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ESTHER AND HERBERT TAYLOR
JEWISH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT OF ATLANTA
JEWISH WOMEN OF ACHIEVEMENT (JWA)**

MEMOIRIST: VIDA DAAB GOLDGAR
INTERVIEWER: GROUP (FIRST INTERVIEW)
 LIBBY JOHNSON (SECOND INTERVIEW)
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INTERVIEW BEGINS

<Tape 1, Side 1, 01 interview by group, November 21, 1985>

Group: . . . Jewish Women of Achievement Oral History Project. This is Thursday evening, November 21. It's 7:30 p.m. We're in the National Council of Jewish Women office. I will begin, Vida, by asking you to spend a few minutes telling us in general about yourself.

Vida: I am not a native Southerner. I came to Atlanta in 1959 from New York. I came to New York, I think, [in] 1951 or 1952 from Cincinnati [Ohio]. I'm a Midwesterner from St. Louis [Missouri] by origin. I came to New York with my husband and, at that time, three children. I got somewhat involved in the Jewish community, but primarily in areas that I could handle with three babies at home. Telephone committees, the Sisterhood,¹ some *Hadassah*² work and things like that. At some point, [I] began doing public relations for the Atlanta chapter of *Hadassah*, which is pertinent. If I had not done that, I probably wouldn't be doing what I was doing today.

My chief outlet for my material at that time was the *Southern Israelite*.³ I would

¹ A sisterhood is a group of Jewish women in a congregation who join together to offer social, cultural, educational, and volunteer service opportunities.

² *Hadassah*, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, is a volunteer organization founded in 1912 by Henrietta Szold, with more than 300,000 members and supporters worldwide. It supports health care and medical research, education and youth programs in Israel, and advocacy, education, and leadership development in the United States.

³ The *Southern Israelite* was a publication that covered news of the southern Jewry and issues that involved Jewish populations throughout the nation and world. Rabbi H. Cerf Straus originally established the *Southern Israelite* as a

carefully meet my deadlines. I'd mail my copy in, be sure to have the deadlines, and paid a lot of attention . . . except one week I missed a deadline . . . holiday or something like that. I drove down to deliver it, and met Adolph Rosenberg,⁴ who was then the editor and publisher. [I] introduced myself. He said, "I'm glad to see you. I've been meaning to call you. I like the way you write. I like your style. Do you want a job?" I said, "No, thank you." By that time I had another one. "I've got four little jobs at home." I was working part-time for my husband. Then mothering and doing all those things that we do at that stage of our lives. He was very persistent and said, "Just help out part-time. I can't pay very much, but whatever hours . . . name your own hours." "Help!" in essence. I thought, "For a month or two or whatever, I can give a few hours a week and come down and help." That was in 1964.

I literally came there with the idea of being there for a couple of months on a part-time basis. This was without any particular journalism background, without any idea . . . I had always thought I was going to be teacher. It was something that I had been interested in for many years. I had a couple of kind of glamorous cousins who were either reporters, or writers or whatever. I've always had a little feeling that that was a nice thing to do. A couple of months passed. A few more months passed. I was still working essentially part-time. Then, in 1973, the part-time was a very long part-time week. In 1973 I was divorced. I needed to work full-time. I didn't really think that there was a way to do it at the paper, but I didn't want to leave. We worked out a way. Essentially at that point I went full-time with the paper. I had started there doing the most minor things, the obits [obituaries], the weddings, and all that sort of thing, which is the best place to start because it was on-the-job training.

About a couple of years after I was there, Adolph said, "I've been trying for many, many years to go to Israel. I've never been able to leave the paper to do it. I think you can handle it while I'm gone." I said, "Sure. No problem." We were going to spend about an hour-

temple bulletin in Augusta in 1925. It became so popular he expanded it into a monthly newspaper. Straus eventually sold the paper to Herman Dessauer and Sara B. Simmons, who moved it to Atlanta, where it began circulating state-wide and eventually throughout the South. In 1930, M. Stephen Schiffer took over as sole owner of the *Southern Israelite*. Ownership of the paper was turned over to a corporation headed by editor Adolph Rosenberg in 1951. In 1964 Vida Goldgar joined the staff and was an important contributor for the next 40 years. In 1979, she purchased the paper. In 1987, its name changed from *Southern Israelite* to the *Atlanta Jewish Times*. Today the paper is owned by Jewish Renaissance Media and continues as a weekly publication with a readership of over 25,000. (2014)

⁴ Adolph Rosenberg (?-1977) was a journalist who became the editor of the *Southern Israelite* after serving as a reporter for the *Atlanta Journal* and the *Atlanta Constitution*. In 1951 Rosenberg headed a corporation that took over ownership the *Southern Israelite*.

and-a-half or so right before he was to leave with some really heavy-duty briefing, except that I ended up in the hospital the week before with a pinched nerve. I kind of walked in the day he was to leave with a collar on my neck. He said, "Bye." I really didn't know how much I didn't know until that time. We got the paper out. I didn't know that headlines had to count a certain way, or be a certain size. I just went back to the print shop and said, "Here, set it in whatever will fit." But we did get the paper out. I guess it was a little heady experience. I was off and running. I've been there ever since. Do you want to go to questions, or do you want to go on a little further?

Group: If it's okay with you, let's go to questions.

Vida: Let's go to questions. I have to add something. The one thing that I said I wouldn't give up when I went to work there was my B'nai B'rith Women's⁵ bowling league. That was part of the part-time arrangement . . . that I could bowl on whatever afternoon it was with Margie [Rosenstein Diamond].

Group: Tell me what it was like growing up in the Midwest.

Vida: It was a very small town. When I was there, it was probably something like 1,800 people. It was perhaps 25 or 30 minutes from St. Louis. It was not a bedroom community . . . a commuter town. It was an independent town at that point, but it was close enough to St. Louis that you had access to things. I still feel strongly . . . having lived in New York for about eight years . . . I still feel very strongly that there's a Midwest and Southern tie that I never felt up east. But then I spent much more time in both of these areas.

Group: What was the name of the town?

Vida: Columbia, Illinois . . . kind of between East St. Louis and Belleville, if anybody knows that area.

Group: What kind of Jewish educational background did you have?

Vida: I think this is the time when we're going to get into maybe a shocker to some of you. I didn't have any. I converted when I was 21, when I married. However, I say I didn't, and yet I did, because my grandfather was Jewish. My grandfather, who came to this country in the middle of the nineteenth century, was Jewish. He in turn married a non-Jew. Yet in this little

⁵ B'nai B'rith Women was founded in San Francisco, California in 1909. It was originally a social organization designed to attract young, single adult members with parties, picnics and dances. As women emerged into the public sphere it expanded into cultural activities, philanthropy and community service. Their announced aims are to perpetuate Jewish culture, enrich their communities and ensure the religious survival of their sons and daughters.

town, which really had no population . . . I had cousins who didn't know that my grandfather was Jewish. I grew up knowing it. These were older cousins. I really don't know . . . but I grew up knowing it. I grew up with a feeling about it and a kinship to it, and there was just something there that . . . I discussed it with family members. I don't know why or how, but I always felt that there was a very strong connection, even though it wasn't continued in the family. I think I married a Jew because he was a Jew . . . in part because I wanted to reach that. Before I did that, I was always on my soapbox and telling people that I was Jewish. If I heard a slur or something like that, I would get on my high horse and [say], "Obviously you don't know that I'm Jewish." So it was there. It's an almost inexplicable sort of thing that was with me from that kind of tenuous connection. Not a lot of people know that.

Group: I've known you since you came to Atlanta and . . .

Vida: Right.

Group: . . . I didn't realize it. Can I follow up on that? Your conversion process . . . was that in response to your engagement to your husband?

Vida: It was, although I suspect now that at some point I would have come to that anyhow. But yes, it was. In a direct answer, it was in order to have a Jewish wedding. I had a very wise and very . . . I can't say enough about her . . . mother-in-law from Macon, Georgia, which is why we ended up back in Atlanta. Annie [Shapiro] Goldgar, who was founder of the *Hadassah* chapter down there, was involved . . . I think she was the first woman to read from the *Torah*⁶ at the Temple [Beth Israel]⁷ down there. A remarkable woman who was pretty upset in the beginning that her son was doing this. Yet she didn't quite . . . she didn't push, she didn't, but she guided and she helped and she sent books. Most of what I learned early on came from her and then after I came to the paper . . . you just keep accumulating.

Group: Did you have a question? . . . It was answered. I mean, it was asked . . . Vida, during your earlier years . . . like junior, senior high school years, did you have certain subjects that you found that appealed to you more . . . literary subjects that you just had this gut feeling in you that

⁶ Hebrew for 'teaching. 'Torah' is a general term that covers all Jewish law including the vast mass of teachings recorded in the *Talmud* and other rabbinical works. 'Sefer Torah' refers to the sacred scroll on which the first five books of the *Bible* (the *Pentateuch*) are written. The reading of the *Torah* in the synagogue in some congregations is traditionally reserved for men only.

⁷ Temple Beth Israel was founded in 1852 by Jews of German descent. It was originally an Orthodox congregation and was named 'Congregation Kahal Kadosh Beth Israel.' The sanctuary was built in 1902 and is noted for its magnificent glass windows and dome overlaid with stained glass. In 1880 the Temple officially became a Reform congregation.

this is . . .

