian.¹⁶¹ He was really in the mode of the Conservative movement. Women, that's just one part of it. *duchenin*¹⁶² they couldn't care less. If you wanted to, fine, [if] you don't want to, that's fine, too. A lot of tradition doesn't make that much difference. So I just saw that happening, it just kept happening . . .

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: . . . and one day, one *Shabbos*—I went every *Shabbos*—we were sitting there, and they had returned the *Torah* to the ark.¹⁶³ All of a sudden, I see this cute little girl walk up—with her short skirt—up to the *bimah* and start *davening nusach*.¹⁶⁴ I said, “Shirley, I'll see you later.” (laughing)

Shirley: (laughing)

Perry: She didn't know what I was talking about. (laughing) I just got up and walked out. That's the last time I ever was in there. I just left. She said, “Where are you going?” I said, “I'll wait for you outside,” and I did. That's it. That's the same thing as the other. If you looked at it—if somebody just saw that, and said, “Oh, that was the thing.” No, that was just the straw that broke . . .

¹⁶⁰ Emeritus refers to someone retired from professional life but permitted to retain the rank of their last office held, as an honorary title.

¹⁶¹ An egalitarian is someone who believes in the principle that all people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities.

¹⁶² In Judaism, the *duchenin* is a priestly blessing.

¹⁶³ In every synagogue, the *Torah* scrolls are kept in a cabinet called the holy ark. During services the scrolls are removed from the ark and prayers/songs/scriptures are recited as the scrolls are carried amongst the congregation. When they are completed, the *Torah* scrolls are returned to the ark.

¹⁶⁴ *Daven* is the act of reciting Jewish liturgical prayers and *nusach* refers to the melody or style of the service.

Shirley: . . . the camel's back.

Perry: . . . the camel's back. Because I saw where it was going, and it has.

Shirley: Hard question . . .

Perry: Yes.

Shirley: Had she been dressed properly, in a long skirt . . .

Perry: No. Wouldn't have made any difference.

Shirley: Would it have made any difference, or, was it just too far from your tradition?

Perry: I don't even know that I ever gave that any thought. That wouldn't have been consistent with . . . nobody there wore them. (chuckles) No, I don't think that's . . . although yes, if you want to bring it up. I don't know who is going to listen to this one day but, you see, what happens is, they go up to the *bimah*. There's all this kissing that goes on, the rabbi spends more time kissing the *balebatim*¹⁶⁵ and the people that he chooses, just certain ones. It's a big social thing. He's a director of social events and public relations, a lot of announcements of all this stuff, and cut out a lot of the *Torah* reading. That was beginning to happen. [He] wouldn't read the entire *Torah* reading. That's what you go to *shul* for on a *Shabbos* is to hear the *Torah*. He would select certain parts. I was even leaning, or reading *Torah*, and he'd say, "No, we're not going to do this today. We're not going to do that." That's unheard of. Who is to say? They are supposed to read the entire *Torah*. That's it. So, that's [why] . . . they could have worn a burka¹⁶⁶ (laughing) . . .

Shirley: (laughing)

Perry: . . . and it wouldn't have made any difference, if you're not going to read the *Torah*. (laughing)

Shirley: So, after you walked out . . .

Perry: Yes . . . (laughing)

Shirley: . . . you ended up at . . .

¹⁶⁵ *Balebatim* at synagogue are laymen, congregants, non-clergy. It can also refer to a person of high standing.

¹⁶⁶ A burka is an enveloping outer garment worn by women in some Islamic traditions to cover themselves in public.

Perry: I just went to [Congregation] Beth Jacob.¹⁶⁷ It's in the neighborhood. I knew a lot of the people, and so, that was it. When I grew up, my pronunciation was the “*sus*” the Ashkenazie.¹⁶⁸

Shirley: Yes, yes.

Perry: I had that up until the time . . . actually, at one time—I think it was all over the world—there was sort of an agreement to start pronouncing Hebrew in the Sephardic¹⁶⁹ way, because that's the way they spoke in Israel. That's the way Hebrew was spoken. In the Conservative movement, they agreed to do that, and so Rabbi Epstein did that. It was okay. It was fine because really, if you're going to learn Hebrew and go to Israel, that's certainly a good way to do it. Finally, it took a long time, and I learned how to say the “*tus*” instead of the “*sus*”. Then, when I got back over to Beth Jacob, everybody was saying “*sus*”.

Shirley: So, now you speak Ashkispardic?

Perry: Sort of. I tell you, there are some words that are really hard for my ear to hear both ways. I like “*Ashray yo shevah, vey succa,*” you know?

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: That just sounds good, “*vey tucca,*” it's hard. I joke, I say, “Can you imagine somebody having a vatectomy?”

Shirley: (laughing)

Perry: (laughing) You know?

Shirley: That would be interesting.

Perry: Well, that's mixing languages.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: Anyway, I mostly *daven* Ashkenazie and I read *Torah* in Sephardi.

Shirley: Okay.

Perry: It's crazy.

Shirley: It works.

¹⁶⁷ Congregation Beth Jacob is Atlanta's largest Orthodox congregation, and one of its oldest.

¹⁶⁸ Ashkenazie refers to Jews of northern and eastern European background (including Russia) with their distinctive liturgical practices and religious and social customs.

¹⁶⁹ Sephardic Jews are descended from those who lived in Spain and Portugal. The term is used in contradistinction to Ashkenazi, but it does not refer to all Jews of non-Ashkenazi origin.

Perry: It works, yes . . . (laughing) I like it a lot more. I like the Orthodox because you know where you're at, keep the rules. That goes back to all my military [experience]. I'm just more of a discipline type of person, and besides that, I really do believe . . . here's what I'll tell you. I truly believe that there are slippery slopes, and once you start making exceptions to rules, and thinking that you're able to make exception to rules of something that was always that way . . . you can do that, but you're never going to be what you were before. Then, what happens is—and we see it in this country with all the intermarriage—it's happened in every family. Almost all of my cousins and their children, almost everybody's [children] have either intermarried or are not Jewish any more. It happens so much.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: But, I think if you start making rules and allowing it, one thing leads to another. They even have weddings . . . I can't stand it, I just don't think it's right—if you have a Jewish wedding—to let non-Jewish people under the *huppa*.¹⁷⁰ They do that all the time and one thing leads to another. If a sister of a girl marries a non-Jewish guy, even though the kid is Jewish, if the husband is not, then the cousins go in the summertime to play with them and half the time they go to a church. They showed all the data, once there's intermarriage, three generations later, it's gone.

Shirley: Do all of your kids belong to Orthodox synagogues?

Perry: No.

Shirley: Do any of them belong to Beth Jacob or to an Orthodox synagogue?

Perry: No. Laurie does. She belonged to a Conservative *shul* down in Dallas [Texas] and left and went to an Orthodox *shul*, and they were great for her and her kids, really, really great! They did extremely well, much better, she liked it a lot. Teresa lives in Orlando [Florida], and they don't really have an Orthodox *shul*. I think they have a real small *chabad*.¹⁷¹ She goes to a Conservative *shul*, she goes every week, but I think if they had an Orthodox *shul*, she wouldn't belong probably. Although, the other day, I saw her e-mailing somebody. She gets one e-mail

¹⁷⁰ A *huppa* (or *chuppa*) is a canopy under which a bride and bridegroom stand during a traditional Jewish wedding ceremony.

