

**THE WILLIAM BREMAN JEWISH HERITAGE MUSEUM
ESTHER AND HERBERT TAYLOR JEWISH ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION
SAVANNAH JEWISH ARCHIVES**

MEMORIST: ALAN GOTTLIEB
INTERVIEWER: HARRIET MEYERHOFF
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Interview Begins

Harriet: Today is June 3, 1999, and I am interviewing Alan Gottlieb. Alan, let's start back from the early day when were you born?

Alan: I was born in Savannah on August the 27th, 1928. My father was born in Savannah, I think it was like January the 26th, 1898. My mother was born, not in Savannah, she was born in Detroit, I think she was born in Detroit, Michigan, where her father was the Rabbi of a Shul there and then my mother, my grandfather came here to be the Rabbi at the B.B.Jacob¹. His name was Rabbi Charles Blumenthal. His Hebrew name was Zalman Mendel, I'm not sure what his father's name was. Anyway...

Harriet: What were your parents' names?

Alan: My mother's name was Lillie Leah Blumenthal. Her father was Rabbi Blumenthal. My father was Joseph, Joe Gottlieb. His mother and father - my father's mother and father were Isidore Gottlieb, his Hebrew name was Isser. Isser Gottlieb. And my grandmother's name, her father was the chazen² at the B.B.Jacob Synagogue from around 1910 and they came to Savannah, and I suppose my grandfather, Isser Gottlieb, met Jennie Gottlieb. Her name was Shenna Chiah Bos, her father's name was Bos. Let me see if I can think of her father's name. Avraham David. I was named after him. And my name is Alan David and his name was Avraham David. That's my Hebrew name, I was named after him. So he was, his name was Avraham David Hurwitz was his last name. My grandmother's name was Jennie Hurwitz, she married Isadore Gottlieb, I'm not sure when. Obviously, my father was born, in the 1880's they were married because my grandmother, I understand, was 13 when she came to Savannah. She lived here all her life and she died here, in 19 I think it was 1963.

All right, so we covered my Grandma Gottlieb and her father and mother, now we go to my mother, her father was Rabbi Blumenthal. He came here with his whole family around 1913 and he had several children. Most of them got married here in Savannah. When he left here to go to Waco, Texas, to take another position, his children were left in Savannah because they had married Savannah people and the families have been here all those years.

Harriet: What do you think it was like for a Rabbi at that time to go to Waco, Texas?

1 BBJ (Congregation Bnai Brith Jacob) Savannah's Orthodox Synagogue established in 1861, originally located at the intersection of Montgomery and State Streets. It moved to its current location on Abercorn in Midtown in 1962.

2 Chazzen(Cantor) is the official in charge of music or chants and leads liturgical prayer and chanting in the synagogue.

Alan: It was very tough. Very tough. I think the congregations didn't have money to pay the rabbis. I remember my mother, when she would talk about it, she would cry. She would say her father had to go and ask them to please pay him. He had a big family and it was difficult. Any way, he went to Dallas, Texas, and he was like a pioneer in Dallas, Texas. He made a big name for himself in Dallas. Right now I have a son who lives in Dallas, Jerald Gottlieb, married to Sarah Blumenthal Gottlieb, Herbie and Esther Blumenthal's daughter, and they live in Dallas and every now and then somebody will come up to my son, Jerald, and say, they'll mention my grandfather's name. They'll say he married us or he conducted my bar mitzvah or whatever. His name was always coming up in conversation. I was in Dallas and they have a Jewish Archives in the community center in Dallas and they have a big picture of him on the wall. We're very impressed by that.

Harriet: Okay. Well, let's get back to Savannah

Alan: Yeah, to Savannah, okay, sure. Okay, so let's see. When my grandfather and grandmother got married, I think it was in 1887, they decided to open a bakery. I don't know why. My grandfather was not a baker, but he had previously owned a barroom, a bar, where they sold liquor in Savannah. That was the first thing he did when he was here, when he, after he opened up a business. He, for some reason, decided to open up a bakery, became a Jewish bakery, a kosher bakery. I don't know how that came about, but I guess there was a need for that and he probably saw the need and the people probably demanded Jewish stuff and he gave it to them. I understand there are people living here right now that remember when he used to ride around, he would deliver the bread in a horse and buggy. He had a horse and buggy and he would take it out, the horse knew the route. The horse walked up and down the streets downtown around Congress Street and State Street where all the Jewish people were living in those days, that was before 1900. He would ring a bell, he had a big bell, a big brass bell. He would ring the bell and everybody would come out to buy bread. He used to sell it five loaves for a dime. Interesting. It wasn't much, but people, I had people tell me that he was a very charitable man. They said everybody had bread whether they had money or not. He had bread for everybody. He would, he sold tickets five for a dime and you'd pay him with a little blue ticket. I remember the ticket. If people didn't have the money, he'd say, forget about it. It's okay. You'll pay me when you have it. I've heard a lot of stories like that. He must have been a nice, a very nice man.

Harriet: Where was, where did he bake at that time?