Vida: Let's say that math came harder to me. English was my favorite subject. I always read a great deal. But I took heavy-duty commercial courses, too. In the kind of school I went to where you had 100 students in the whole school, not even in one class, the curriculum was not as broad as it could have been. Naturally, every woman at that time, or girl, was expected to take shorthand and typing, which I did . . . which, oddly, has proved invaluable to me in my job now. But I'm sure that the . . . my interest then in the English classes. I still am not good at math. I have three mathematician sons, and a mathematician son-in-law, and I don't know where they came from.

Group: Could you tell us a little bit more about your parents . . . their backgrounds and your siblings?

Vida: Both of my parents were born in this country. My paternal grandparents were as well. My mother's father I've already mentioned. My mother was a schoolteacher. That was back in the days where she taught in what might have been the equivalent of a one-room country school, I guess. She died when I was seven years old, in childbirth. My dad was the town pharmacist, which . . . they both came from very large families. As the pharmacist, that was almost a professional job which none of his brothers and sisters had. It was an agricultural community, primarily. Some of them worked for the railroad. Some of them . . . he, with an eighth grade education, came into pharmacy the same way I came into journalism, by the apprenticeship field, and went off to what had passed for a school of pharmacy later on. But I think he probably knew more going in than he gained. [He] was well-loved. He is the only man that I know, or the only person that I remember at least up until the time of his death, who was editorialized in our local newspaper at his death.

My mother came from a . . . I guess even my mother's family, there was that something Jewish about them, even though they might not have known it. It was a family of teachers . . . a lot of teachers in the family. As I said, she died when I was seven. My dad remarried when I . . . a year or two later . . . I've forgotten when . . . which was not a particularly happy experience. I have one sister [Adele Fox], who lives in Cincinnati [Ohio], four years older than I. I have two stepsisters and a stepbrother that I'm not in communication with anymore. My stepmother also died when I was about 13. Essentially, at that point, my sister and I kind of kept house and ran the place. My sister married and lived with us for a while. Then she left.

I was 21, I think, when I got married. I did not go to college. I was the valedictorian of my high school class. At that time . . . I'll brag a little bit, because it's all down the tubes by now . . . but I had the highest grade point average in the school of 100 students in the whole student body. It doesn't mean much, but it was good. It was assumed . . . I always assumed I'd be a teacher. I got engaged right out of high school, [but] did not marry that particularly young man . . . that was the childhood sweetheart thing.

By that time, I was working for a real estate company, and I didn't want to think about going back. I think I was fearful of being . . . after having been kind of the big fish in the little puddle . . . I was a little fearful of going off and being this very tiny fish. I didn't really make any strong effort at that time. It worried me for a long time. It made me feel uncomfortable when people would say to me, "Where did you go to school?" and I had to say, "I didn't." Then I'd be embarrassed except that at this stage, it doesn't really bother me because I think, "You don't really have to. If you can hang in there somewhere long enough, you can manage." That's kind of that part of my life.

Group: How did you meet your husband?

Vida: At this real estate company. We managed an office building, along with some other things in St. Louis. He walked in one day to rent an office. I took an immediate dislike to him. We went through a whole bunch of . . . there's a word, but I can't think what it is exactly. This refers back to something I said earlier. I had to go show him this office on several occasions. He came back, and at some point he asked me about my name, 'Vida.' He said, "That was an unusual name, where did it come from?" I told him, "I was named for my grandfather, David. It was a shorter form of 'Davida.'" He said, "What is that anyhow?" I said, "It's Hebrew." He said, "You don't look Jewish." It never dawned on me that he was. I said, "How in the hell am I supposed to look, anyhow?" It was, "Back off. I'm Jewish." I really . . . at that point, I thought, "You can't be so bad then."

He was living in Cincinnati. We got married six months later. He did a lot of commuting back and forth. We were married by one of the professors at the Hebrew Union College⁸ in Cincinnati, I was converted by him. It was the rabbi who had a congregation in Memphis [Tennessee] earlier . . . Nashville [Tennessee], I'm sorry . . . who had performed the

⁸ Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) is the oldest Jewish seminary in the Americas and the main training seminary for rabbis, cantors, educators and communal works in Reform Judaism. It has campuses in Cincinnati, New York, Los Angeles and Jerusalem.

ceremony for my brother-in-law and his wife, a Memphis girl. That again came through the family connection. We just tracked him down in Cincinnati since we were living there. Rabbi Sylvan Schwartzman,⁹ who turned out later to write several of the textbooks that my kids used in Sunday school, which was interesting. He's now retired.

Group: Did you have any . . . did you know your Jewish grandfather?

Vida: Yes, albeit at a very young age. But he lived with us after his wife died and as he got older. He lived with us for I don't even remember how long . . . a year or two years, whatever, until my mother died, and then he lived with other members of the family. He . . . what I didn't know then, and have only pieced together in my mind now, was that he was not very tall. He had white hair that curled on his neck, and a cane, which I think was probably more for effect than getting around, and for stamping when he was annoyed. He loved to play pinochle.¹⁰ That essentially is my memory. But from the things I pieced together, I think he came . . . when he came here . . . I believe it was 1865 or something like that. He lived to 90, and he died when I was perhaps eight or nine or something like that. But he also—my mother was the very youngest of this family of 12 or 13 children—I think he went to New Orleans [Louisiana]. I think he probably . . . and nobody knows this . . . peddled his way up the Mississippi River until he landed in there. He had a little store and a mill. Later he was postmaster in one of the communities . . . all of those little things that just fit into the pieces of kind of typical Jewish immigrant history. But I didn't know it at the time. I put it together.

You may remember I wrote—last summer when I was in Germany—I tracked down his ship record of the boat that he left Hamburg [Germany] on, and that had been somehow very important to me. I'd been trying to find where he came from. I know now that the town, which I thought was in Alsace-[Lorraine],¹¹ was the wrong town and it was in what is now Poland. It

⁹ Rabbi Sylvan D. Schwartzman was a published author and Professor of Jewish Religious Education and Practical Rabbis at Hebrew Union College. Early in his career he served from 1941-1947 as rabbi of Children of Israel in Augusta, Georgia. Although he only stayed for six years, Rabbi Schwartzman had a profound impact on the congregation, nearly doubling the size of its membership and starting a regular interfaith community forum. During World War II, he led services at the local military base. In 1945, the congregation sent a letter to the United States Secretary of State urging his support for the plan to create a United Nations. He also raised money for the *Haganah*, the group fighting for Jewish independence in Palestine.

¹⁰ Pinochle is a trick-taking card game for 2 to 4 players using a 48-card deck. It was very popular with American Jews in the first half of the twentieth century.

¹¹ Alsace-Lorraine is an area bordering France and Germany that has been in constant contention, belonging to one or the other at various times. It is populated by both French and German people. It was seized from France during World War II by the Germans and after the war returned to France.

was in the Danzig Corridor.¹² Whether I'll ever get there or not, I don't know. But he too was one of a large family. I keep feeling that maybe some of them, some cousins or something, got out. I don't know. But it's something that I'm still looking for.

<End Tape 1, Side 1, 01>

<Begin Tape, Side 1, 02>

Group: To follow up, did he have a religious background?

Vida: I don't know because . . . I think that he did. We did find one of those probably promotion type . . . a cousin of mine who did some root-seeking back on the Illinois end, of one of those kind of "Who's Who" type things. It had a bio, which I'm sure the information had to come from him. It mentioned his town and his family. I think it said "of the Hebrew faith" or something like that. But what that meant at that time . . . whether it was religious or not, but what we also found was . . . or what my cousin Rick also found, was a record in the church that said, "David Schein, converted Hebrew," or something like that, "married to Emma Lorenz" [sp]. He didn't ever talk about it particularly. I don't know anything about that. It's part of kind of what I'd like to find out.

Group: Vida, picking up on something that you've said a couple of times . . . that is that you said that you thought you were going to be a teacher. Was that the only career option, or were you thinking 'career' when you were growing up?

Vida: I don't think . . . my seventh grade or eighth grade little . . . what passed for an annual . . . that we put together and stitched ourselves in craft class or something, said, "What do you want to be?" was a stewardess or a teacher. Somehow the stewardess went by the boards easily . . . I guess just because that's what my family did . . . or that part of my family did. I thought it was a very good thing to do. I still think it's a good thing to do. My youngest son just this year started his first year of teaching out at Northside High School [Atlanta, Georgia]. I'm so proud I could spit, because one of them . . . my oldest son does some teaching at the university, but it's not his main idea. But Dean wanted to be a teacher. I was so pleased. It just was kind of natural. I didn't think beyond that, simply because . . . I mean, it wasn't a feminist type . . . all you can do is teach. It was that's what we do.

¹² The 'Danzig Corridor,' (also known as the 'Polish Corridor'), was a small narrow piece of land which was ceded to Poland after World War I. It provided Poland with access to the Baltic Sea, but in the process divided the bulk of Germany from the German province of East Prussia.

Group: In keeping with that then, what's your opinion of the women's movement?¹³

Vida: That's the tender question because I'm all in favor of the women's movement. I'm all in favor of everything that it stands for. But I have never felt that I wanted to set myself off and limit myself in that area. I know that when I bought the paper, for instance, and some of you may be among them . . . I know that there were people . . . I doubt if anybody in this room actually felt this way . . . but I know there were those people out there who kind of said, "She'll never make it. She's a woman." I wouldn't stand for that kind of . . . I mean that just didn't make a great impression on me.

By the same token, when I joined a journalism organization, I joined the Society of Professional Journalists,¹⁴ which let women in in 1970. I joined in 1972, or something in that time frame. I never joined Women in Communications, because I think that's self limiting in a way. I mean if other avenues aren't open, that's fine, but if the avenues are open, I want to go knock heads, if that's what's necessary. I was very pleased to be the first woman president of the Society. We are on our third woman president now. It's hard to make a change. But it opened a door there. I really . . . there are some organizations that would like to be involved in in that area, but I don't have any time for any more. Essentially, except for my journalism groups, I kind of stick within the Jewish community. But go get 'em, tiger.