¹⁷¹ *Chabad* is an acronym for *Chochmoh, Binah, Da'at* (wisdom, understanding and knowledge); the name of a movement predicated on the concept of studying and understanding God and His relationship with the world.

that she looks at for the weekly *parashah*,¹⁷² and that's Rabbi Zader. She loves (laughing) Rabbi Zader. So, she knows how to pick and choose.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: Jeffrey did belong to AA, because that's where he grew up, but he left AA and he went over to [Congregation] Ariel¹⁷³ . . .

Shirley: . . . which is also Orthodox . . .

Perry: . . . right down the street from him. But, they don't belong there now. They don't belong anywhere now. But, they'll have to make a big choice [about] what they're going to do, in the next few months. His son goes to Hebrew Academy, and Laurie's two children go to Day Schools, and Teresa, who is down in Orlando, her daughter goes to what they call a Hebrew Day School. So, all of the kids go to Day School.¹⁷⁴ Not many people can say that.

Shirley: Not many people can say that. My grandmother used to say that you can tell how you raised your children by how your grandchildren turn out.

Perry: One hundred percent, yes, but you have to be lucky, too.

Shirley: That's true.

Perry: I'm not really trying to be . . . you know, it's easy to talk. If you've been lucky, you can act too smart for your britches, but a lot of it you don't have control over.

Shirley: True. Let's go to Jewish communal activities. Talk to me a little bit about the Federation¹⁷⁵ [Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta].

Perry: Well, Federation was something that—as far back as I can remember—we were involved with when we came back to Atlanta. Early on, we were involved with synagogue and Federation. Leaders of the Federation, lots of them, were AA presidents, and they graduated and went over to the Federation. That's the way it worked. There were some Temple¹⁷⁶ people also, that did the same thing. But Gerald Cohen, [Dr. William] Billy Schatten, people like that, the

¹⁷² The *parashah* is the weekly *Torah* portion to be read during Jewish prayer services, the *Torah* used in Jewish liturgy during a particular week.

¹⁷³ Congregation Ariel is an Orthodox Synagogue, located in Dunwoody, Georgia, a suburb of Atlanta.

¹⁷⁴ A Jewish day school is an educational institution designed to provide children of Jewish parents with both a Jewish and a secular education in one school on a full-time basis.

¹⁷⁵ 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, and educational opportunities. It is part of the Jewish Federation of North America (JFNA).

¹⁷⁶ The Temple is a Reform synagogue in Atlanta and the oldest Jewish congregation in the city. Typically, Reform congregations use 'temple' and 'synagogue' is used by Conservative congregations. The word '*shul*' is often used by Conservative and Orthodox congregations.

Cubas [Joe and Max], many of the people who were involved in Federation were formally AA people. So, you had some support. I got on committees and was on the board and was an officer for quite a number of years. Then there comes a time where they make a decision, I guess, who's going to be the vice president, and that's tantamount. That was then. Now they have lots of vice presidents. It's a big organization now.

Shirley: Yes. But if you were the vice president, it was assumed you were going to be . . .

Perry: . . . pretty much, yes . . .

Shirley: . . . president . . .

Perry: . . . yes, and you worked on a lot of committees before or you were a chairman. Like, I was the lay president of *Hillel*,¹⁷⁷ which we had then, we have YAD now.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: But, I got a lot of experience in that, and worked with some of the other agencies—a number of the other agencies. We'd go to everything there was, every kind of event. I started going to Israel in 1967, although I didn't go with the Federation. I think I went in 1973 with Federation. Really, the 1970s is when we started doing a lot with Federation.

Shirley: Talk to me about your presidency of the Federation.

Perry: Somebody said that—I don't know if it was Terry Bagen, or Terry Bagen says that I told her this, but—if you had been president of the Jewish Community Center, you're president forever.

Shirley: (laughing) Yes.

Perry: You're one of the *balebatim*. They call you in for things when they make big decisions. That's true in a lot of organizations.

Shirley: True.

Perry: When you're president of the Federation, it's two years, then you're out of there. It's like Jimmy Carter¹⁷⁸ when he left the White House. He forgot his umbrella and he called there, and said, "This is Jimmy Carter, I think I've forgotten my umbrella," and they said, "Jimmy who?" (laughing)

Shirley: Yes. (laughing)

¹⁷⁷ Hillel, The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life, is the largest Jewish campus organization in the world, working with thousands of college students globally. The Young Adult Division (YAD) of the Jewish Federation serves 22 – 40 years olds.

¹⁷⁸ Jimmy Carter is a politician and philanthropist who served as the 39th President of the United States from 1977 to 1981.

Perry: So, it's the same thing. You're very, very active up until the time you're president. When you're president—all of a sudden—you inherit a lot of stuff, some of which you knew about . . .

Shirley: . . . and some you didn't.

Perry: . . . and some of it happens the next day. Poor Billy Schatten,¹⁷⁹ I remember when he was president—it was almost the next day—the “Who is a Jew”¹⁸⁰ thing came, and it really was hard. So, being a president of Federation, you're a cheerleader. You run the board meetings, and I think a lot of it happens up until the time . . .

Shirley: What was the most meaningful part of it?

Perry: Well, I was in the right place at the right time, if you want to look back. I had the opportunity to interview quite a number of people, and during my term we started a number of things. For instance, at the time—and I really regretted this—I think probably, if we had some staying power it would have been all right. But, *Hillel* was not doing well, for a number of reasons, so we started YAD. That was in my administration . . .

Shirley: . . . for the youth.

Perry: . . . youth movement, which encompasses Emory University, Georgia Tech, Life College, University of Georgia now, it's huge. We hired Rabbi [Lou] Feldstein¹⁸¹—he's not there now, but YAD served a real purpose. As it turned out, *Hillel* was floundering, and they subsequently got an incredible leader nationally. He has been responsible for programs with the Birthright Israel¹⁸² program, which [Charles] Bronfman and [Michael] Steinhard and one other gentleman started. They are just fabulous and *Hillel* is doing fabulous now, they really are. But we don't have *Hillel* now, we have YAD. Who knows, we may one day go back to that, but that

¹⁷⁹ Dr. William Schatten served as president of the Atlanta Jewish Federation from 1988-1990. During his lifetime he also served as president of AA, a board member of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, was an Emory University graduate and key supporter of developing a Jewish studies program there. The Schatten Gallery at the Woodruff Library is named in honor of his family.

¹⁸⁰ “Who is a Jew?” refers to a push in the late 1980s and 1990s, by rabbinic leadership in Israel, to pass legislation that defined a Jew only as one who has a Jewish mother. It was controversial because it excluded certain kinds of conversions, Conservative, Reform, and others.

¹⁸¹ Among his many contributions to the Jewish community in Metro Atlanta, Rabbi Lou Feldstein led Atlanta YAD, served as COO of the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta, and was rabbi at Congregation B'nai Israel in Jonesboro for 13 years.

¹⁸² Birthright Israel is a not-for-profit educational organization that sponsors free ten-day heritage trips to Israel for young adults of Jewish heritage, aged 18–32.

was my administration. We started *Tichon* [high school].¹⁸³ I really did have a lot of input into that.