Alan: He was on Congress Street, which was, which is a block North of Broughton Street, approximately, you know, in that area. Close to Montgomery Street, between Broughton and Montgomery and close to the river. There were, I understand there were two or three Jewish bakers there. One was Buschbaum's Bakery and one was Horowitz's Bakery and one was Gottlieb's Bakery. Even down there was Nugent's Bakery, a non-Jewish bakery. The Nugent's were Catholics in Savannah and they also had a small bakery down there. And it seems that of those bakeries, Gottlieb's was the one that survived over the years and stayed in business here until, I don't know, until about 1990 or so, something like that. I mean, as my memory, as I collect my memory. I think they went out, they closed their doors in about 1990. It was operated

by my grandfather's sons, Irving Gottlieb, he was the main thrust in that business. Sadie Gottlieb was a sister of Irving's and Elliott Gottlieb was another brother. It was a very family-oriented business. The whole family worked in there. My father, who owned a delicatessen and he was not in the bakery, he would go down to the bakery every morning, 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning, to help them put rolls in bags and bread, slice bread and put it in bags ready for the days business. He felt an obligation to help his family in that business even though he wasn't, was not connected in that business at all.

Harriet: Where did he bring the kosher meat from? Where did that come in?

Alan: The kosher meat, well, let's go - he opened up a delicatessen and, I was a little boy, let's see, he opened that up in 1934. I was six years old. I was born in 1928, so in 1934 I was six years old. I recall going with my father down to the Merchant & Minis Steamship Company. It was a boat that came to Savannah from New York twice a week and you could, a lot of people would buy tickets on that boat, it was like a, a cruise, the first cruise. It was a, it was a freighter. I remember Irving Gottlieb and Dera Gottlieb, they went to New York from Savannah on their honeymoon on that boat. They took the boat to New York, the boat back. My father and mother did the same. That's how, and they had refrigerators, big walk-in coolers on that ship and you could receive a refrigerated shipment of cheese, meat, delicatessen meats, fresh meats, and stuff like that. So, that's how we got it here. We didn't have, today we have refrigerated trucks coming from New York, Chicago and all points North and West and we get two shipments a week of refrigerated or frozen, our choice, food delivered from New York or Chicago to Savannah, right to our door in Savannah, they bring it to us. That's how we get it now and it came on the boat at that time.

Harriet: Where was his first deli?

Alan: When he opened up his store, the first store he had in Savannah was on 34th and Bull. Let's see that would have been the Northeast corner of Bull and 34th. That was directly across the street from the Sacred Heart Church and, at that time, there was a school called the Benedictine Military School and it went through high school and the boys all, a lot of Jewish boys went to that school. Many, many Jewish boys went to that school. Graduated from BC. We called it BC Benedictine, Benedictine, I don't know what the C was for. Benedictine College, I think, or something like that. I think they called it Benedictine College. It was the high school. I attended Richard Arnold Junior High School which was right on the Southeast corner of Bull and 34th. It was a junior high school which later became sort of a vocational school. It's still standing. They use it for something today. This is 1999 and it's still being used, I believe. It hasn't been torn down.

Harriet: How did you get to school in those days?

Alan: Well, when I, I remember my father and mother lived in Miami, Florida, when I started school I came here in the second grade. I remember the first day I went to school in Savannah, I went to 37th Street School. 37th and Habersham between Lincoln Street and Habersham. It's still there. They use it, I think SCAD bought that school. It's being used right now. It's an old school. That was the first school I attended. The first day I remember my Aunt Sadie Gottlieb walked me to school and she must have given me some instructions but I always

remember I walked home during recess. When recess came, I came home and she had to take me back to school, because I didn't know what I was supposed to do.

Harriet: Then you must have lived in that neighborhood.

Alan: My grandmother lived on 32nd and Abercorn Street. In those days there was a streetcar that came down Abercorn Street.

Harriet: Around six, before you moved there, where did your parents live? Where did you grow up?

Alan: I was born in Savannah. Sometime in my early youth my parents probably moved, moved to Miami, they moved to Miami, Florida. We had some relatives down there that evidently told my father and mother that it was a good opportunity to go to Miami and open up a business. So they opened up a little grocery store in the black neighborhood of Miami, I remember it well. Before long, they found out they had a man working for them who was stealing stuff from them. Any way they went broke and they had to come back to Savannah in 19... , I think it was 1934, I guess, yeah. It was in 1934 they came back to Savannah. So I started, I went to the second grade in Savannah. Mrs. Eiler was the teacher. She died not too long ago.

Harriet: Alan, what was it like for Jewish children in your era? Obviously, you stayed home for the holidays?

Alan: Yes.

Harriet: How was that accepted by the teachers?

Alan: I don't remember any incidents. I do remember other students calling us Jew Baby or Jew, making slurring remarks like that, I remember that very well. They used to say, there is that Jew baby or something. Something of that nature. That's the only thing that I remember that was discriminatory. Nothing from the teachers, they were very nice to me. I was very close to the teachers.

Harriet: But I guess there was no recognition of Jewish holidays or being Jewish

Alan: We took off, of course, for the Jewish holidays and I think it was accepted. Very well accepted. I never heard any arguments about it or any conversation about why we weren't there. We just weren't there.

Harriet: Now what about life in the B.B.Jacob in the early days as you can remember?

Alan: It was, it was fairly normal. We went to Hebrew School in the old B.B.Jacob on Montgomery, a block South of Montgomery Street, a block on Broughton Street. It was on Montgomery and State Street. If the building is still there it's been sold to a church, I believe it's being used by a church now. We went to Hebrew School in the B.B.Jacob there. They had classrooms downstairs and it was very comfortable. I mean, we never had any problems. We went to shul. My Grandmother Jennie Gottlieb, she encouraged me to go to shul³ every Shabbos⁴, in fact she used to leave money in my father's store. She would give him money every

³ Yiddish word for synagogue. It is derived from a German word meaning "school" and emphasizes the synagogue's role as a place for study.