Group: I'd like to know how the Jewish press . . . how you experienced the Jewish press interrelating with the normal commercial press.

Vida: I can only speak from my own experience here because I think in every community that it is probably different. We . . . I think . . . and part of it is because of my work and Adolph's work before me . . . Adolph's work with the Press Club and my work with Sigma Delta Chi, had established very good relations with the daily papers, with the editors and so on . . . [we] convention together and drink together and what have you. I think that it's been helpful. I know that they get the *Southern Israelite*. I know even more that they read the *Southern Israelite*. I

¹³ The feminist movement, also known as 'women's liberation,' 'women's lib,' the 'women's movement,' or 'feminism' refers to a series of campaigns for reforms on issues such as equal pay, reproductive rights, domestic violence, maternity leave, women's suffrage, sexual harassment, and sexual violence. Feminism began in the western world in the late nineteenth century and has gone through three waves. First-wave feminism was oriented around the station of middle- or upper-class white women and involved suffrage and political equality. Second-wave feminism attempted to further combat social and cultural inequalities. Third-wave feminism is continuing to address financial, social and cultural inequalities.

¹⁴ The Society of Professional Journalists was founded in 1909 and was formerly known 'Sigma Celta Chi.' It is a broad-based American organization with nearly 8,000 members dedicated to encouraging the free practice of journalism and stimulating high standards of ethical behavior. (2014)

think the same thing applies to the television media. I think they look to us. I think they respect us. I think on times when I have taken them to task on some areas that they've respected it. May not have agreed with it, but I've got their ear, and they've got mine. It's a good working relationship here. I really don't know if that exists everywhere or not. I think it probably is on a community to community basis. I don't know it that answers your question. I think there was something more there.

Group: I was really wondering whether or not you felt that the *Southern Israelite* had the general respect among the press.

Vida: Yes, I do, definitely. I know that factually and both from . . . in both sides of the media, but probably more in the printed press, in the *Journal-Constitution*.¹⁵ I know that they have a great deal of respect for the paper. Now I'm talking "they." I'm talking about specific people. I'm talking about the two editorial page editors. I'm talking about Jim Minter¹⁶ . . . at that level. Whether we're talking about . . . the reporter on the beat may not know we exist, but Dick Williams¹⁷ and . . . at the editorial level, yes, they definitely do.

Group: What was your most interesting interview that you've done?

Vida: Goodness. That's really a toughie. I guess . . . I don't know if I could pinpoint the most interesting interview, but I think that the two most exciting experiences for me in pursuing whatever a story, one was being in the Cabinet Room¹⁸ at the White House. I found that thrilling. I was in Washington again last week, and I went through the Capitol,¹⁹ and I still feel . . . I'm a flag-waver, and so on. I don't agree all the time, but I'm . . . and I found that . . . here's this little kid from Columbia, Illinois who never did anything, sitting here in the White House with the President of the United States, and by gosh, that was exciting for me. I think the second

¹⁵ The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* is an Atlanta-based daily paper. In 1982, the *Atlanta Journal* combined staff with the *Atlanta Constitution* to become the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. Today, it is Atlanta's only major daily paper.

¹⁶ Jim Minter began his journalism career as a writer for the University of Georgia's *Red and Black* newspaper as a sportswriter. He ultimately moved to Atlanta, where he worked for the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. He became Executive Editor of the newspaper in the early 1970's and retired in 1988.

¹⁷ Dick Williams is an American journalist who has been reporting and analyzing politics and public policy for more than 30 years. For 17 years, his column was featured in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. For almost 25 years, Williams has been moderator of the *Georgia Gang* now seen on WAGA-TV in Atlanta. (2014)

¹⁸ The Cabinet Room is the meeting room for the cabinet secretaries and advisors serving the President of the United States. The body is defined as the United States Cabinet. The Cabinet Room is located in the West Wing of the White House Complex, adjoining the Oval Office, and looks out upon the White House Rose Garden.

¹⁹ The United States Capitol, atop Capitol Hill at the eastern end of the National Mall in Washington, D.C., is the seat of the United States Congress, the legislative branch of the United States federal government, completed in the year 1800.

. . . and I don't know that I would even lump . . . I don't know which one I would put on top. But certainly being in Beirut [Lebanon] in the middle of the Lebanon War²⁰ was an exciting experience. The stories that came out of that, again for many of the same reasons, that it was . . . I felt kind of a sense of mission there, too. How are you going to end up a war zone? But as far as individual interviews, I don't think I can even remember, because there have been a lot. Many of them are so interesting, and so many of them are so dull.

Group: Which president?

Vida: That was [Jimmy] Carter.²¹ It would not . . . it really had nothing to do . . . the American Jewish Press Association,²² of which the *Southern Israelite* is a member, routinely over the past . . . I guess . . . I'm not sure dating back to whom . . . but has at some point in the course of an administration been invited to the White House for questions to the State Department, and so on. Now, that was true up until this administration. We have not yet been invited to the White House by Mr. [Ronald] Reagan.²³ But it happened . . . there was a little special . . . that's the President, that's Jimmy. It was kind of neat. But perhaps . . . no, I couldn't go beyond . . . I can think of times like that that were exciting, but not an individual.

Group: Did you want a follow up question? . . . As you reflect on the 24 years or 21 years that you've been in Atlanta, can you identify one Atlanta Jewish woman who quickly comes to mind that you hold in very high regard or someone who impressed you with their . . .

Vida: I can think of a number of them. I can think of one who somehow was influential to me in my earliest days here, and that was Janice Rothschild [now Blumberg].²⁴ I think of

²⁰ The Israeli-Lebanese conflict (1982-1985) was a series of military clashes between Israel and Lebanon as well as various non-state militias acting from within Lebanon. Israel invaded a portion of Lebanon with the intention of containing the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which had been attacking Israel. They did expel the PLO but didn't succeed in removing Syrian influence, which only deepened after the Israelis left Lebanon on May 17, 1983.

²¹ James Earl "Jimmy" Carter Jr. (1924-) was the 39th President of the United States from 1977 to 1981. He was a Democrat.

²² The American Jewish Press Association (AJPA) is an organization of Jewish newspapers, magazines, journalists, and affiliated organizations in North America. It was established in 1944 and is based in Phoenix, Arizona.

²³ Ronald Reagan (1911-2004) was the 40th President of the United States. He served from 1981-1989. He was a Republican.

²⁴ Janice Oettinger married Rabbi Jacob Rothschild, a prominent and well-known rabbi of the Temple in Atlanta. Rabbi Rothschild died in 1974. Janice later remarried and moved to Washington, D.C. with her second husband, David Blumberg. She has held leadership positions in numerous organizations, including the B'nai B'rith Klutznick National Jewish Museum, and served as president of the Southern Jewish Historical Society. She has lectured at universities, synagogues, museums and academic conferences across the country. In addition to authoring and/or contributing to several books, she has written articles for the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, *Southern Jewish History*, *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution Sunday Magazine*. In 2012 she returned to Atlanta to live.

Jo[sephine Joel] Heyman.²⁵ I think . . . gosh, there are a lot. I can think of one who won't be familiar to any of you. But it was . . . I would call my Aunt Hannah Luntz,²⁶ who was really my husband's aunt, but who was a remarkable woman in her own right and a Council member of long years' standing. But I guess without going into a list, I probably would stop. Janice, I think, in my earliest days, because she was very visible to me. She was writing, and she was doing a lot of things, and she was involved with the theater. She was the *rebbitzin*²⁷ and made a great impression on me, I think. I've got a feeling that there's somebody that I should be saying, and I'm going to hate myself when I walk out of here, I think. "My goodness, how could I forget?"

Group: Of those three women who did come quickly to mind, is there something that you could identify that brings the three of them together in your mind, some quality?

Vida: You know what . . . I think you're right. I had never thought of it before.

Independence. They were all . . . Aunt Hannah's no longer living . . . but independent women who really did what they had to do, or felt they had to do, or wanted to do, or whatever, and did it within a framework . . . within an appropriate framework, but they did it. I never pinpointed . . . that's very revealing. I just learned something about myself that I didn't know. I will, if I may, let me interject something here. Was everybody here in this room surprised when I said I was a convert? Is there anybody that . . . you weren't. You weren't. You knew it. Because when I came to Atlanta, I made no bones about it. I mean this is what I was. I was proud of it, and that was the way it was.

After I started working at the paper and particularly after I started writing that earlier column that many of you probably don't even remember called *Coffee Klatch*, which was so bad. Now when I go back and read it, I think, "Did I do that?" But at any rate, I began to get this feeling that if I said anything mildly critical of any group or body or custom or anything else, or if I went off on any sort of tangent, the feedback I was going to get . . . I don't know that this would have happened . . . but was, "What does she know about it anyhow? She's not even Jewish." I think that exists. It exists to some degree that I felt that very strongly. All at a

²⁵ Josephine Joel Heyman (1901-1993) was a Jewish civic and political activist in Atlanta. During the 1930's, she conducted night classes to teach Holocaust refugees English. When the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching expanded, she became an active member. In the 1940's she was one of five women founders of the United Nations Association of Atlanta. She and her friend, Eleanor Raoul Greene, started the DeKalb County chapter of the League of Women Voters. In the 1960's, she turned her efforts to promoting racial desegregation. She also gave years of service and leadership in the National Council of Women Jews and *Hadassah*.