Shirley: It's a community high school . . .

Perry: . . . a community high school. It's for kids who don't go to day schools, but they want some Jewish education. They don't go to Hebrew schools or afternoon schools, so they're there for an evening or two . . .

Shirley: . . . this is post *bar mitzvah*?

Perry: . . . yes, and a lot of people have done really well with *Tichon*. That's really kept a lot of Jewish kids in touch, so that they would stay in [the community], and we have some good people that have come out of that. That's a good program. But it was in my administration that we proposed that. It almost went under, and I can remember the day I had to really use my presidential power to be sure that it happened. As it turned out, it was one of the better things—even though that might not be, in the whole constellation of things, as big as some of the other things—that I could do as president.

The Jewish Education Service¹⁸⁴ is another one we started. We had the Board of Jewish Education, which was old-fashioned—but good—just run in an old-fashioned way. It was not high priority to a lot of people. Jewish Education was not very . . .

Shirley: . . . it was the step-child . . .

Perry: . . . it was a real step-child, and worse than that, it was being run by people who weren't modern, in a lot of ways. So they weren't impacting anybody. They might have, in some ways, been responsible for the way people looked at the thing, even though they were trying to do a good job. One of the things I did was I chafed the fellow who is in charge, now, of all the Federations. They've changed the name, it's the Jewish Community Association or . . .

Shirley: . . . United Jewish . . .

Perry: . . . United Jewish Communities.¹⁸⁵ Steve Hoffman from Cleveland [Ohio] is in charge of that. He's the head man now, and he was in Cleveland at the time. There was a man who had a very, very big foundation there who was really interested in a number of things, and

¹⁸³ *Tichon* Atlanta is a supplemental Jewish community high school, founded in 1992.

¹⁸⁴ The Jewish Education Service of North America (JESNA) partners with local Jewish communities through individuals, organizations, institutions, and foundations to create consistent excellence in Jewish education.

¹⁸⁵ United Jewish Communities is an organization incorporated in 1999 as a merger of the Council of Jewish Federations, (CJF), United Israel Appeal (UIA), and United Jewish Appeal (UJA).

Steve Hoffman was on his board. I was able to identify this, and I started—even when I was vice-president—really, working hard. I had heard that this foundation was going to award three communities as Lead Communities. They were called Lead Communities in the United States. And every place they went, I traveled, all over. I was at every meeting, all the Federation meetings. I was active, and I made a statement. Jonathan Woocher¹⁸⁶ is head of one of the big educational things now.

Shirley: Spell his name.

Perry: W-O-O-C-H-E-R. He's still very active in Jewish education. He remembers that I said that Atlanta was going to become the Vilna of North America. Because, it used to be that Vilna was known as the Jerusalem of Europe. So, I said we were going to be—with all due respect to the Sephardim—I didn't mean that, to the exclusion of them. I could have said Constantinople or Istanbul too. But, the meaning was that we were going to be the next great place.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: And I kept pushing that and doing some things. And working on that, we ultimately, were one of the three Lead Communities. We were named that. That was a big thing. What did that mean? It didn't mean that you won millions of dollars, but it did get us a lot of recognition, and we did get some grants. Then we started being able to do some programs. We had to go through a series of almost fake things. You had to create these entities which, that's just the way bureaucracy works. When you're a president, you don't know a lot of that stuff. Your Executive Director, [David] Sarnat,¹⁸⁷ was there, and they were all playing games to do these things, and we did. I forget what we called that entity, but we went through a lot of steps to create it, and now it's no longer [there]. We were able, by that time, to get a Jewish Educational Service, and Janice Alper¹⁸⁸—we interviewed her—she's still here. She's done a good job. So, that was another thing that we were able to do. Jewish Educational Service, YAD, *Tichon*—all that is educational.

Shirley: Right.

¹⁸⁶ For over thirty years, Jonathan Woocher, author of *Sacred Survival*, was the preeminent specialist in Jewish education policy in North America.

¹⁸⁷ David Sarnat served as Executive Director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta for 21 years beginning in 1979.

¹⁸⁸ Janice P. Alper has been active in the field of Jewish Education for many years and was editor of *Learning Together, a Sourcebook on Jewish Family Education*.

Perry: Levin is still at the Federation and he said I was the “education president”. That’s what I wanted. That was my . . .

Shirley: That was your agenda.

Perry: . . . [my] agenda was education. I was lucky, because the way things turned out, I was able. I did work really hard to make some of those things turn out. You never would realize now, with all the day schools—not that I had anything to do with that—for instance, their Jewish Educational Service now is doing a remote [degree]. You are able to get a Master’s degree in Jewish Education here. You couldn’t do it [before]. Emory does one, but not in Jewish Education. You can’t get the Masters of Jewish Education, it’s in other things. Georgia State is another. [University of] Georgia is another. But they could, in conjunction with Cleveland [Ohio]. There’s an institute in Cleveland, a four-year program to get a Master’s degree, and it’s all out of the Jewish Educational Service. They’ve also done a lot of other things to recognize teachers at all the different schools. Every year, we have an event where they honor the teachers, and they have special lectures annually. They’ve done a good job. So, that’s what I feel good about. We did the usual thing, we led missions. We were there, leading missions back in the time of the Gulf War.¹⁸⁹ Chicago [Illinois] and Atlanta were the only cities that went to Israel.

Shirley: I think we were all there at the same time, Chicago with Atlanta.

Perry: Yes. They were over at the King David [hotel], I think, and we were at the LaRome. You remember, people on the streets, they just really . . .

Shirley: . . . they came up and thanked you for coming . . .

Perry: . . . thanked you for coming. I went to Israel about every year for about twenty [years]. I’ve been there 21 times. So, that was another big thing, really pushing Israel. I have tried to be very, very close to all the Consul Generals who have been here. I really tried, at the time I was president, to have a closer relationship between the Federation and that.

A couple of other things I would say with Federation that I was able to do . . . I was really lucky. Three things, I would say. One of them is with Tom Glaser and the Jewish Chamber, American Chamber of Commerce . . .

Shirley: American-Israel Chamber of Commerce.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁹ The Gulf War (1990 – 1991), including Operation Desert Storm / Operation Desert Shield, was a war waged by coalition forces from 35 nations led by the United States against Iraq in response to Iraq’s invasion and annexation of Kuwait.

¹⁹⁰ Tom Glaser is the founder and former president of the American-Israel Chamber of Commerce, Southeast Region, which is now Conexx. The organization connects Americans and Israelis via business and networking.

Perry: American-Israel Chamber of Commerce. The Federation started that, and we incubated them. Actually, Tom had a tiny little room in the Federation. The way he got in was the proposal was there. [David] Sarnat was the Executive Director, and we didn't have any money, really, for that. It was sort of an abstract concept. But, this guy was very impressive. He was currently down in Athens, Georgia, as the head of the Chamber of Commerce. He applied and he said, "Why did he want to do it? He always wanted to do something for Israel." That's like a secretary comes to work in a medical office and says, "I always wanted to do something in medicine." It sounded so ridiculous, hokey. But, Marty Cogen told me, "Perry, you have got to hire this guy. He is great, and he really means what he says. He's making way more money there than he'll make here, but he can make this into something good. My brother-in-law up in western North Carolina knew him when he was up there, and says he is great. I'll guarantee you he will do." I said, "What do you mean you guarantee?"