⁴ Yiddish word for Sabbath. The Jewish day of rest and is observed on Saturdays. Shabbat observance entails refraining from work activities, often with great rigor and engaging in restful activities in honor of the day. Shabbat

week and that was to encourage me to go to shul on Shabbos, she encouraged me to do that. It was very enjoyable. I enjoyed the Hebrew School. I had a teacher who I called him Mr. Geffen. He taught me everything I know about how to daven and about going to shul and what you do in shul. He was my favorite teacher. I had him for years. They didn't have a whole staff as they do now. Harry Slotin, Alan Gottlieb, Gerald Pollack, there was about three or four of us in this class. We were like the incorrigibles, I guess, so they put us in a class together. Also there was a boy named Rocky Seigel. His uncle was Louie Seigel. He had a store on East Broad Street.

Harriet: Is Rocky also Melvin Seigel?

Alan: Melvin Seigel's brother, younger brother, he died when he was about 18, I think, this boy died. Melvin died early, too. Melvin was married to Mickey.

Harriet: Then you grew up in the old B.B.Jacob and the new B.B.Jacob. Can you-

Alan: Well, I was already married when, about the time that we started with the new B.B.Jacob.

Harriet: Can you think of anything that was done in the old shul that maybe we, of another generation, don't, aren't aware of?

Alan: No, I don't think so. I think we're doing a fine job. I think they're educating the children better than we were ever educated. We have a wonderful leadership, a wonderful Rabbi, and wonderful teachers. I think it's helping the whole com-, Jewish community. I don't think we, I think we missed something in my day maybe. But we're not missing anything now. I think we're doing a good job.

begins on Friday night and is ushered in by lighting candles and reciting a blessing. It is closed the following evening with the recitation of the Havdalah blessing.

Harriet: What can you say about the JEA⁵ downtown?

Alan: Well, on Barnard and Charlton Street was the old JEA and I don't remember when I used to, when I started going there, at a very early age. We went to, what we called gym class every afternoon. Jerry Eisenberg was the coach and he was in charge of the gym class and the athletics at the JEA. He was a marvelous person. He taught school in Savannah High School for years and then he died suddenly of a stroke. I remember his funeral well. He was a wonderful man. He was in charge of the athletic program. We went to gym like three days a week, Monday, Wednesday and Friday. We played all sports in the gym on the second floor at the JEA on Barnard and Charlton Street. We played a most unusual game - indoor softball. We played, in the gym, softball. The outfield was the stage. Two guys would stand on the stage and that was the outfield. We became very good at playing indoor softball. Nobody could beat us. Nobody, no athletic team in town could beat the Jewish team on the indoor course, because that was our home grounds and we just knew how to play, play the balls off the walls and so forth.

Harriet: Why didn't the Jewish boys utilize the square outside? The park?

Alan: I don't know. It was never a consideration. We never thought about it. It was like a, the square, you couldn't drive through the square. It was, had a fire path down the middle of the square. We never thought about going inside. The only thing we thought we were missing in the JEA was a swimming pool. We always, they always gave us, hinted towards the fact that they might build a swimming pool sometime. They never did. Never, ever did build a swimming pool in the old JEA. But we really, we spent, it was the focal point of our lives. It was a social and, it was just the whole focal point of our, we would go, after school we'd go to the JEA and we would play ball, play softball, basketball until 11:00 at night, then go on our bicycle and ride home through the streets of Savannah. Go home at 11:00 from the JEA. We were there all day long, every day, and there were all kind of activities there and AZA⁶ and BBG⁷ were big activities for us. Our lives centered around those two clubs. The girls BBG and the boys AZA. And that's where our social life was. We, that's where we met the girls, AZA and BBG meetings on Sunday. That's where we debated and we had AZA ball teams, basketball teams and Sanford Wexler, he was wonderful, he was the AZA advisor and the AZA debating coach. I remember I used to love to debate. We would debate against AZA in Atlanta,

5 JEA Is Savannah, Georgia's Jewish Community Center. A Jewish community center (JCC) is a general recreational, social, and fraternal organization serving Jewish communities in the United States and Canada, as well as in the former Soviet Union, Latin America, Europe, and Israel. The JEA was once the hub of Jewish life in Savannah. Families congregated there for social, educational, sports and cultural programs. The JEA ran camps and held classes to help some new residents learn to read and write English.

6 AZA (Aleph Zadik Aleph) The Grand Order of the Aleph Zadik Aleph (AZA) is an international youth-led fraternal organization for Jewish teenagers, founded in 1924. It currently exists as the male wing of B'nai B'rith Youth Organization, an independent non-profit organization. AZA's sister organization, for teenage girls, is the B'nai B'rith Girls (BBG).

7 B'nai B'rith girls or BBG is the female order of the B'nai B'rith Youth Organization, a youth movement that grew out of B'nai B'rith International. BBG was founded in 1944 for teenage girls. Chapters of girls soon sprung up throughout the United States and Canada. Today, it is an international sorority. The male teenage order is Alpha Zadeik Alpha (AZA).

Charleston - we had a wonderful time. Sanford Wexler was our basketball coach and he was our debating coach and he was our advisor, the AZA advisor. He had a great influence on a lot of young Jewish boys. He was a, Sanford - he did a wonderful job. He shaped a lot of youth, Savannah, Jewish youth. He shaped their characters. He did a lot for them.

Harriet: Was there Hebrew School or just religious school?