²⁶ Hannah lived in Macon from 1886-1977.

²⁷ *Rebbetzin* (Yiddish: רבציין) or *Rabbanit* (Hebrew: רבנית) is the title used for the wife of a rabbi.

sudden I buttoned up. I no longer told anyone. Now, I know that a lot of . . . first of all, because of my Macon connection and Macon connections with Atlanta, a lot more people know it and knew it than I think. I didn't think most at my staff knew it. I found out that they all do, because somewhere along the line it buzzed around. But that feeling was so strong in me at that time. To a degree, it still exists, that I have never gone public. I debated, knowing that this would have to come up tonight, could I deal with that or not. There's only one way . . . is to open it up. But there's something wrong, I think, when . . . and I'm not the only one that feels that way . . . that we do feel that way. But anyhow, that's just an aside.

Group: When you first came and when your children were smaller and lived in a predominantly non-Jewish area, how did you feel about that for yourself and for your children?

Vida: You know because you were there. It didn't really bother me at that time because when we lived in New York, we lived in such a predominantly Jewish area . . . all of New York . . . that I somehow was looking for other things when I came to Atlanta. Not actively looking for other things, but I didn't make a great point about seeking out a Jewish neighborhood. Now, at one stage when we did live over in the Margaret Mitchell area,²⁸ I found, "Gee, this is comfortable." But we left there and went to another non-Jewish area. I have to say honestly, if I had to do it over again, that would be important to me. It wasn't then, and I'm sorry it wasn't then. But it wasn't. I wouldn't want to be in a totally Jewish neighborhood. I felt that the interchange was very good, but I do feel that I would have done some things . . . we all feel that we would have done some things differently.

I was a great, ardent public school supporter at that time, and by gosh, my kids were going to go to public school. All three of them, they went to Fulton County, City of Atlanta, DeKalb County. We moved around a lot. It would never have occurred to me at the time to send them either to the academy or to private school of any kind. Now, I think I might do that differently. I don't know. It's a feeling that I'm not sure of.

Group: Would you have done it differently, as you say, because of the children, wanting them in a Jewish atmosphere, or for yourself'?

Vida: Primarily for my children, although I think for myself, too. In just that kind of routine

²⁸ Margaret Mitchell is a neighborhood in the northwest part of the city of Atlanta. It is bounded by Moore's Mill Road on the south, Interstate-75 on the east, and the Paces neighborhood on the west. The neighborhood is named for *Gone With the Wind* author Margaret Mitchell. It was developed in the 1950's and was originally called Cherokee Forest.

understanding that there's so much stuff that you don't have to get out of the way first. My first friend in Atlanta, my closest friend when I came to Atlanta when we lived in the Tuxedo [Park]²⁹ area . . . that was before I knew you . . . was not Jewish. Twenty odd years later we are still friends. At that particular period, I'm not sure if there were any other Jewish children in the school. By the time we got to Riley, it was a more or less mixed neighborhood, but not heavily Jewish. But yes, I think I would change that. I don't know that it would help, but I would do it.

Group: Are any of your children married to gentiles?

Vida: I knew that was coming. Yes. My daughter, who was the first marriage, is married to a gentile, a Methodist. They have been married for 13 years, I think. They were married by a rabbi . . . but they were married by a rabbi . . . an imported rabbi, more to please their grandmother than . . . At that time, Ed [Barber] talked about the possibility of conversion, although not for the sake of getting married. If he did it, he wanted to do it because that was what he wanted to do. Since that time, they really don't do anything. He's not particularly religious. Deborah [Goldgar Barber] is not particularly religious. She feels very Jewish. She is interested in all . . . I mean, she's not involved Jewishly, but she's interested Jewishly. But from any point, they are the parents of my two granddaughters, who at this stage are being reared without any religious education of any kind. Now, yes, that worries me. But I kind of feel in a sense that when I got married, my father didn't say, "You can't marry him." I mean, he just . . . "If that's what your choice is, that's fine with me, I like Mike."

My mother-in-law welcomed me in, although she had reservations. I adore my son-in-law. My only other married child, my oldest son, but who was not my first married, married five years ago a . . . what he calls a 'renegade Catholic,' who right now is taking a conversion course. By the time their first child is born at the end of January, my third grandchild will be a Jewish grandchild. She had the idea and intention from very early on. It's just taken five years to kind of put it into reality. I guess, again, you can't be pushy. You can't do this. I've been fortunate. I adore both my daughter-in-laws and my son-in-law. When I told her that if she were still considering conversion that it would be well to do it before the baby is born because then the baby would be born Jewish and she wouldn't have . . . by the next week, she'd been to see the rabbi. That's underway at this point, and I assume will take place. My other two are still not married . . . have shown no particular inclination to date Jewish girls at this stage. That's why I

²⁹ A neighborhood in northwest Atlanta.

say, in answer to your question, that I don't know that it would have mattered. But I think maybe it would.

Group: I had a question. What was the actual response to you from members of the Jewish community, to your being a convert, a female, and a Midwesterner in heading up the *Southern Israelite*?

Vida: Now, first of all, as far as the convert is concerned, I'm really not sure who knew that and who didn't. Those presumably at that stage who knew it either had forgotten it or had accepted me . . . knew me well enough . . . if they knew me well enough to know it, they knew me well enough to take that all right. Remember, I'd been working for that paper for 13 or 15 years already at that time. As far as the Midwesterner, I really don't know about that, because I've never thought of it before. Atlanta is home. Nobody ever brought that issue up. But now, as far as the woman, we've covered that before. In essence, I'm sure that there was that feeling out there . . . that she's not going to make it or something, never mind that it barely was squeaking through with a man. But I think that that was . . .

I'm not sure that the [Mid]westerner part . . . I had been at the paper . . . remember, by the time I bought the paper, I'd been there for 15 years and was fairly solidly ingrained with the Jewish community. I'd been out in the community a great deal. Oddly enough, the interim publisher, Jack Geldbart, was the one that they had more questions about. They knew me. They didn't . . . a lot of the community didn't know Jack and couldn't figure out what he was doing at a newspaper . . . at the *Southern Israelite*. I'd always been around. There are so many newer people in Atlanta, too, that didn't know maybe that I . . . I don't have a Southern accent, but that . . . they tell me up in New York that I do. That is the one issue that didn't come up. At least nobody told me about it.

Group: I have one other question and that is, what kind of changes have you observed in the Jewish community in the twenty-some odd years that you've been here?

Vida: Obviously . . .

Group: . . . I'm interested in Atlanta primarily, but in the South as well.

Vida: I think primarily the enormous growth has been something to see. But what that has done in essence to the community as I remember it when I came and to those of you who have been here much longer . . . natives . . . than I, is that what was essentially a very close-knit community it appeared to me, where everybody belonged to everything and everybody knew

everybody else. All of a sudden you can walk into a room at a Jewish function and say, “Who are all these people?” But I think that one of the things that I’ve noticed is a definite . . . maybe it’s a peace treaty or something of that sort that may blow apart any day between the various groups . . . between the Orthodox,³⁰ Conservative³¹ and Reform.³²

<End Tape 1, Side 1, 02>

<Begin Tape 1, Side 2>

Vida: That has changed. I think that’s a change for the better. What I think that is particularly good for Atlanta is that with this growth and newcomers and so on, we haven’t lost the something that was there, just enlarged it. Especially coming from New York, where you just didn’t have that kind of closeness as a community, even in the suburbs where I lived in Glen Cove [Long Island, New York]. It didn’t seem to be quite there in the same way it is in Atlanta. Maybe that’s Southern hospitality, or something. There have been a lot of changes. I think that there have been changes. I think there has been a greater movement, and I might be wrong about this, within the Jewish community to get involved in outside activities, as well. Not to the exclusion of Jewish activities, but to branch out and broaden in some other . . . whether it’s cultural or whatever it is. I think that’s broader than I remember when I came here.

Group: Non-Jewish activities you’re referring to?

Vida: Yes. Political, whatever it is.

<End Tape 1, Side 2>

<Begin Tape 2, Side 1, 01 interview by Libby Johnson, January 8, 1987>

Libby: . . . what began as a group interview of Vida Goldgar. Vida is editor of what this week has been renamed the *Atlanta Jewish Times*, formerly known as the *Southern Israelite*. It is Thursday, January 8, 1987. We are in Vida’s office at the Atlanta Technology Center at 1575 Northside Drive. This interview is being done in connection with the Women of Achievement

³⁰ Orthodox Judaism is a traditional branch of Judaism that strictly follows the Written *Torah* and the Oral Law concerning prayer, dress, food, sex, family relations, social behavior, the Sabbath day, holidays and more.

³¹ A form of Judaism that seeks to preserve Jewish tradition and ritual but has a more flexible approach to the interpretation of the law than Orthodox Judaism. It attempts to combine a positive attitude toward modern culture, while preserving a commitment to Jewish observance. They also observe gender equality (mixed seating, women rabbis and *bat mitzvahs*).

³² A division within Judaism especially in North America and Western Europe. Historically it began in the nineteenth century. In general, the Reform movement maintains that Judaism and Jewish traditions should be modernized and compatible with participation in Western culture. While the *Torah* remains the law, in Reform Judaism women are included (mixed seating, *bat mitzvah* and women rabbis), music is allowed in the services and most of the service is in English.

Oral History Project, jointly sponsored by the Atlanta chapters of the National Council of Jewish Women and the American Jewish Committee. There have been a number of changes at the newspaper since you had your group interview. The paper has been sold. There was a name change just this week. Why don't you explain a little bit about why those changes have taken place?