Shirley: (laughing)

Perry: "You're talking about money?" (laughing) He says, "No. Alright, I'll tell you what. Why don't we make up some unbelievable goal for him in the first year. Let's hire him, and [see] if he can do what we ask him to do, in terms of getting business, getting some Israeli companies over here, doing business with them. It had to do with Home Depot¹⁹¹—I can't remember everything—buying some little tables, and it started off small. But, to make a long story short, he *far* exceeded what we told him to do. We gave money, and then it grew to what it is today, which is very, very big. So that was one thing. When they honored Tom, not too long ago, I was able to tell that story—that honestly—he would not have been hired if Marty Cogen hadn't really [supported it]. It shows that you have to know somebody. So, that was one thing.

Another thing was the GILEE Program,¹⁹² which is a great program. We gave money to Robbie Friedman. He's the Professor and Head of the Department of Criminal Justice at Georgia State University. He is today, and this is back twelve years ago. He wanted to start a program where they would take law enforcement officers from Georgia to Israel, and vice versa. He really saw the merit of doing that for several reasons, one of which is the Israeli police do certain special things that nobody else does. It's not Army, but it's police [who handle] bombs,

¹⁹¹ The Home Depot, a national chain of home improvement stores in the US, was founded in 1978 by two Jewish businessmen in Atlanta, Arthur M. Blank and Bernard Marcus.

¹⁹² Georgia International Law Enforcement Exchange (GILEE) is an award winning joint project of Georgia State University and local, state, federal, and international law enforcement / public safety agencies.

and things like that. Here, we're on the same latitude, we have a lot of the same things. So, we gave him some money. He's grown that thing into an enormous thing, he has the support . . .

Shirley: And GILEE is the acronym for the Georgia International Law Enforcement Exchange.

Perry: . . . Yes. He's taken maybe, twelve groups or more over to Israel. When you go down there, once a year, [to Georgia State University] they come from all over Georgia—the graduates of this program—to say hello to all the new Israelis that come. It's so prestigious to be selected now. Jackie Barrett,¹⁹³ who's head of the police department, has been on that. All the big sheriffs. If you go to "Podunk, Georgia", right now and you go into a little [sheriff's] office, you'll see an Israeli flag. Those guys love Israel, and it's due to this program. It's great. Recently, they had a huge program down at Georgia State, where they had speakers from all over the world. It was post-September 11.¹⁹⁴

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: It was well attended. They had a panel with Georgia Pacific and Southern Bell, and all the big companies. They were all supporters. They had their law enforcement people there, telling what they're doing. Jay Davis is now Chairman of the Board. He's the one that came on board after that. They have a few Jewish guys, but we were one of the first ones. And I personally, have given him money every year, because I was so taken with the program. So, that was the second. I said there was a third, but I can't think of it right now . . .

Federation is not a constituent agency. Originally they were not supposed to do programs.

Shirley: I'm glad you said originally (laughing) because, they do programs now.

Perry: Well, that's the same way as the United States government, and every other government.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: Once they start something, then they start doing other things.

Shirley: Yes.

¹⁹³ Jacqueline Barrett was Sheriff of Fulton County Georgia, from 1992 – 2004 and is the nation's first African American woman to be elected sheriff.

¹⁹⁴ The September 11 attacks were a series of four coordinated terrorist attacks by the Islamic terrorist group al-Qaeda against the United States on the morning of Tuesday, September 11, 2001.

Perry: Because they get people that can raise enough money, they can get a very big staff so they can do things.

Shirley: How big was the staff when you were president, and how much did the campaign raise? Do you remember?

Perry: No, I don't, although I can remember going downtown, when we had [an office] on Exchange Place where Bobby Johnson¹⁹⁵ and Mike Gettinger¹⁹⁶ ran the whole thing. He was the Executive Director, and they were one staff, I guess, and that was it, and a lot of volunteers. Then, when I was there, it was over on Peachtree [Street]. We had a larger thing, we added on to it several times and we got more people. I don't know whether or not we were raising \$6,000,000, \$7,000,000—whatever it is—but, we had a lot less Jewish people. We now have the Jewish Museum, [The Bremen Museum]¹⁹⁷ which is a great museum, and they're going to be asking to be a constituent agency soon. I don't know how many agencies we have now, but that will be another constituent agency.

Shirley: When you went out of your presidency, you became a trustee for life.

Perry: Yes.

Shirley: Is that what happens to past [presidents]? “Old presidents never die, they become trustees for life?”

Perry: We've only, I think, met one time or twice. We were asked to come to give some recommendations, and it turned out they really convened us there to run some things that they wanted to do. So, I think they were sorry they did it, because—as it turned out—(laughing), they backed off. I don't think you have much say so. I think—it depends—as an individual, you might. Just like Jimmy Carter has been a great citizen after having been President, and you can do that as an individual. I think there are some individuals who continue to, in their own right, do things. But, you know, every dog has his day. It's really not right to expect to . . . you're not the president any more.

¹⁹⁵ Ms. Bobby Johnson was the financial secretary for the Atlanta Jewish Welfare Federation of 29 years.

¹⁹⁶ Max C. (Mike) Gettinger became Assistant Director of the Jewish Federation in 1962 and shortly after became Executive Director, a position he held until retiring in 1979.

¹⁹⁷ The William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum in Atlanta celebrates and commemorates Jewish history, culture, and art through events and museum spaces. The Bremen also contains the Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History, which houses thousands of manuscripts, oral histories, and photograph collections, related to southern Jewish history and the Holocaust. This interview of Perry Brickman is one of those transcripts.

Shirley: Talk to me a little bit about some other community activities. Let's start with the Jewish Community Center.¹⁹⁸

Perry: Well, I'm on the Board of Trustees . . . I'm a trustee as well as on the board.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: And that's a real honor, because I was not a president there. I was really . . . I didn't even want to say this, but . . . I love the Center a lot because I was brought up in a Center in Chattanooga. I love this Center, and always have, I really do. It's great. They were having horrible times when I was an officer. They didn't have real fiscal responsibility. They were really struggling and they were just about ready to go under. I guess, you should ask other people, maybe ask Asher, Benader, and some other people, but, it was tough. I met with them a lot when I was president. I love Max Kuniansky.¹⁹⁹ I like to say, Max had me over for lunch one day, literally.

Shirley: (laughing) Not just to eat . . .

Perry: (laughing) No, no for lunch—he chewed me up and spit me out (laughing).

Shirley: . . . and spit you out.

Perry: But, I stood my ground because he loved the Center, he was a great Center person. He wanted to do a certain thing, like for Shirley Blumenthal Park,²⁰⁰ he wanted to do that. He was a generous person, too, just like those guys at AA. They would get in a morning *minyan*—Dave Center and Gerald and some of those people, and Orkin—and they'd raise a certain amount of money, which was a lot—it was enough to do something. But they didn't have anything to run the program.