Alan: No, we had Hebrew School. We called it Hebrew School.

Harriet: Now that was in the downstairs of the...

Alan: When I started Hebrew School it was in the downstairs of the B.B.Jacob shul on Montgomery, a block off of Broughton Street. Montgomery and State Street. Then Mr. Sam Blumenthal, Mr. and Mrs. Sam Blumenthal died and they left a piece of property on the corner of Hall and Abercorn, what corner? The...

Harriet: Southwest?

Alan: Yeah. It was the southwest corner. It had been a large, large residence. He left it to the, he left it to the, I guess he left it to the B.B.Jacob Synagogue to be used as a religious school and that's where we went to Hebrew School, everybody went to Hebrew School in that school. When the JEA was built, when the new B.B.Jacob was built they discontinued having classes at the B.B.Jacob in that building. I guess they eventually sold, that money, the residuals of that money must have gone to the B.B.Jacob. They called it, the JEA, of course, the Jewish Educational, Educational is the middle name, Alliance. I think we were committed, the community was committed to having the schools in the JEA where the middle name was Jewish Educational Alliance. The B.B.Jacob was built, the new B.B.Jacob was built without one single classroom. They did not put a classroom in that building because they were committed to the educational process taking place in the Alliance. That's the evolution of the schools.

Harriet: Did boys from the AA attend that same Hebrew School? Or was it just B.B.Jacob?

Alan: I don't think so. I never, I never remembered, you know, it was interesting - we used to, the AZA, we used to go and have an AZA Shabbos at the AA, Agudath Achim Synagogue⁸, and we would have it at the B.B.Jacob. In those days, when I was a teenager, there was no difference whatsoever in the davening⁹ of the, at the B.B.Jacob and Agudath Achim. I think, they were not considered, they didn't call themselves conservative at the time. It happened later that they became a part of the conservative movement. We davened out of the same siddur¹⁰, the services were identical, there was no difference between the B.B.Jacob and the AA as far as, if you went to shul, you didn't know the difference. I think in the AA they always sat, the women and the men could sit together. What happened was, if you wanted to sit apart, way up on the third floor they had a little balcony where the women could climb up to that third floor and sit apart from the men. That was the first thing I remember about that.

8 Agudath Achim Synagogue. Agudath Achaim is Savannah's Conservative synagogue. It was established in 1903, and in 1945 they joined the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism and became the 1st Conservative synagogue in Georgia.

9 The act of reciting Jewish liturgical prayers during which the prayer sways or rocks gently.

10 A *siddur* is a Jewish prayer book, containing a set order of daily prayers

Harriet: Alan, in the old shul, in the fall, what did they do about air circulation in that old shul?

Alan: The old shul was very hot. I remember, I do remember once the Rabbi announcing from the pulpit on Yom Kippur he was thanking the Movsovit Company, or Izzy Movsovit, for donating the ice. Somehow they were using huge amounts of ice to circulate cool air in the building. He thanked Mr. Movsovit for donating, buying the ice whatever it was.

Harriet: Could you explain how that might have been done?

Alan: How they could have cooled the place? They must have had a ventilating systems with fans in it. They must have put a lot of ice somewhere where the fans could blow across that ice and possibly blow some cool air into the shul through the, they probably had just ducts and air. They were just blowing air and it wasn't helping, so they put ice in those ducts. I don't remember if it helped or not. I do recall the Rabbi thanking Mr. Movsovit for the donation of the ice.

Harriet: Now, who, was it your family in those days who were active with the catering? Who eventually did that?

Alan: I heard stories about that. In the early years of the B.B.Jacob and when my grandfather and grandmother had opened up the bakery, I heard people talk about the fact that they would do the cooking for weddings and then they would take the food into the JEA where the parties were held. That was the place, they would go into the gym at the JEA. My grandmother would prepare, she would cook the food for these weddings, chickens and whatever. I had a lot of people tell me, I had Louis Black, well, Harold Black told me that my grandfather and grandmother catered his father and mother's wedding. He told me that after they were married for fifty years. I was doing the 50th anniversary. He said, we found a good thing and we're sticking with it. We still got the Gottliebs - so they did cook food in the bakery ovens. They were the only ovens that were big enough to do that in Savannah and be kosher. So they would cook in the bakery and take it up to the JEA and serve it.

Harriet: Well, Alan, how do you think they preserved the dairy products that needed to be cooled?

Alan: Well, they had refrigerators and iceboxes. I remember in the bakery they used to have a great big, it was an icebox, it was literally an icebox because the ice company would come every day and put big blocks of ice in, like 300 pound blocks of ice, there was a place to put the ice and it would cool the box down. It had, the cold water would run out through a series of pipes that went through the refrigerator and it cooled it. That's how they did it. I never remember any problems with, I never remember problems with refrigeration. I mean, there are always problems with refrigeration when they break but, as a general rule, everything was well protected. The equipment was okay.

Harriet: Well, since your, since the Gottlieb family was so significant in Savannah, why don't you get back to your father and the different locations of his deli and how all of the Gottlieb family grew. The business.

Alan: Well, what happened was, I think I already said, his first deli, delicatessen, it was a small store, a little small store, it was the site of a former filling station, gas station. It was a

real, it must have been 1,000 square feet it was a little small place. I remember it well. They started this kosher business. They used to be across the street, I told you, from two schools - from BC and from the Richard Arnold. And then their next move, from there they moved to Whitaker and Duffy Street. Duffy and Whitaker. They stayed there.