Vida: To deal first with the sale of the paper, it was not something that I was contemplating at all. I had had a previous offer that was not something that I particularly wanted to consider. But having to deal with that led me to think about the future of the paper and my future and what needed to be done, or could be done, with the paper. I had time to work through all those emotional and traumatic things that go with giving up your baby. Actually, when in mid-July, I got a call that Stan and Shirley Rose, who are publishers of the *Kansas City Jewish Chronicle*, along with their son Steve . . . that Stan and Shirley, whom I had met before, were going to be in Atlanta for I think a *bat mitzvah*³³ or *bar mitzvah*,³⁴ and wanted to talk with me and get together with me, I didn't think much of it except that this is par for the course when colleagues visit each other's towns. Then it was hinted to me by a friend of mine who works for the paper out there that sometime down the road, if I ever gave some thought to selling the paper, they would like to talk to me. I didn't really tie the two things together until we got together and had a lovely dinner and a drink or two. I discovered that they were talking about . . . we're interested right now. I don't know whether, without that previous exposure to the possibility, I would have been able to make a quick decision or not. Long before that, for a number of years, I have given a lot of thought to the future of the paper. I'm not ready to retire, but by the same token, time is passing. Once I determined that none of my children was interested in the newspaper business . . . they had their own careers and were mostly out of town, I thought, "What do I do?" I feel so strongly about the need for an independent paper in the community and for the continuation of this newspaper, by whatever name.

³³ Hebrew for 'daughter of commandment.' A rite of passage for Jewish girls aged 12 years and one day according to her Hebrew birthday. Many girls have their *bat mitzvah* around age 13, the same as boys who have their *bar mitzvah* at that age. She is now duty bound to keep the commandments. Synagogue ceremonies are held for *bat mitzvah* girls in Reform and Conservative communities, but it has not won the universal approval of Orthodox rabbis.

³⁴ Hebrew for 'son of commandment.' A rite of passage for Jewish boys aged 13 years and one day. At that time, a Jewish boy is considered a responsible adult for most religious purposes. He is now duty bound to keep the commandments, he puts on *tefillin*, and may be counted to the *minyan* quorum for public worship. He celebrates the *bar mitzvah* by being called up to the reading of the *Torah* in the synagogue, usually on the next available Sabbath after his Hebrew birthday.

I had talked over the years to, I think, three young people from various parts of the country who were experienced Jewish journalists and had some interest from them in possibly coming into Atlanta and growing into the job by the time I was ready to give it up. But for various reasons, and I guess the primary one was that I really was never able to pay them what they were asking or what they were worth, to say nothing of moving expenses and all that sort of thing, none of them really came to pass. I put it out of mind a little bit. But it was never far from my mind, and time was passing.

Knowing the Roses, although I didn't know them very well, but knowing their philosophy of Jewish journalism and knowing the newspaper that they have out there, the Jewish paper . . . they have other papers as well, but the Jewish paper, and liking them and liking what I heard, and liking, frankly, the offer that they made me, I didn't really take very long to make a decision. It moved very quickly. That was in mid-July that they were here for the first time. In mid-August I flew out to Kansas City [Kansas]. We've talked many times since then, and the lawyers have talked and all that sort of thing. But I flew out to Kansas City to meet some of their people and to look over their operation, and also to sit in with them and help interview a young man that they were considering for general manager who indeed . . . Jeff Rubin is our general manager now. All of us agreed that he was the one for the spot. By August, I think 26, we signed the papers. I may be off a day or two on that, but it was before the end of August. We actually signed the papers for the sale. It wasn't without some trepidation. There was a big change, an emotional change, from going from . . . just being the final word. But the idea, first of all, of getting rid of the business headaches in themselves was a major improvement.

There's been a lot to learn. We've made so many changes just in format. But all in all, if I anticipated easing up, that hasn't happened. It may happen. But I'm at another juncture now against . . . from the first of the year in that I will be paying less attention to the nuts and bolts day-to-day production of the newspaper itself and have more time . . . the time that I always said, "If I only could plan and think and get out, wouldn't it be wonderful." Now I will have that time to do that and to do some advance planning on stories and series and things, rather than going on a rather rushed day-to-day basis.

The name change is . . . from the *Southern Israelite*, which was the name of the paper since its inception 62 years ago, was a little harder to get used to. The *Atlanta Jewish Times* is, I agree, a more modern name, more in keeping with what is happening in the Jewish community

of Atlanta. Part of the reason for the change was to perhaps be more appealing to a lot of the newcomers in town who don't have the history of the *Southern Israelite*, and frankly, very often say, "What's that? Is it a synagogue bulletin?" Also, to appeal to the advertisers, many of whom are not Jewish, and who are even more confused as to what the *Southern Israelite* is. I agree with all the reasons. Emotionally, I haven't quite totally accepted it yet. I still pick up the phone, if I happen to, and say, "The *Southern Israelite*." I guess that'll happen, and continue to happen for a long time. I'll be glad to elaborate on anything, but that kind of sums up how that happened so quickly, and why it was able to happen so quickly.

Libby: How did it feel when you put your name on the dotted line?

Vida: I think I was numb. I think I was a little numb, because there was no turning back at that point. I don't recall any feelings of wanting to, but it did seem so quick and so final. Then there was this flash of, "What was it really going to mean?" Those are all . . . I guess my philosophy through life, which I think I probably gleaned from my father, was once you make your mind up to something, then move ahead and don't look back. I think I've pretty well stuck to that throughout my life, including my divorce and other areas. I'm kind of excited about the future, and it's . . . when I took the sign off my door at the old office that said 'Editor and Publisher,' it was kind of odd. But then quickly, Jeff, our general manager, got a new one for this door that's just 'Editor.' At least there's a sign and I know who I am.

Libby: Are you an employee now?

Vida: I am an employee now. I do not have any stock interest in the paper at all. That's a little strange, too. I'm in on a lot of the decision-making and so on. I think that there was certainly great consideration for my feelings and sensitivity to the change that the Roses displayed toward me. In a way, it's kind of nice being an employee. In some ways it's not . . .

Libby: . . . less control of things?

Vida: Yes.

Vida: Even if that end of the day is midnight. But there are so many things that I have been unable to do that in the normal course of things I should have been able to do, events that I should have attended, board meetings that I've missed because we were working late or because there was something, a special issue. I feel that I haven't really . . . not that I'm going to get out and hit everything that's going on . . . but I felt guilty about a lot of things. I have not been to a

board meeting of the [Louis] Kahn [Group] Home³⁵ for months and months and months, because they meet on Wednesday evening, and that's our late night. This new arrangement, especially now at the first of the year, should enable me to do a few more of those things. I'll be doing probably a little more writing than I've had, especially on some major events, and we'll see.

Libby: I noticed you do have a typewriter.

Vida: Yes, I do have a typewriter. I haven't completely learned how to use this fancy thing.

Libby: Looks like a new-fangled job, yes.

Vida: A couple of weeks ago I broke my wrist. For all that period, I was blaming those odd spaces in the typewriter on the fact that the splint was catching them. Now I found out that I don't have a splint anymore and the spaces are still appearing.

Libby: What was Adolph Rosenberg like?

Vida: That's a toughie. He was a solid newsman from the word 'Go,' with an eye and an ear for the story. He was totally disorganized. My office is very tidy by comparison. But he always knew where everything was. He, toward the end, I think, felt that for whatever reasons, the paper did not enjoy the support of the community in a way that he would have hoped. He gave his entire life to it, [his] entire adult life.

Libby: Did he start the paper?

Vida: No, he didn't. It was started in Augusta [Georgia] by a Rabbi [H. Cerf] Straus. Then a man named Herman Dessauer,³⁶ whose daughter still lives, Sara [Burns Dessauer] Hene, lives in Atlanta, apparently had an interest in it, [and] brought it to Atlanta. I think his was from the business end. In turn [he] sold it to a man named Steve Schiffer, who had been in the advertising department at the now-defunct daily paper, the *Atlanta Georgian*.³⁷ Adolph came on as editor in, I think, 1939 with Steve Schiffer. [Adolph] later went into the Air Force. When he came back, I'm not sure of the time frame here, he began to think how nice it would be. A number of community-minded people actually bought the stock, I think, which never was redeemable for anything, to enable Adolph. Then he was president of the corporation. Essentially it was his

³⁵ The Louis Kahn Group Home was located in northeast Atlanta and provided assisted living for senior citizens.

³⁶ Herman Dessauer married Sara Burns Simmons. Their daughter was Sara Burns Dessauer, who married Burt B. Hene, Jr. She had a sister, Kitty.

³⁷ The *Atlanta Georgian* was a daily newspaper published from 1906. It was purchased by the Hearst news organization in 1912 and by the 1930's it was the third largest newspaper in Atlanta, Georgia with a circulation of 75,000. It was purchased by James Cox and closed in 1939. It covered prominently the Atlanta race riot of 1906 and the Leo Frank murder case.

paper. I think that may have been about 1951. He died in 1977, in February [NB: actually January 17]. He was totally dedicated. In that period, even in the period after I came, I know that there were many times when he would take out a second or maybe a third mortgage on his house to fix the press. We had our own printing press at the time and literally manhandled the paper through survival in some very tough times. It was in Chapter 11 [bankruptcy] at one point.

Libby: When was that?