So, we butted heads. But it wasn't long after that, that he sent me a really nice present. I think it was to say, "You know what? I respect you." Ultimately, we had to make a change—they had to make a change. It was not me, they had to do it. They were a constituent agency of ours, and they were bleeding, and they were expecting us to bail them out. Nobody wanted to be the hatchet man, but Philip Shunshcin told me that I was the guy that was the hatchet man, to finally get it done. He says, "Nobody knows it, but we have to make a big change." They finally did what they had to do, and then they got a new director which was Harry

¹⁹⁸ See footnote 89

¹⁹⁹ Max Lewis Kuniansky was president of the Atlanta Jewish Community Center from 1961-1964.

²⁰⁰ Shirley Blumenthal Park was a Jewish community center in East Cobb County, and part of MJCCA. It was closed and sold to Mt. Bethel United Method Church in 2013.

Stern²⁰¹, and man, they're in great shape now, they really are. They're doing good. They have to watch themselves though, because I just saw over in L.A. [Los Angeles, California] for instance, they've had to almost . . .

Shirley: They've had to close branches.

Perry: . . . many of the branches. You have to be exceedingly careful, because fame is fleeting, and good times are sometimes not always with you. You have to be very, very careful. So, I did have to make some . . .

Shirley: . . . hard decisions . . .

Perry: . . . and some, bad feelings. But mostly, as it turned out, everybody always likes a winner. So they're a winner now, so that's all forgotten.

The best thing I ever did with the Center was, I was co-chairman with Phyllis Freedman of Israel Expo 85.²⁰² George Stern was president, and asked if we would do that. Asked us a couple of years ahead of time, and it took about a year and a half to really plan all that. It was almost like an every-day event. It was really something. There were ten days that we transformed the Center into Israel. It was fabulous. We had about 65,000 visitors. We had to stop people on the street until we could empty out, because the fire marshal was all over us. It was great. You remember it . . .

Shirley: I remember that.

Perry: . . . the ball field was made into a huge *kibbutz*²⁰³, and down on the lower level we had like a *shuk*.²⁰⁴ Every Jew in Atlanta came there, all the Orthodox and Reform and everything.

Shirley: I think you had commemorative Coke bottles and all sorts of things.

Perry: Yes, we did. I've got all the stuff. We had people for weeks. We had ministers, we had ecumenical events, we had things on television. We had the opening event at the High Museum [of Art]²⁰⁵. They'd never done anything with the Jewish community, and we brought in—from two museums, the Israel Museum and the Ameritime Museum of Haifa—we brought in all kinds of relics. That was a very political thing. I didn't realize what it would take. We had

²⁰¹ Harry Stearn was CEO of the MJCCA from 1991-2006.

²⁰² Israel Expo 85 was a ten-day event held in March of 1985 at the Jewish Community Center in Atlanta. It was open to the public with activities, events, educational displays and more, promoting awareness and celebration of Israel and the Jewish faith.

²⁰³ A *kibbutz* is a collective community in Israel that was traditionally based on agriculture.

²⁰⁴ A *shuk* is an open air market in Israel.

²⁰⁵ The High Museum of Art in Atlanta is a leading art museum in the Southeast and a division of the Woodruff Arts Center.

some high-powered people helping us. We had some big shots who, ordinarily, would not get on their hands and knees, but they were on the floor of the Center putting things up.

Shirley: It was set up almost like a maze that you could go through.

Perry: Yes, we had all the backdrops, it looked just like Israel. All the stations, we have all the tapes now from all the stations that we got to, television, radio. That was the place to be, everybody came over. It was a fabulous thing.

There was a group that was opposed to doing it, because they said it would suck out all the community, and it was true. But, at that time, it didn't hurt anything. It really didn't hurt anything. It amalgamated everybody, it brought everybody together. It was a defining moment, there was no question about it. We have people today who put on their resume "worked on Israel Expo 85" because they met people there they'd never seen before. You had people from the Temple. Honestly, they were really great and did things that we couldn't have done to get certain things done. I don't want to mention names, there's too many names, I'll leave names out. But the opening event at the High Museum was huge. Can you imagine, that was \$100—we had to really swallow it—\$100 a person to go. It was a gala, tuxedos and everything like that. Then we came back for a fashion show at the Center afterwards with buses taking them over, with a lot of the people wearing Israeli fashions. It was really great. So, that lasted ten days, and it was a tremendous thing.

That was the first computer that we had used. I bought them a computer (laughing) to put some stuff on, and again, my friend Marty Cogen really—he keeps coming up—he's a good business man. We were running over. The budget was around \$350,000. Doesn't sound like much, does it?

Shirley: Not today (laughing), not in today's world.

Perry: That's why a lot of the people didn't think that we should do it. But, we were really keeping up. Then we got into a little trouble, we wanted to do some things. He got on that computer, and he put it all together and that just made it easy to do. And we broke even, we did the whole thing. It was great.

One of the great things to come out of that was the *Yad Vashem*²⁰⁶ exhibit. That was the last thing. You remember, we had archaeological exhibits and the children came, but at the last minute, we said we wanted to do a *Yad Vashem*. It was a going to cost another few thousand

²⁰⁶ Yad Vashem is Israel's official memorial to the victims of the Holocaust.

dollars. Couldn't do it. I had to go—let's put it this way—it should have been easy to get the money, but they wouldn't give it to me. So, I went to a few friends who had Federation endowment funds. That was back in 1985—that was the early part of it—and about four families gave us about \$1,500 a piece, and we did it. And those were the longest lines. You had to really stand in line to get in there, it was really something. After it was over, we kept that in the basement of the building there, and kept it alive. Then, we got a thing with Federation to where they opened it up when somebody wanted to come in. Then they started some schools, and they did that.

Shirley: It was the first Holocaust Museum in Atlanta, I believe, and it was in the basement of the Jewish Community Center.

Perry: We did that on a shoestring. I'm a photographer, and I actually took the pictures, made the pictures of all the people. Ours was different than most. We took our local survivors and made the exhibit around them, rather than the other. Of course, we . . .

Shirley: Which is still the case . . .

Perry: Yes, it is . . .

Shirley: . . . at the Bremen Museum.

Perry: . . . the Bremen Museum grew out of that. That's exactly where that came from. Jane Levy was the person at the Federation who would come and unlock the door, and a couple of others. But that was where it started, and that was the money—the \$6,000—that the people gave us was very greatly appreciated. And all that is forgotten. I did have the opportunity, when they were celebrating the new exhibit at Federation, when it first opened. At a Federation board meeting, I got up and said, "I know that you will want to know a little history about how this happened. Not to put a damper, or take away from any of the things that were done here, but let me tell you that we couldn't have had this if it hadn't been for four families."

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: Those people sat there, they'd even forgotten about it.

Shirley: Okay. Talk to me a little bit about photography.

Perry: Well, that goes together with dentistry, I guess. I started really taking 35mm back in 1956. I got a camera, this East German camera actually, of all things. It was during the Cold War, and I was at an Air Force Station where you weren't even supposed to take in the things. But I needed to take pictures of "before" and "after" on some of the patients. If they'd caught me

with an Exacta Camera (laughing) made in East Germany . . . they wouldn't have known, but, if they had known, it would have been ironic.