[Side two]

Harriet: Alan, tell me, you know, about Lucy.

Alan: Okay. In 1950 I married Lucy, I met Lucy at the University of Georgia. We were both attending the University of Georgia in Athens. We got married in August, August the 28th, 1950, the day after my 22nd birthday. That was the last time I celebrated my birthday. It was my anniversary after that. No, we still celebrate everything. We moved to Savannah and I went into business with my father and my mother and their store was on Whitaker and Duffy Street and it was a good location at the time because Whitaker Street was a one-way street going from Broughton Street to the south part of town and you had to go down, no, you didn't have to, but most people came home from business driving down Whitaker Street and they could stop at our delicatessen and get something to take home to eat. They would order orders on the phone and pick them up on the way or whatever. So it was a good location at the time.

Harriet: Was the bakery business...

Alan: The bakery, the bakery was not, the bakery was already on the Bull Street, between 33rd and 34th and Bull, right on Bull Street. The bakery was there, had been there for many years because they had bought that property years ago, years previous to that. They were there. We wanted to be, we moved from where we were, we wanted to get close to the bakery because everybody went to the bakery, it was a big attraction. You know, everybody had to have bread and cakes and stuff like that and so we opened a store on the corner of 33rd and Bull Street. It was an old house and we remodeled it, made a beautiful little store out of it and we stayed there for a few years. After that we bought a piece of property on, a block away on 32nd and Bull Street. My wife and I, Lucy and I were very ambitious, we wanted to build a new store, so we talked to Eric Meyerhoff and Gunn Meyerhoff. They built us an 8,000 square foot, beautiful magnificent facility, which is still standing. It's empty today. It was the last word in delicatessen and fancy foods. We had every fancy food you could think of. We had a magnificent assortment of cheeses, it was a great place. It was right across from the bakery, too. We enjoyed a lot of nice business there in that store. Two years later, I think it was, no, it was more than that. Two years later we, it doubled the size of that store. We enlarged it. Apparently it became too large. The overhead was bigger than what we were taking in and we had to close that store. So we closed that store. It was a wonderful store. We had a world famous Sunday morning brunch in that store. People would come from all over the country and tell us they had read about it. We were selling it too cheap. Five dollars whitefish, lox, cream cheese, blintzes, anything you could think of that you wanted on a brunch for \$5, all you could eat. People came from everywhere to eat that brunch.

Anyway, we eventually closed that store and I went to work for the M&M Supermarkets. Norton Melaver, Millie Melaver, and so forth. Annie Melaver, Norton's mother. I became Director of Food Services there and they wanted to go into the catering business. So they did. And so we did. We went into the catering business out of a supermarket. They took Murray, my son Murray Gottlieb, and I into their business and we became, we were, found ourselves in charge of all the delis, four deli departments in four different stores in the M&M chain. We stayed there a while and then they decided, M&M decided that the catering business was too much personal attention. They were accustomed to dealing in great volume and self-service and not so much charging and delivering and not so much personal service as we gave in our business. Even though we increased the business in those deli departments tremendously and received a nice bonus for doing it the first year, eventually they decided, the Melavers decided that they would like to discontinue this specialized business of catering. So I went back into the catering business on my own and I've been in it ever since. I think that was in 1979. I believe that was. This is 1999, so I'm still catering.

Harriet: But, Alan, tell me what else you do that maybe other people don't realize. For instance, I learned that you do the kosher meals, prepare meals for people, patients in the hospital.

Alan: Yeah, we do. It became apparent that there were a lot of, there is some demand for kosher food, we have a lot of, well, first of all, as you mentioned, we've, for many years we have been making kosher meals like tv dinners in kosher, in foil packages that we wrap and label. We provide them to all the local hospitals and even some hospitals in Charleston, SC, also. It's sort of like airline meals that everybody is familiar with. Anybody who goes to the hospital and requires kosher food has the opportunity to be part of our business. Another part of the business is, we are constantly being called by the big hotels in Savannah and in Hilton Head. They have people who come in and request kosher food. They call the hospitals, the hotels call us and we even customize those meals. People say what they want, they want brisket of beef or all chicken or no salt or whatever they want, special things. It's a good service we provide because it, the hotels love it because they can give the customers what they request and they don't have to turn away the business because they can't provide kosher food. On several occasions we have even gone to Hilton Head and catered in the Hyatt Hotel, in the Hyatt Hotel in the kitchen there. We would casher¹¹ the kitchen, casher the stoves with the cooperation of the Hyatt Hotel and we would casher dishes and silverware and we've catered conventions at the Hyatt. We did several, we did two big conventions for over 100 people in the Hyatt - one for the National Federation of Jewish, National Council of Jewish Federations. We did a convention there, a 3-day convention there. When we got through they gave us a standing ovation, which we were thrilled with. They were very complimentary to us. They came back several years later and we did it again. They were very nice. They were very pleased and happy that they could come to Hilton Head.

I remember an interesting thing - I was saying Kaddish¹² for my mother at the time, I didn't want

¹¹ To make fit for use. Render kosher

¹² Kaddish (Hebrew for 'holy') a hymn of praises to G-d found in the Jewish prayer service that is recited aloud

to miss saying Kaddish, and I told them that we would have to have a minyan, I needed to say Kaddish for my mother and the guy I was dealing with from the National Council said he also was saying Kaddish and he wanted to have a minyan and it was a very unusual thing to find, every morning out in the lobby of the Hilton Hotel, a group of men davening with tallis¹³ and tefillin¹⁴ right in the, I said I never thought I would be standing in the lobby of the Hilton Hotel in Hilton Head, Hyatt Hotel, davening, but we did. We managed to do it. It was a very unusual thing.