Vida: I want to say . . . it was the early Seventies. I don't remember just exactly when. It had to do with a tax situation that was really kind of a major mix-up. Nonetheless, the end result was the same. But [he] came out of it. I think that he probably had some assistance from the community in some way at that time. I'm really a little vague. I know that before the Chapter 11 arrangements were worked out, we weren't positive that we wouldn't find a padlock on the door. At that point, he asked me if I would take the addressograph plates and keep them in my car, so at least we had our mailing list and we'd get a paper of some sort out somehow. I felt like a lawbreaker or something, but I did it. He knew that there wasn't much point in his having them, so I drove around with our mailing list.

But he became ill in the late . . . probably 1975, early 1976, and practically until the day he died, even during chemotherapy, he would come right in to the paper. He maintained some semblance . . . of carrying on. He was a remarkable man. He could be annoying. He could be aggravating. At one time, I asked him, after he was ill and I wanted to indicate in the softest way because we didn't talk about his illness, that I might be interested in the paper. The only way I could phrase it was if he wanted to give up a little responsibility, I'd be interested in a piece of the action. His response was, "After all, you're a woman, and a single woman. What if you fell in love with somebody in Chicago or something like that? What would you do then?" I got annoyed and couldn't really express it. I said, "You wouldn't say that to a single man." Nonetheless, that was the end of the conversation. He proceeded . . . as his illness proceeded . . . to negotiate with Jack Geldbart, who bought it from him, and from whom I bought it in turn. Jack was here for about two years, I guess.

Libby: He hired you . . . wanted you to come work here, despite the fact that you were a woman . . .

Vida: . . . trusted me completely when I really had no idea what I was doing. When he had an opportunity to go to Israel, he just said, "Handle it." Somehow, I did. During that illness, I

was to all intents and purposes . . . because we were the editorial staff . . . but somehow when it came to that ownership or actual involvement, then he couldn't quite see that. He was invariably . . . not invariably cheerful earlier, but he had a pretty good philosophy of life, too. He did, as I said, get a little bitter toward the end. He was not . . . many times he took on issues in the paper that some called 'courageous' and others called 'foolhardy.'

Libby: What is an example? What sticks out in your mind as one of those kinds of issues?

Vida: At this . . . it was a rather personal kind of attack, I guess, to someone who is still very much with us. I think I'd almost rather not get into that.

<End Tape 2, Side 1, 01>

<Begin Tape 2, Side 1, 02>

Libby: How do you think the paper has changed? You said he was bitter, seemed bitter, about the fact that he didn't feel like the community supported the paper.

Vida: I'm not talking really about financial support or . . .

Libby: . . . you're talking about subscriptions or . . .

Vida: . . . I'm really not certain whether I could pinpoint it, or whether it was just an overview including all of those things. But I think the paper was definitely . . . many, many times, was in financial difficulty, many times even in my period there where I would hold my paycheck. He took very little out of it. It was truly a labor of love. I think he felt unappreciated, perhaps, began to feel a little unappreciated. But the highlight of his life, I think, was being in Israel during the Six-Day War.³⁸ Did I get into that in the other . . . ?

Libby: . . . no. You talked about the fact that he had left for that trip not long after you came to work here . . . basically said, "Get the paper out."

Vida: That was his first trip. That wasn't the Six Day War. Because the Six Day War . . . he was president of the American Jewish Press Association at that time. He had planned . . . the AJPA for many years had its annual meeting automatically in New York in somebody's office. It just was . . . he was one of the founders of it. He decided that it was high time, since one of

³⁸ The Six-Day War was fought between June 5 and 10, 1967 by Israel and the neighboring states of Egypt (known at the time as the United Arab Republic), Jordan, and Syria. Relations between Israel and its neighbors had never fully normalized following the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, and in the period leading up to June 1967 tensions became heightened. As a result, Israel launched a series of preemptive airstrikes against Egyptian airfields on June 5 following the mobilization of Egyptian forces along the Israeli border in the Sinai Peninsula. The outcome was swift and decisive. Israel took control of the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria. The Sinai was returned but the other territories were incorporated into Israel.

our main topics was Israel, and many of . . . a number of the editors had not even been there, that it was time for a show of support and the annual convention should be held in Israel. He worked very hard to get that across, and had a good number signed up to go. It was scheduled for the last week in May of 1967. Somehow, I convinced him that I really ought to go, too. That happened to be one of the times when we had an old newspaper man who was doing some part-time work, but he knew how things operated. We had a good printing staff back then who knew how to get . . . the technical end. So we arranged it.

I left a week early and went with my husband to . . . he had some business in Portugal and Switzerland. We took a week there. Then we were to meet in Israel. Adolph was going to stay . . . we would have one week together, and he was going to stay. We were there reading the papers, when we could get hold of an English language paper, or puzzling out the headlines. Obviously, things were heating up in the Mideast. I called home at one point . . . I think the State Department had already issued a call for Americans to leave Israel. I called home. I said, "What's happening there? Are you going to scrub the convention?" I was a little nervous myself about going in at that time. So was my husband, although he was less so than I was. Adolph said, "We've had a couple of cancellations, but we've still got a good group." He said, "I'm coming if I have to come by myself." I said, "We'll meet you there."

We flew into Israel on an almost empty plane from Switzerland, and indeed did meet Adolph there. He had relatives . . . he had an aunt and, I think, some cousins there that he was planning to visit. I was supposed to leave May 31, and did indeed leave on schedule. Even with the war imminent . . . we really were treated like royalty. Much was made of us in the papers for having come in and showing the support. We got to go down into the Negev³⁹ to a training base and ride around on halftracks and things, do a lot of . . . it was interesting. But a blackout was in force. Adolph stayed. The war broke out. He could not get back. Didn't really . . .

Libby: . . . he was stuck then?

Vida: He was stuck. He didn't really . . . he had a bullet hole in his room . . . came through his window. I don't recall whether he was in the room, or not. He proceeded as a true newsman.

³⁹ The Negev is a desert and semi-desert region of southern Israel. The region's largest city, and administrative capital is Beersheba in the north. At the southern end is the Gulf of Aqaba, and the resort city of Eilat. During the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, Egyptian forces occupied the region. The Negev became the focus of an Israeli push to secure its borders. The end of the war is considered to have occurred in March of 1949 when Israeli soldiers raised their flag in the newly secured southern Negev around present-day Eilat.

He hooked up with a unit, whatever, went down into where the fighting was, or had just been. I tried desperately to get a call through, unsuccessfully. We didn't hear anything from him. He couldn't get to us. Not knowing really what was going on over there, we didn't know if he was dead or alive, or what had happened. At some point we got this thick airmail letter. He started sending stories back.

Libby: Sending copy?

Vida: Yes. He couldn't get through on wire or anything like that. When he got back, he was just much in demand . . . all over the city, because I think he was the only Atlantan, only Atlanta newsperson, that was actually there. It was . . . he talked about it for the rest of his life and reminisced about it.

Libby: I'm sure. You mentioned the B'nai B'rith bowling league that you were so active in . . . switching gears a little bit. It must have been important to you, because you said that was one thing that you wanted to work part-time because you wanted to maintain your bowling schedule. What women were you bowling with?

Vida: I actually bowled in two leagues. I bowled with the Temple⁴⁰ Couples League, although I bowled not as a couple. But that was an evening one. The B'nai B'rith Women⁴¹ . . . I don't remember. I know I've got a trophy. I don't recall. I think Margie [Rosenstein] Diamond is in that league.

Libby: Does it still exist?

Vida: I doubt it. I don't really know. At some point, it really did become impossible. But then also at some point I released the ball, and either my knee or my back went. I don't know. But I went down on my face. I said, "That's it." But it was important to me for a couple of reasons. One is because I really don't get exercise. I get tons of exercise up and down and running around, but I don't have any sort, or didn't then, and still don't, regular exercise program. I've always enjoyed bowling, which seems kind of an odd activity. But I never learned to play

⁴⁰ The Temple, or 'Hebrew Benevolent Congregation,' is Atlanta's oldest Jewish congregation. The cornerstone was laid on the Temple on Garnett Street in 1875. The dedication was held in 1877 and the Temple was located there until 1902. The Temple's next location on Pryor Street was dedicated in 1902. The Temple's current location in Midtown on Peachtree Street was dedicated in 1931. The main sanctuary is on the National Register of Historic Places. The Reform congregation now totals approximately 1,500 families (2015).

⁴¹ B'nai B'rith Women was founded in San Francisco, California in 1909. It was originally a social organization designed to attract young, single adult members with parties, picnics and dances. As women emerged into the public sphere it expanded into cultural activities, philanthropy and community service. Their announced aims are to perpetuate Jewish culture, enrich their communities and ensure the religious survival of their sons and daughters.

tennis. I did play volleyball with Alice [Weinberger] Caplan and a few other people at the [Atlanta Jewish] Community Center for some time. Also about the time I started to work here, or shortly before. Bowling was something I knew I could do. Not marvelously well, but well enough not to be embarrassed by it. They were a nice bunch. I wish I could name names. I'm a little embarrassed that I can't. It was a nice group of women that I enjoyed having that little time. With three or four . . . I guess I had four children by then, at home, between work and home and den mothering and all those things, it was a relaxing sort of thing. I gave it up with some reluctance. But I haven't bowled for years. I kept the ball, but . . .

Libby: One thing we didn't get real clear in the first interview was the names of your parents and your grandparents. Tell me your folks' names, your mom's maiden name and then your respective grandparents.

Vida: My mother's name was Adele Schein . . . S-C-H-E-I-N. My father's name was John Daab . . . D-A-A-B. His parents were Elizabeth, my grandparents, Elizabeth and, I think, Fred. He died before I was born. I never knew him. I did know my grandmother. My mother's father was David Schein. Also, my grandmother died. I knew my step-grandmother. Isn't that odd? I've got the whole family thing written down somewhere. It doesn't come to mind.