I started photography then. That basically started out of the dentistry, and I then gave a lot of talks [about it]. A friend of mine showed me how to make slides instead of sending them off. I did it all in the dark room myself. Just to think about that now, you can do that on a computer in . . .

Shirley: . . . no time.

Perry: . . . no time at all, and it's so good.

Shirley: How did you learn? Was it something you were interested in as a kid, or did you pick it up when you started dental school?

Perry: I probably picked it up then, just learned how to do it. My mother had a camera, she used to take pictures. I have her camera. It's a Brownie that opens up, one of those . . .

Shirley: . . . the old-time kind.

Perry: Yes, old-time Brownie. I don't think you could find any film that will go in there, but it's a great looking camera. My mother did a lot of things. I've still got one of her golf clubs too. She was really something. But, that's how I got into photography. The B-52s that they were bombing Afghanistan with . . .

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: . . . those planes, I took pictures of those planes, at least some of them. Because, in 1956 that's really when they started building them. The B-52s had just been built and the B-47, those same planes are flying now, it's unbelievable. So there may be one or two of those planes that are still in use, that I have pictures of. You know, with photography, you get one camera and then you have to get another camera, and another, and then they change film on you every five minutes. So right now, I'm still using good cameras. I'm not using digital right now because I can do so much more with a regular camera although, the digitals are improving.

Shirley: Talk to me about video. I know you do that, too.

Perry: Well, that was just an extension. If you have an eye for one thing, you can do the other. Shirley and I went to Russia as "*spies*" (chuckles) . . .

Shirley: (laughing)

Perry: . . . in the 1980s, and I took a camera there and did a production on "*The Tears of Glasnost*." You do some things with the kids and the family, but we did a lot of stuff that

happened around the Federation, documented a lot of things. I have a huge library of stuff that we took. I did a lot of audio, too. I have thousands of audio tapes.

Shirley: What's going to happen to all of your videos, your photographs?

Perry: I don't know, I'm in bad shape right now. I used to know where every single thing was, and now it's all on top of each other. I thought that having two days off, I was going to have time to get all that stuff together. It has not worked out.

<End Tape 3 Side 2>

<Begin Tape 4 Side 1>

Shirley: This is Shirley Michalove interviewing Perry Brickman. This is Tape Four, Side 1. We were talking about what you were going to do with your audio and video tapes, and you were saying that you wanted to contact Fay Landie . . .

Perry: Yes, Fay Landie is terrific.

Shirley: . . . at *Hillel*.

Perry: Yes, she's great. She runs that office and she's developed a way . . . well, there's some software that allows you to itemize things under certain categories.

Shirley: Yes, to catalog . . .

Perry: . . . to catalog things, and she said she would help me out. So, I think that's what I've got to do. But, a lot of times, people think what they have is important and then (chuckles) when you take it over there, they don't think it's all that important.

Shirley: (chuckles) People don't want it.

Perry: Right. So, some of the things would probably be good. I've got great video tapes of the two nights that the Russians came in and we settled over 300 people in Atlanta when they came to the airport. The one time I made an exception to a rule—somebody called me and said this guy was doing a story on that, and she borrowed the original of mine, and she left town.

Shirley: Oh my goodness.

Perry: About a year or so ago, I was in New York. I had seen an article in the *Wall Street Journal*, just a blurb, that something happened and they go and interview different people around about an event . . .

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: . . . and this girl's name was there. It said she was a videographer in New York City. (laughing) I called her up, she answered the phone, and I told her who I was. There was a real . . .

Shirley: . . . dead silence.

Perry: . . . dead silence. Then she didn't remember, and then she remembered, and I just told her, "I'm coming over to pick up my video." She says, "I don't have it. I never did. I gave that back, I gave it to so and so. I'd never, oh, I'm so [sorry]." So I checked it back here with the Jewish Family Career Service²⁰⁷ and they said they didn't have it. So, subsequent to that, I found that I had made a copy of it. I think I have the whole thing. That is an incredible thing, seeing those people come off the plane and interviewing them. I was all over it. I couldn't do that now, carrying all those . . .

Shirley: . . . all the equipment . . .

Perry: Yes. So, I'll give . . .

Shirley: That's the kind of thing the Jewish Archives in Atlanta [Bremen Museum] should have . . .

Perry: Yes, I think you're right.

Shirley: . . . as part of the history of our community.

Perry: Yes. I've got a lot of stuff like that.

Shirley: Just as we'll have these tapes.

Perry: Yes. Jane Levy encouraged me to enter a contest one time. We had *250 years of Jewish Life in Georgia*. It was at the Schatten Gallery. It turns out that it was 250 years of *life* in Georgia because Jewish life started just a few months after. That was an interesting thing—I told you before how lucky I am—I did this thing, and I was going to get somebody to help me and she couldn't. She was a professional and she was going to help. She told me I needed a voice, and she called Lois Reitzes.²⁰⁸ I didn't know Lois at the time, but I did get to know her. Lois was so kind and she even picked out some music that we could use for this particular thing.

Then I had another project that I was doing, and I went down to a place that was supposed to have been good, and they weren't. They did a terrible job, and the last minute another friend got me to someplace else. So, anyway, I did this thing on *Jewish Life in Georgia*. It was five parts, and we showed it to Schatten Gallery. It was a multi-image type thing, a dissolve show. It turns out that, *Beit HaTefusot*, the Museum of Diaspora in Tel Aviv, had their first contest. They had still photography and they had video photography. Jane asked me to enter

²⁰⁷ Jewish Family & Career Services (JF&CS) in Atlanta provides counseling and career support, services for older adults and individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and operates a full-service dental clinic.

²⁰⁸ Lois Reitzes is an Atlanta NPR radio show host, best known for her work on WABE FM 90, where she has been since 1979, making her the longest-running voice in Atlanta radio.

this production in there. It turns out they didn't want anything that long, but they let me enter one segment of it which was *Georgia's First Physician—a Sephardic Jew*, and I won second place, internationally. So, I got to go to Israel to . . .

Shirley: . . . accept your award.

Perry: . . . accept it from Abba Eban²⁰⁹

Shirley: Wow.

Perry: (laughs) That was fun, it was a lot of fun. I have so much stuff that I haven't really put together. I'm terrible about that. I collect a lot of things and then put them together at the last minute. So, I probably could sit down and create all kinds of interesting things.

I remember, one of the shortest pieces I ever did was maybe a minute and a half long. I showed it to the Federation at a board meeting. It was a eulogy to Bernie Howard.²¹⁰ I just put together some little things and got Shirley to narrate it. I had a couple pictures of Bernie and Joy, and I showed it there. It was a real tear jerker, but they probably would like that.

Shirley: Yes, those kinds of things.

Perry: I'd like to show that to Clark Howard.

Shirley: He probably would appreciate it. Let's switch gears a little bit now. Talk about your membership on the Medical Dental Board at the Jewish Home²¹¹.

Perry: Well, that's another interesting story, several stories that I'll tell you real quick. When I first came here, I went down . . . it was on 14th Street?

Shirley: 14th Street.

Perry: . . . I used to go there. At that time, Bernie Palae, and some of the others, were going. Most of the people that were in there were not infirm.

Shirley: It was more a retirement home when it was on 14th Street. You didn't have to need nursing care then.