Any way, we also have people that call us from far away, different towns, and request us to ship kosher food to them. We have had occasion that we ship kosher food to other countries. We had some people from Chicago were going on a trip, they asked Rabbi Slatos and Rucky Slatos, Rucky is from Chicago, and she told them that we could do it and we did it. We shipped food to them where they went, wherever they went.

Harriet: Alan....

Alan: Yes.

Harriet: What procedure is that?

Alan: What do you mean?

Harriet: How is that done?

Alan: Well, we prepare the food, they told us what they wanted, we prepared the food, we had to go through Customs, it was complicated, it was not easy. They didn't want to do it, the government didn't want to do it, you know, the Health Department. They didn't want to.

Harriet: How was that kept refrigerated?

Alan: Oh, we shipped it in dry ice. It came in in perfect condition. It came in in good condition. We never had a problem with anything like that. The food was in good shape when they got it. Of course, we sent it to Hawaii one time, that's in the United States now. We sent it to some other place, I forgot exactly where we sent it. But any way they wrote us a letter, they said everything was perfect and this guy said, he said in the note, I don't know why you're not world famous. He was so nice about it. They appreciated the fact that they were able to get kosher food and get, we sent fancy stuff then. I mean stuffed chicken breasts, rib steaks, ribeye roasts and things like that. They wanted to eat, they were on vacation, they wanted to eat the finest that was available.

while standing. The central theme of the Kaddish is the magnification and sanctification of G-d's name. Along with the Shema and Amidah, the Kaddish is one of the most important and central elements in the Jewish liturgy. Mourner's Kaddish is said at all prayer services and certain other occasions. Following the death of a parent, child, spouse, or sibling it is customary to recite the Mourner's Kaddish in the presence of a congregation daily for 30 days, or 11 months in the case of a parent, and then at every anniversary of the death. It is important to note that the Mourner's Kaddish does not mention death at all, but instead praises G-d.

¹³ A prayer shawl fringed at each of the four corners in accordance with biblical law. The wearing of *Tallis* at worship is obligatory only for married men but is customarily worn by males of *bar mitzvah* age and older.

¹⁴ *Tefilin* also called "phylacteries" are a set of small leather boxes containing scrolls of parchment inscribed with verses from the *Torah*, which are worn by observant Jews during weekly morning prayers. They are worn around the arm, hand and fingers and on the forehead. The *Torah* commands that they should be worn as a "sign" and "remembrance" that G-d brought the children of Israel out of Egypt.

Harriet: Alan, is there any food that you prepare today that is the same recipe that was your parents or grandparents?

Alan: Yeah, I think my mother and my grandmother had a tremendous influence on the way I cook. Definitely. My mother was a wonderful cook and my Grandmother Gottlieb, Jenny Gottlieb, was a wonderful cook. I used to see, I used to watch her cook. She was a great cook and I learned a lot from them, believe it or not, just standing watching.

Harriet: What do you fix today that are theirs?

Alan: Stuffed breasts, stuffed veal brisket is one of my favorite things and it is one of the nicest things we do. You, veal brisket is a nice tasty piece of meat and you put a pocket in it - you cut a pocket in between the rib, the ribs and the skin and then you put, you fill it with stuffing, whatever you want to stuff with. You can, lot of people stuff it with potato bagel or a bread dressing, a cornbread dressing. Cornbread dressing is very good to stuff it with. It cooks a long time. It gets very tender and it's very tasty. That's one of the nicest things. And also brisket of beef is a good thing and sweet and sour stuffed cabbage very popular, especially for Passover, we make hundreds of them. Very good thing for Passover¹⁵. People love it. A lot of people don't make those kinds of specialties any more. Matzo balls, we sell a lot of Matzo balls for Passover.

In recent years my son Murray Gottlieb has had a kosher store in Memphis, Tennessee. A restaurant, a deli and a restaurant. He couldn't, just couldn't stay away from this business. We provided kosher, cooked kosher food for Memphis, Tennessee, for the last twelve years. He has closed that store in Memphis now and we won't be doing that any more unless somebody else wants to do it in Memphis. We also serviced Memphis, Tennessee, and they loved it. They bought thousands of dollars' worth of kosher Passover foods. We would ship 38 - 40 cases, big boxes of Passover food on a refrigerated truck, a frozen truck. They would pick it up here and deliver it in Memphis in a week.

Harriet: Alan, for your large affairs, is all of the preparation done in the kitchen of the B.B.Jacob?

Alan: Not necessarily. If we are having a big banquet here in the JEA, we'll cook the food in the JEA. If we're having it in the Agudath Achim, most of the time we will prepare the food in the Agudath Achim. We do prepare a lot of food, we use the B.B.Jacob as a commissary. We rent the kitchen on a daily basis as we need it, which is almost daily. There are a lot of social functions going on in the B.B.Jacob. We have been fortunate enough to cater most of them. There are other caterers who do come into all the facilities and prepare food, but we've been very fortunate. We've had, certainly, more than our share of the parties.