Libby: We can get that later.

Vida: Yes.

Libby: Your mother died when you were seven.

Vida: Seven.

Libby: Your father remarried. I gather that was not a particularly warm relationship.

Vida: Not for us. Not between my sister and myself and my stepmother, or between her children. Maybe it was somewhat typical of the times. I'm not sure. She died I think, when I was about 13 or 14 also. He did not remarry after that, although he continued to date until he was close to 80, I guess, which was kind of neat.

Libby: He was in Columbia, Illinois until he died?

Vida: Yes. He died in 1967 of cancer of the esophagus.

Libby: What was his attitude when you converted? When you married?

Vida: I really don't know. To tell you the truth, I'm not really certain whether he knew, literally knew, that I formally did or not. I know that sounds very strange.

Libby: It doesn't sound strange to me.

Vida: We lived away. He never really asked questions. He liked Mike. I was happy. He enjoyed his grandchildren when we came to visit. But I'm not sure he gave too much thought. I think he kind of felt, "That's her business." He didn't carry it much further than that.

Libby: There was never any problem about celebrating Christmas? How did you handle . . .

Vida: . . . especially after the children were in school, that is the time that you go home and we got winter vacation. Almost every year we would go home at that time. Sometimes we would come to Macon to visit my in-laws and then make the circle and back to New York. Other times we'd do it the other way around, or one or the other. My Dad, bless him, always went to a great deal of trouble, and he was pretty well up in years, to decorate a little artificial Christmas tree and to get Christmas presents for the children. Frankly, I never had the heart to tell him that I'd prefer that he didn't. I don't think that he could really have understood. He would have been hurt.

We would often be in Macon for *Hanukkah*.⁴² Or we celebrated *Hanukkah* when we happened to be there, as the case may be. The kids kind of grew up taking it for granted that when we went to Grandpa's, there would be Christmas. As they got a little older, they understood it better, but like many kids . . . presents . . . why not? Now, I did have . . . my father may have had a little bit more of an understanding about my mother and her background. I'm not sure. I do know that a cousin of mine, on my mother's side, much older than I, or a number of years older, when I got married, and she said . . . or was getting married . . . and she said something about, "But Mike's a Jew." I said, "Yes." She said, "But the Jews don't believe in G-d." I said, "Amanda, they invented him." She was really very distressed about this. I said, "Grandpa was Jewish." "Where did you ever get such an idea?" She had grown up in the same way that I had, with mothers who were sisters, and never, ever knew that. I grew up knowing it. I don't know precisely why that is or how it happened. I think I did tell you about discovering my grandfather's sailing papers, didn't I?

Libby: Yes.

Vida: I have now discovered through a cousin of mine who is working on something of a

⁴² Hebrew for 'dedication.' An eight-day festival of lights usually falling around Christmas on the Christian calendar. *Hanukkah* celebrates the victory of the Maccabees in 165 BCE over the Seleucid rulers of Palestine, who had desecrated the Temple. The Maccabees wanted to re-dedicate the Temple altar to Jewish worship by rekindling the *menorah* but could only find one small jar of ritually pure olive oil. This oil continued to burn miraculously for eight days, enabling them to prepare new oil. The *menorah* with its eight branches commemorates this miracle.

genealogical effort that I also have Mormon relatives now. My mother's brother, Henry, who apparently ran away from his Jewishness much more and went to California which was kind of unheard of in those days, that one of his children . . . I don't think he became a Mormon . . . but there is a Mormon grandchild in Nevada. The daughter or granddaughter or whatever is a student at Brigham Young University [Provo, Utah]. They're a prominent family in their community. I think a banker or something like that. It's so odd to me to think that I've got relatives that span almost . . . I don't know that there are any Buddhists, but it's possible.

Libby: Tell me about *Hadassah*, what that was like here when you were volunteering. You said that sort of got you into the PR [public relations] journalism area.

Vida: In a sense, the PR got me. I had to be in *Hadassah*. There was no question. My mother-in-law had been a founder of the Macon chapter and twice president, its first president and then later on, and was very much involved with . . . all the Atlanta *Hadassah* people of her generation and my generation, actually, Laurel Weiner,⁴³ and so on, and regional *Hadassah*. When I moved to Atlanta . . . there was no question that the first thing I joined after Sisterhood, maybe even before was *Hadassah*. That was the time of the . . . the chapters have all changed so. I was a member of the [Henrietta] Szold Chapter. But I had this temporary little public relations business. I think I mentioned that, didn't I?

Libby: I'm not sure you mentioned that.

Vida: That was a time when my husband had just begun, in the early Sixties, to build a major corporation and took a big new space out near Lenox Square.⁴⁴ [He] had a lease on a smaller office down at the NBG [National Bank of Georgia] Building. Apparently, I don't know whether he couldn't sublease it or whatever, but . . . he came up with a brilliant idea. He had this executive assistant who also handled all the public relations for the firm and one thing and another . . . that she should move down there and start a public relations business. He would be our chief client, and whatever other business we could stir. He also decided that that was a good thing for me to do, to keep me out of mischief. I really didn't know anything about the business.

⁴³ Laurel Weiner (1928-1996) was an Atlanta resident and former national vice president of *Hadassah*. She was a native of Brooklyn, New York and attended the University of Georgia. She devoted most of her spare time to volunteer work for civic organizations and the cause of Zionism. She was a delegate to three World Zionist Congresses and a leader in many national, regional and local Jewish groups. She was on the board of the Atlanta Community Council and the Community Planning Council. She was also a former president of the Southeast Region of *Hadassah*.

⁴⁴ Lenox Square is a mall in Atlanta's Buckhead community. It was built in 1959 and has undergone several major renovations.

She knew a great deal about the business. We opened our own public relations outfit. We had a number of clients. I think we did a good job for them, but we seemed to get an awful lot of clients that somehow went out of business before they paid the bills. I think that in Atlanta . . . we may well have been the first all-female public relations business.

Libby: What did you call yourselves?

Vida: It was Cavanaugh Associates. Her name was Trudy Cavanaugh. I wouldn't make that claim. We did take in a male associate at some point who really was not terribly successful. Pretty soon I think the lease ran out. We weren't doing anything anyhow. Trudy went back to work for Mike. I went back home. That was when Virginia [Diamond] Saul and Rae [Davis] Sternberg, and I'm not sure . . . I think they'd both take the blame, but I'm not sure which one, actually . . . I'm inclined to think it was Ray who said, "We need a real professional to handle chapter publicity now." The chapter still existed over . . . encompassing the groups, rather than the individual groups as it is now.

Libby: I see.

Vida: I said, "But I'm really not a professional." She thought I was being modest. I really wasn't. Up until that time, I think I had been telephone committee, group secretary, and things like that. I always liked the idea of PR because I could do that at home. I didn't have to have committee meetings. If I wanted to do it at 2:00 o'clock in the morning, I could do that. Because they thought I was a professional PR person, they decided what my future would be. Of course, that brings me back to the *Southern Israelite*.

Libby: Tell me about . . . you mentioned Ray Sternberg⁴⁵ and . . .

Vida: . . . Virginia [Diamond] Saul . . .

Libby: Virginia Saul. Who are the other women who were active in *Hadassah*?

Vida: [Dr.] Nannette Wenger⁴⁶ was very active. Hazel [Berman] Karp, Sonia [Abelson] Rabinowitz, Colleen Weston.

Libby: Were these mostly Atlanta natives?

Vida: Not all. Certainly Nanette was not a native. She was already practicing medicine.

⁴⁵ Full name: Ruth (Rae) Davis Sternberg (1926-1997).

⁴⁶ Dr. Nannette Wenger is a prominent and pioneering cardiologist in Atlanta. She got her medical degree from Harvard in 1954 and went on to study at Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York City and Emory University in Atlanta, where she was among the first faculty hired for the Emory University Medical School. She also became the Director of the Cardiac Clinics at Grady Memorial Hospital.

Virginia, if she's not an Atlanta native, is not far. Hazel . . . I don't know about Hazel. Rae probably is. I don't know. I really don't know.

Libby: What kinds of activities . . .

Vida: . . . but they had been on the scene . . . they seemed to me . . . I just thought of another name: Joyce [Spielberger] Levow. I have not really heard about her for a while. At the time, as a real newcomer to Atlanta, I just thought that they had all been here forever and ever. I felt shy. I was very shy at that time, oddly enough. Reading the minutes of a meeting when I was secretary was a scary proposition. I held onto a desk. I looked up to all of them. With the exception of Joyce that I've lost touch with, we're all still friends, all still active in one way, shape or form with something. It's kind of neat.

Libby: How long had you been married when you moved here?

Vida: I was married in 1951, and moved here in 1959.

Libby: It wasn't as though these women were active . . . I call the Jewish mentors . . . they really weren't acting in that capacity for you?

Vida: No.

Libby: But clearly local mentors in terms of knowing the community?

Vida: Yes.

Libby: What kinds of things does *Hadassah* do? What was it doing then?

Vida: The Hadassah Hospital and Hadassah Medical Organization was very much in the forefront then, as it is now. Youth Aliyah⁴⁷ had I think, perhaps more emphasis at that time. There were skits and fashion shows. I don't know if the *Hadassah* had fashion shows. We did have skits, because I was in a couple of them. My recall, and somebody else might remember quite differently, was that Hadassah Hospital at that time was, if not the major focus, it was right up there.