²⁰⁹ Abba Eban was an Israeli diplomat and politician, and a scholar of the Arabic and Hebrew languages. His career included roles as Israeli Deputy Prime Minister, ambassador to the US and UN, and Vice President of the UN General Assembly.

²¹⁰ Bernie Howard and his wife Joy were owners of the home accessories business, Howard Unlimited, in Atlanta. Their son, Clark Howard, is a popular consumer expert and host of the nationally syndicated *Clark Howard Show*.

²¹¹ The William Breman Jewish Home has been serving the elderly and disabled in metro Atlanta since 1951. It provides long term skilled nursing care and short term rehabilitation services and is part of Jewish Home Life Communities, a non-profit organization.

Perry: We'd go down there. There was a little dental thing there, mostly it was medical, though. Drug companies would furnish a few little hor d'oeuvres, and we'd have our meetings and that was it.

Then they moved over to the present site. I can remember moving over there. Alpha Omega—my group actually—Ed Greene, Charles, Rosemary, myself and Ed Greene donated a whole bunch of stuff and set up a clinic there at the Jewish Home. It was really nice, and AOs would go over there and examine [patients], do cancer checks on them once a year. If somebody needed something, they could either go to them or go to their dentist, they would get transportation. It was nice both ways because a lot of people felt good about doing that.

It's just terrible what organizations like OSHA,²¹² which is a governmental agency, will do to cause things to shut down. It's really difficult to satisfy . . .

Shirley: . . . volunteer anything . . .

Perry: . . . right, to satisfy all their draconian²¹³ . . .

Shirley: . . . rules.

Perry: . . . rules. It's terrible! It was a clean place, we sterilized everything. But you had to have a full-time person, you had to have all this documentation and they made it so difficult that the Home could not continue to run the clinic. Same thing happened up in Chattanooga. We had given to the Siskin Foundation²¹⁴ there. We did a dental clinic in memory of my parents, and they had to shut down the thing for the same reason. The people from the dental community, non-Jews and everybody, were coming there giving their time. It's very difficult to . . .

Shirley: To do that.

Perry: . . . to work now. I feel so sorry for them at the Home. I've served there for a long time. They have to satisfy all these criteria. You can't do it! They come over there at a time when you're making hamburgers, and they'll stick a thermometer into the hamburger and if it doesn't register a certain heat, they give them a citation. If somebody came in your kitchen, you'd fail.

Shirley: Everybody would.

Perry: Everybody would. It's awful. Anyway . . .

²¹² Occupational Safety and Health Association (OSHA)

²¹³ Draconian refers to laws, or their application, which are excessively harsh and severe.

²¹⁴ The Mose and Garrison Siskin Memorial Foundation is a non-profit based in Chattanooga, helping children with special needs, families, and professionals through education, outreach, health care, and research.

Shirley: I was over there recently, and I guess it was Medicare²¹⁵ was in there.

Perry: Yes.

Shirley: They were measuring the width of the doors!

Perry: Yes. So, finally what's happened is that there are companies that specialize in servicing nursing homes. They have doctors and so on. Some of the good old-time doctors like Bernie Pelae come there and they'll see two or three patients, but most of these other doctors get the patients. We've been very lucky, the two or three of those people who work for these companies, have turned out to be really nice people—thank God—and they actually enjoy coming. Because at the meetings we have quarterly, you go over those people who have died and the personnel talk about some of the social things. Most of us have known all the people for so many years, and these people just sit there in awe. They really are impressed that there is a human side to it, not just a number.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: But they've been really good, and they like the Jewish food out there, too. (chuckles) But it's mostly, now, just going to meetings (laughing). It used to be you could do something, you could serve. I serve on the board, I go there.

Shirley: Yes. All right, you said you were the Education President of Federation. Let's talk about *Yeshiva* High School²¹⁶ and Greenfield Hebrew Academy,²¹⁷ and your involvement with them.

Perry: Well, those are the two oldest schools . . .

Shirley: Oldest day schools.

Perry: . . . yes. My children didn't go to either one. I really take my hat off to people who sent their kids back then. I know that a number of the leaders in the community said they would never give a nickel. The Federation wouldn't give it, nobody would give them money. They thought that these people were getting into a ghetto, that they should send them to public schools where we all went, most people went. But, they saw something, and they started something, and they have done a great job. The Hebrew Academy used to be a very low maintenance, low image

²¹⁵ Medicare is a national health insurance program in the U.S., begun in 1966 under the Social Security Administration.

²¹⁶ *Yeshiva Ohr Yisrael* of Atlanta is a private, Orthodox Jewish high school for boys in Atlanta.

²¹⁷ Founded in Atlanta in 1953, Greenfield Hebrew Academy (GHA) was the first Jewish day school in the country to be accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. In 2014, GHA merged with *Yeshiva* Atlanta high school to become what is now Atlanta Jewish Academy.

type thing. It's certainly not that now. It's an incredible, beautiful thing. Again, it just shows you how bad things lead to good things. I was involved, to a certain degree, in that too. You might remember, they really wanted to move, they had to move. They were growing and they sought to go out to the new campus where the Jewish Community Center is out in Zaban.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: But, it didn't work out. That's the easiest way of saying it. There were a lot of people that really felt that would be a great use of the money and . . .

Shirley: of the land . . .

Perry: . . . the land. Well, as it turned out, there wouldn't have been room for them. Second of all, they would have been stifled. They couldn't have built what they have now, no question about it. They were so lucky. They didn't think so, but they were. Just shows you, when you have to do something and you have a disappointment, you can go on sometime, and do much better. Recently another organization wanted to . . . the Center cannot subjugate, I think—I don't know the legal terms—but, God forbid, you never know what's in the future. If that land had to be given up for any reason, then anybody that was on that land would have lost what they had, even if they were a viable organization.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: If the parent was there, and [the school] went down, they couldn't promise them or give them any . . .

Shirley: . . . guarantees.

Perry: . . . guarantees. So it broke the back of that particular thing. But, they've done great, Hebrew Academy, and I have two children in the Hebrew Academy right now—one in early grades and one is graduating. I've spoken there several times as president. I've always enjoyed working with Dr. Frankle, particularly when he was there, and of course, Dr. Wagner is there now, and I know him also. So, they've done great things.

Yeshiva Atlanta, I've known them. I can remember, particularly, the Jewish Community Center *did* let them use their premises, down on Peachtree [Street]. A lot of people don't remember that. It was sort of an *Odd Couple*²¹⁸ type of arrangement. Rabbis were chasing

²¹⁸ *The Odd Couple* is a popular play written by Neil Simon in the 1960s. It's the story of two friends, Felix (very clean and proper) and Oscar (sloppy and casual), who become roommates and have to learn to co-exist.

kids downstairs and, people were trying to go swimming and finding a *dechah*(sp.)²¹⁹ <Tape 4 Side 1, 14:13> there. (laughing)

Shirley: (laughing)

Perry: Sometimes there were different worlds there, but it worked. They worked for a while up here on Lavista [Road], too, they had a place there. But, they've had a rocky time. They've always had a good school and their graduates have gotten into the very best schools. We've had a few people graduate [from] there, who have become rabbis. We've had some that have had distinguished careers in other things. And to the best of my knowledge, everybody who has ever graduated there has married a Jewish person, as far as I know. That may not be exactly right, but it's probably pretty close, and that's a lot different than 60% intermarriage²²⁰.