¹⁵ Hebrew *Pesach*. The anniversary of Israel's liberation from Egyptian bondage. The holiday lasts for eight days. Unleavened bread, *Matzoh*, is eaten in the memory of the unleavened bread prepared by the Israelites during their hasty flight from Egypt, when they had not time to wait for the dough to rise. On the first two nights of Passover, the *sedar*, the central event of the holiday is celebrated. The *sedar* service is one of the most colorful and joyous occasions in Jewish life. In addition to eating *matzoh* during the *sedar*, Jews are prohibited from eating leavened bread during the entire week of Passover. In addition, Jews are supposed to avoid foods made with wheat, barley, rye, spelt or oats unless those foods are labeled "kosher for Passover". Jews traditionally have separate dishes for Passover use.

Harriet: For a large affair, how many people do you hire? How many people are working on a function? Not serving, but preparing?

Alan: Well, preparing, we have a sort of a skeleton crew, a basic crew that help us every day. Five or six people work in the kitchen every day. Then when it comes time for the party, we have people that we call in to help serve, like a wait staff, waiters and so forth. We have had sometimes as many as 75 waiters on a large banquet. That's about how we do it. We are not limited, interestingly enough, we are not limited to strictly, to only kosher catering. One of our best customers, through the years, has been the Hibernian Society, which is an Irish-Catholic organization that celebrate St. Patrick's Day with a banquet for 900 to 1,000 people every year. They usually have that at the Alee Temple¹⁶ and we prepare everything at the Alee Temple for that, course they are not eating kosher food. We prepare everything at the Alee Temple, we work for two or three days in advance and then we have around 75 people come in to help us serve it. We've been doing that, we've done it over 20 times in the last 25 years. We've had it almost every year. It's out on bid every year. They seem to like to come back to us. We've been doing it so many times. We've done it over 25 times, I'm sure.

Harriet: Back in the early days, how did they prepare, they could not have prepared days in advance because there was not very much refrigeration.

Alan: Not that good refrigeration.

Harriet: How did they operate in the earlier days?

Alan: Who? Do you mean before my time?

Harriet: In the deli-

Alan: Before my time?

Harriet: Yeah.

Alan: I guess, you know, necessity is the mother of invention, yeah. I guess they made do, they did what they had to do. They were able to keep it cool somehow. I guess, I never heard a discussion about that. In my day, we always had good refrigeration, no problem we had refrigerated trucks, frozen trucks coming from New York bringing things to us. We never had a problem. I don't recall any problems. I never heard my parents talk about any problems. You know, I'd like, speaking of my parents, I'd like to give an interesting sort of a story I guess you could call it. I've thought about it a lot. We all know in this day and time that the grocery stores, the supermarkets have all gone big into the kosher business, to the specialty food business. I wanted to tell you about the way it used to be. When I was a little boy I remember my parents preparing for the Passover season in the business. What they would do, every year we would get in our Passover merchandise. We would get in tremendous amounts, we were really pioneers in the kosher business in Savannah because there was no other place to get it. If they hadn't done it, I don't know where the food would have come from, Atlanta, I guess. They would keep records from year to year what people bought for Passover. People would come in

¹⁶ Alee Temple is Alee Shrine Temple in Savannah, Georgia. A religious home for the Shriners. Shriners are formally known as the Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, a society established in 1870 and headquartered in Tampa, Florida. The fraternity is based on fun, fellowship and the Masonic principles of brotherly love, relief and truth.

and they would come in and sit down, it was like an interview, with my father or my mother or my Uncle Leon Gottlieb, my father's brother, he used to help us because he didn't have a business, he liked to shoot pool. He could come in and help us whenever we needed help. He would come in. They would sit down, people would come in and my mother and father, they would take out, they had a loose leaf notebook, they would use a page for each order. They would put the person's name on the top of the page and they would write the order on the rest of the page. There would be almost a page of things. They would show people the new items they had, people would remember what they wanted, people would have bills from last year and also we would have a copy of last year's order. For everybody. I probably still got those things somewhere. We would have, if you came in, Mrs. Meyerhoff came in, we would say let's look at your last order. You had 10 pounds of matzo, 5 pounds of matzo meal, 3 pounds of this, a jar of gefilte fish, we would write it down and they would do that all day long. Even into the evening people would come. I recall the Garfunkel family used to come. Benny Garfunkel, his father Charlie Garfunkel, a couple of the older women, mostly in that family the men always bought the food. I remember them coming in and placing a great big order and then we would, what we would do with these orders, we'd write them all down and at night we would stay there until 12:00 at night filling orders. Putting the stuff in boxes and then the next day we would deliver. I remember delivering big boxes of Passover food to the Garfunkel family. They lived on Hall Street. Going up the back steps to the second floor with these huge boxes of matzo and Passover things. That's the way it happened.

It's interesting how the people today are satisfied to walk in and talk to nobody and take it off the shelf, put it in their buggy, check it through and pay cash. With us, we delivered it. We had to deliver it in our own truck and we had to charge it, maybe they'd take two or three months to pay us. We'd have to pay right away but they could wait three months to pay us. It's interesting to me, which was the point I was making, that in those days the people demanded so much personal attention for their Passover orders. Now it's self-service, cash and carry, take it home with you and that's the way they like it. It's interesting how that is an evolution of the way that business went.

Harriet: But it was also a time when doctors came to the house to treat patients.

Alan: I know that. Absolutely. When I was a little boy the doctor, I'd have fever, they'd call the doctor, he'd come. He'd come listen to my little heart. That's right.

Harriet: Well, Alan, I think you've got a big heart to begin with. Tell me, do you remember...

Alan: That's so sweet of you to say that.