Shirley: Right.

Perry: So, there's something they do that's really good. They have some great *rabbanim*; Rabbi Estreicher, and others. Rabbi Cohen was the rabbi there for many years. Rabbi Abrams is there now. They simply need an infusion [of funds]. They need a one-time, really good, infusion. They do well, they teach well, they [just] need to look better. They need to really be able to have a capital campaign and have about five or six million dollars, and do what they have to do. It's a good school. It's not for everybody, it's about 55% non-Orthodox students.

Shirley: That's amazing.

Perry: Yes. There are still people that want their kids to go—just like the Catholics used to send [their children] to Catholic school—because they wanted the real thing.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: So, I'm on the board there and I try. There is a very disparate group, and I see there are a lot of differences [between] high schools [usually 9th – 12th grades] and junior high schools [usually 7th and 8th grades], and elementary schools [usually kindergarten through 6th grades]. [Parent Teacher Association] PTAs are really different. Mothers and fathers are so much more active, it seems like, in the lower grades. They really get in there with them. But it's not true [in high school] and unfortunately, you need a lot of parent involvement . . .

Shirley: To make a school . . .

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220 Marriage between people of different races, castes, or religions.

Perry: . . . to make a school really have a personality and to have it run really well. You look at almost any high school, and they don't really have the same [involvement] . . . unless it's a brand new one. Then they have a lot of energy going into that. That's really interesting to see the people who come to the board meetings.

Shirley: I believe you and Shirley were honored by *Yeshiva*²²¹ a couple of years ago.

Perry: Well, yes, a few years ago. That was very, very nice. It was a real honor. I wish them the best. I like to see them flourish, mainly because it's an Orthodox school, and they really teach. The teaching there is really legitimate—that's a bad word, isn't it? (chuckles)

Shirley: (laughs)

Perry: What I mean is that it's a *Torah* True—that's what they call it, I think—school. They teach the *Torah* as it's written, and they believe what they teach. And the *mitzvahs*²²² that you do are not just because *you* want to do them. It's not something that makes you feel good, it's because you're supposed to do it. That's what you're supposed to do. There's a big difference in that. I think they teach the kids a lot, and they come out of that being good Jewish kids. I know a lot of people who backed into there. They got there by mistake almost, and they're just so excited that their children went there. I have a friend whose kid won a full scholarship to Duke [University] from there, and he tells me all the time how great *Yeshiva* was for his child.

Shirley: Talk a little bit about your involvement with ADL [Anti-Defamation League].

Perry: I'm not too involved, I'm on the board.

Shirley: What does that entail?

Perry: ADL sort of paralleled a lot of the things that I went through. I had to like ADL because they were involved in the thing at the dental school, and other things. In the old days, it was just a pure . . . ADL was anti-defamation. It was started many years ago as an outgrowth of the [Leo] Frank²²³ trial here. It's gotten into a lot of things that I don't have that much interest in. Not that they're not valid, but they're a lot more liberal in their politics than I am. (chuckles) Besides which, they never have any . . . I told them, if they'll have a *kosher* meal when they have

²²¹ Perry and Shirley Brickman received honors from both *Yeshiva* Atlanta High School and *Torah* Day School of Atlanta.

²²² The Hebrew word *mitzvah* refers to precepts and commandments as commanded by God, or a moral deed performed as a religious duty.

²²³ Leo Frank, a Jewish factory superintendent in Atlanta, was falsely accused of murdering 13-year-old Mary Phagan. He was convicted and jailed, then kidnapped from jail and lynched in 1915.

their meetings, then I'll come. But I'm not going to do it, and they just never end up doing it, except at the "*The Dinner*" [ADL Annual Gala].

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: We usually go to that.

Shirley: We're getting ready to wrap up. What haven't I asked you that I should have?

Perry: I don't know. What I'm going to do? I'm working three days a week now, but it turns out . . .

Shirley: You're semi-retired?

Perry: Well, I'm working hard those days, and sometimes I'm working four days a week. It's kind of hard quitting, I think. What am I going to do? You have to hope that you keep your health, that's one thing that you never know about. I have so many friends that are sick and dying, and it just happens really quick. So, you have to make yourself productive and do some things. So, I would like to do a few things.

Shirley: Such as?

Perry: There are some simple things, like going to see aunts and uncles who are real old, before they die. It feels really bad when you don't do something you should do.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: And, getting all these things [documents] I told you about, getting them together. Spending more time with the grandchildren and my children. But, all and all, I have really been the luckiest person in the world. I told you so many examples of how, when things were bad, they became good, and when they were good, they got better. There are sometimes disappointments, but they turn out, usually, for the best. There's a Hebrew expression that says, "Everything will work out." Everything works out. I probably need to go to *shul* more. I go at least once a week, and many times two or three times. I probably could do that a little bit more.

But, the things that bother me . . . I was just looking at the computer before you came here. There was a horrible article. It was about all these rabbis that are going to Israel now to plant trees in the Palestinian lands. We have so many Jewish people now that don't take the time to do things Jewish. They'll go to any extent to do what they think is right, but they won't take five minutes to learn some basic Jewish things. I think they're basically good people, but they're too lazy, or they're afraid, to learn more about themselves. So what they do is funnel it to the other thing. It's very hurtful to Israel. I really hate to see that. It bothers me a lot when you see people do that.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: I did remember one thing. It was at the Federation and Billy Schatten was the president, and I eluded to this earlier. Five minutes after he became president, this *mehudee*(sp.) <Tape 4 Side 1, 23:06> thing hit. The “Who is a Jew” thing.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: It had to do with marriage and divorces and it never really was like what people said it was. They always accepted people who came from here. It’s just that you couldn’t get *married* over there unless . . . it was their rules. But people put a chip on their shoulder and expect somebody to knock it off, and then they’re very happy.

Anyway, we had a group down at Federation that convened, and they said they weren’t going to give a nickel to Israel, or the Federation, if Israel didn’t rescind that. It was shocking to me for them to be thinking of themselves like that.

Shirley: Yes.

Perry: A lot of them were married to non-Jewish women, and their brand of Judaism said that it was okay if their child . . . if the father was Jewish, it was okay. My whole life might have been changed by that. I remember, I got up and—I must say, nobody even paid any attention to me, which showed you that it didn’t make any difference—but I got up and I said, “I absolutely disagree, and there’s no way I wouldn’t give money. If Israel told me they wouldn’t *take* my money, I would make them take the money, and that was wrong to do.” They just looked at me and nobody even answered me. They just went about their business, and they really did make that resolution. They never followed through on it, though. Somehow or another that thing was worked up, but they were ready to not do that. I couldn’t believe that! I think, even nowadays, there’s a lot of that. People think about themselves and not about . . .

Shirley: . . . the greater Jewish community.

Perry: . . . the greater Jewish community. So, if I had my druthers, I would like to see people get along better. That’s easy to say. (chuckles)

Shirley: True. Well, thank you, Perry.

Perry: You’re welcome!

<End Tape 4 Side 1>

INTERVIEW ENDS