Harriet: Do you remember anything about City Market and the Jewish...

Alan: Not much, not much, I, my daddy would take me down there sometime. You could drive right into the market, it's a pity that building is not still standing. It would be fantastic. Any way, you could drive into the City Market, he would drive in there and we'd get out of the car and walk around. I do remember my mother in the days before we sold meat, calling up the kosher butcher in the Market, it was Sam Friedman, Uncle Friedman, and the sister was Bertha Friedman. I remember my mother saying, ABertha, what you got today?@ You

know, I'd hear them talking on the telephone about she wanted some veal chops and this and that and the other. All I remember about that is going down there and walking around. I saw the Movsovitz, I remember them being there. Meddin Brothers was in there, in the City Market downstairs. Movsovitz Produce. I remember going in all those places and then walking around upstairs where they had kosher chickens. Sam Karsman was in there. That was Lee Rosenzweig's grandmother and grandfather. Peter Movsovitz's father and mother had a chicken place in there.

Harriet: Alan, did you do any work with the prisons here?

Alan: No. I really haven't had any requests from any local prisons. I'll tell you an interesting thing. My son Murray Gottlieb has operated a kosher restaurant and delicatessen, kosher store in Memphis, Tennessee, there seems to be, he's had several requests for, some prison in Tennessee requested 2,000 kosher meals for a prison. 2,000 kosher meals they were going to need for Passover. It seems that there are a lot of Jewish people in prisons and there are also, those meals needed by black Muslims whose dietary laws are similar to the laws of Kashrut. They don't eat pork and so forth. They only eat kosher cheese. There seems to be a demand for kosher cheese among the Muslims. I remember when we had our retail store we would have many Muslims come in and buy kosher meat and kosher cheese and things like that.

Harriet: So you had Muslims here?

Alan: Yes. A few.

Harriet: Now, your father was stationed at Fort Screven?

Alan: Yeah. In 1916, I guess, he was stationed at Fort Screven. In those days they sent the soldiers to the camp to be stationed as close to home as possible. Later on, in the next World War II, they used to send them far away from home. But he was in World War I they sent him to Fort Screven. He always used to joke about the fact that his mother used to send him hot meals on the train from Savannah to Tybee to Fort Screven. I remember he told a funny story - he said when the war was over in 1917, 16 or 17, when World War I was over, he told, he told, he wanted to get out of the army as soon as he could, he wanted to come home and get married to my mother. So he told the sergeant I got to get out of this army and if you let me go I'll send you, the family had a bakery. He said I'll send you cakes and pastries like you never saw before. I got to get out soon. The guy let him out and he sent him stuff, too.

Harriet: Alan, I remember back in the '60s you catered a big Passover service at the JEA on Abercorn for the Parris Island and other military...

Alan: Yeah, we used to do that. Over the years we've had the request, special requests to do things, I'm glad you remembered that. I had forgotten. We used to do a fast breaker. The night of Yom Kippur. They would, I don't know who it was, the United, I don't know who it was that requested this service, but we would, they would bring a couple of hundred soldiers who were stationed in nearby camps here, Hunter Field, Fort Stewart, Parris Island - any way, they wanted to have a breakfast and we would serve, you know, typical food for breaking the fast. We would have pickled herring and toast and eggs and whatever they wanted. Usually we served what we would serve to them what, generally, we served to ourselves. We would have a couple of hundred people here breaking the fast in the JEA. That was in the 19, let's see, 1940s, maybe

early 50. It had to be in the early 50s I was already married. So it was in the 50s. We had a lot of troops stationed in Savannah. There were 40,000 troops stationed around here and a lot of them were Jewish.

Harriet: And there's somewhere in the 60s I remember you did something. There were a lot more Jewish men in the military at that time.

Alan: Yeah, there were lots, hundreds, hundreds. It's amazing. There were a lot of Jewish boys stationed here. Interesting. In this community, in Savannah, you will find many people who live here now who were stationed here and they met Savannah girls, married them and stayed here and they're still here. They're old men now. Older than me. Older than 70.

Harriet: Can you think of anything else that you'd like to add?

Alan: Well, I like to think that my family has been a pioneer in the kosher food business in Savannah. I like to think that we did some good for the community over the years. That we provided a service that was necessary and was needed and I am sure it was appreciated. We appreciate the opportunity to continue doing this work. We're still doing it. My son Murray is back in business with me. We're working together and having a good time doing it. Working hard.

Harriet: For the record, name your children.

Alan: I have two boys and a girl. Murray, who just moved here. Murray Gottlieb. I have a daughter. Well, I have a son in Dallas, Texas, Jerald Gottlieb. He's married to Herbie Blumenthal and Esther Blumenthal's daughter, Sarah, used to be Sarah Blumenthal Gottlieb. Murray just moved here from Memphis, he's married to Deborah, she was Deborah Posner, now she's Deborah Posner Gottlieb. They have two little boys, Judah and Govey, Gabriel Gottlieb and Judah Yahudah Gottlieb. My daughter, Nachomah who was before she was started using her Hebrew name of Nachomah, her English name is Karen Gottlieb, I almost forget it myself. Karen and she's known as Nahomah. She's married to a young man, Rabbi Sved Cohen. They live in Toronto, Canada. They have six children. Three boys and three girls. Did I say that Jerald in Dallas has a daughter Rebecca and a son Joey named after my father Joseph. He's in Yeshiva in Jerusalem in Yeshiva Kotel. It's by the wall.

[Tape ends.]