Libby: Fundraising?

Vida: Fundraising. *Hadassah* donor. I think you will get a much better picture of *Hadassah* from one of the other interviews.

⁴⁷ *Hadassah* supported Youth Aliyah from its inception in the 1930's, when it helped young Jewish refugees resettle in Palestine. Henrietta Szold was Palestine director of Youth Aliyah until her death. Since 1935 Youth Aliyah has been the principal organization in the United States supporting Youth Aliyah, providing about 40 percent of its world budget (as of the 1970's). These funds were used to train and rehabilitate over 135,000 children from 80 countries in installations in Israel, particularly those from the Soviet Union and Africa. As of 2016 they have five youth residential villages in Israel where the children receive housing, educational and recreational activities.

Libby: How do you think Jewish women's groups have changed since you moved to Atlanta?

Vida: I think that there is a lot more recognition of the fact . . . now, I always felt even back then that we had a number of people who were professionals who worked their volunteer activities around the professions, and so on. I think there's more of an awareness of that now . . . of working women, career women. I think that the . . . certainly it's not much more . . . a greater American political awareness.

Libby: That's interesting.

<End Tape 2, Side 1, 02>

<Begin Tape 2, Side 2>

Libby: This is Side 2 of the interview with Vida Goldgar on January 8, 1987. When we turned the tape over, we were talking about how Jewish women's groups had changed. I think you were perhaps going to move into a discussion about the suburban groups.

Vida: Yes. Without going back on what I just said about the interest in political affairs and so on, I do believe that at least some of these suburban groups, in an effort to attract newcomers who may not have had the community involvement or the organizational involvement and who are in the midst of getting settled in the community, of raising families, of getting the house fixed up, whatever, or having perhaps a greater emphasis on the social. A lot of people at that stage of their life just aren't necessarily too interested in the beginning, unless something's fun. The other projects work themselves in after a while.

I think you asked if I were a member of a congregation. I have been a member of the Temple here since we came, and before that was a member in Glen Cove, Long Island. We came the year after the Temple was bombed.⁴⁸ The rebuilding had not completely taken place at that point. My experience with rabbis had been somewhat limited. I had gone down to join the Temple. I'd also gone down later on to buy some *Hanukkah* candles or something like that and . . . before *Hanukkah* had to register my son for religious school. Registration was held at the East Rivers School on Spring Street, which is where classes were held until the Sunday school was rebuilt. I walked in and I saw a man sitting at a table just rushed . . . and a large number of

⁴⁸ The Temple on Peachtree Street in Atlanta was bombed in the early morning hours of October 12, 1958. About 50 sticks of dynamite were planted near the building and tore a huge hole in the wall. No one was injured in the bombing. Rabbi Jacob Rothschild was an outspoken advocate of civil rights and integration and friend of Martin Luther King Jr. Five men associated with the National States' Rights Party, a white separatist group, were tried and acquitted in the bombing.

registrants and said, “If this is all mixed up, don't blame me,” and was carrying on. I didn't know who he was. I thought he was kind of interesting. Rather to my astonishment, I discovered when I got up to my turn in line that it was Rabbi [Jacob] Rothschild⁴⁹ himself, who was registering children for the Sunday school. We later became good friends. Janice, his wife, and I became friends, and still are. But that was my introduction to Rabbi Rothschild, not as a figure in the pulpit delivering a thunderous sermon, but as a rather harried man trying to get these kids signed up and keep the traffic line moving.

Libby: How has the Temple changed over the years? You joined in what? That would have been . . .

Vida: . . . in 1959, actually. We came here in the summer. I know I joined in time for the holidays, Sunday school and so on. I think perhaps a major change has been from a rather . . . even as late as when I came, it was still a rather old-line membership of long-time Atlantans and descendents of old-time Atlantans . . . names that are still certainly very much involved. There were not as many people from different backgrounds. I guess that would be a good way to put it. It was coming out of its . . . what apparently was its earlier stage of classical reform, but again, not to the degree that it has now. I remember that people who were new members, from other places or perhaps other congregations, were astonished to find that there was no *bar mitzvah* or *bat mitzvah* at the Temple, which has changed, reluctantly. I also came at the time when the Civil Rights Movement⁵⁰ was at its prime. Rabbi Rothschild was certainly a major advocate and proponent of that. It still continues with a lot of involvement in social action and so on, which I think the Reform movement as a whole does.

I can go to the Temple now and find that I recognize so few people. There was a time when I recognized almost everyone. Part of that has to do with the fact that I'm not as active. I'm not around there as much. I used to spend many, many hours back in the kitchen cooking hamburgers for the Sunday school on the one Sunday a month when they had luncheon with the

⁴⁹ Rabbi Jacob Rothschild was rabbi of the city's oldest Reform congregation, the Temple, in Atlanta from 1946 until his death in 1973 from a heart attack. He forged close relationships with the city's Christian clergy and distinguished himself as a charismatic spokesperson for civil rights.

⁵⁰ The American Civil Rights Movement encompasses social movements in the United States whose goal was to end racial segregation and discrimination against black Americans and enforce constitutional voting rights to them. The movement was characterized by major campaigns of civil resistance. Between 1955 and 1968, acts of nonviolent protest and civil disobedience produced crisis situations between activists and government authorities. Noted legislative achievements during this phase of the Civil Rights Movement were passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Immigration and Nationality Services Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968.

rabbi. As a matter of tact, Eloise [Kaufman] Shurgin, who was the executive director for many years, was convinced that my last son was going to be born on one of the big steel tables in the kitchen. It was all I could do to get up to the table or the stove to flip a hamburger. I also . . . for a couple of years, was involved with the Sisterhood Luncheon Food Committee. I edited the bulletin there for a number of years. In that period, particularly when the children were in Sunday school, I was there a great deal more than I am now at the time when you really got to see people and know people, as opposed to services . . .

Libby: . . . sure . . .

Vida: . . . but I think that there were those who perhaps thought at one time with suburbia and suburban congregations, that it would cause a considerable decrease in intown congregation membership. I don't think that's happened. I don't have any figures on it, but it seems to me that it's, at least on the High Holy Days, it's more crowded than ever.

Libby: Yes. I think the Sunday school is a little small for the size of the congregation. I think there are under 400.

Vida: When my children were still there, they were having to use space at the Community Center at one point . . . and very crowded. So that's true.

Libby: It's 1,600 families. I don't know what the demographic statistics are in terms of age breakdown of those families . . . whether they count a lot of older widows or . . . those must be a family.

Vida: Sure.

Libby: The Sunday school is a little small for the size of the congregation. I wonder what will happen.

Vida: There's also been some movement in other cities . . . I don't know about here . . . toward Reform day schools. I really don't know if that is being considered here, but that would also have some effect, too. I don't know. Four hundred is not a lot of children for a congregation that size.

Libby: No, it's not. How old were your children when you started working?

Vida: My oldest . . . I started in 1964. He was 12. Then it was probably 12, 10, and eight. Or 12, 13, 11 or something. The first three were pretty close together. Then my youngest child, who is 26 now, was born in Atlanta the year after we came here . . . in 1960, right at the end of the year. He just had a birthday. He was three to four years old, I guess, when I started working,

which is another reason for working part-time. I did have the advantage of having good health. Additionally, in 1964, we were living in a home which had a building that had formerly been a guest cottage, which was my husband's office. He was on the scene, if not in the house most of the time, for a few years there . . . about four years. I think one of the things that I am pleased with was that whatever toll it took from me, since I was working part-time, even though I was bowling, I didn't slough off any of the PTA [Parent Teacher Association]⁵¹ or the Cub Scouts⁵² or any of those other activities that kid kinds of look to Mama for.

Libby: How did you manage to handle it all?

Vida: With great difficulty. I'm not sure now. I'm a relatively . . . I can't say . . . I'm not a high energy person in that I'm 'go-go-go-go-go,' but I've got a lot of stamina. I can keep late hours.

Libby: You just had a longer day than all of the rest of us.

Vida: Had a very long day, yes, because a lot of things that I . . . and particularly when I started doing some writing for the paper. I did a lot of that at home at night. I guess it was a few years after I started writing at the [*Southern Israelite*], I started writing a weekly column that was syndicated. That I always did at home. I think that's why I'm such a night owl now. I could never really accomplish anything until the kids were in bed, but I don't get up very early in the morning.

Libby: Do your kids ever tell you that they wished you'd not worked? Or they wish you'd been home more?

Vida: They never have.

Libby: Did they ever say that at the time"?

Vida: I don't think so. Again, that was one of the nice things about this particular job and about Adolph. If there was something important going on, whether it was visiting day, have lunch with the class or whatever, I did it. When he said, "Give me whatever time you can and set your own schedule," he really did live up to that. By the time in 1973 when I started working

⁵¹ A national organization with affiliations in local schools throughout the United States composed of parents, teachers and staff, and devoted to the educational success of children and the promotion of parent involvement in schools.

⁵² A youth organization in the United States. It was founded in 1910 to train youth in responsible citizenship, character development, and self-reliance through participation in a wide range of outdoor activities, educational programs and at older age levels, career-oriented programs in partnership with community organizations. They wear a uniform and earn merit badges for achievements in sports, crafts, science, etc. The boys start as a Cub Scout until age 11 and can move up to be an Eagle Scout.

full-time, my youngest was going into high school, I guess, at the time. If not, he was in seventh grade. My daughter was already married, and my other son was in college . . . two sons were in college, so they were gone. In that period of time, it may or may not . . . I don't know whether the youngest, at that stage, had any strong feelings. He certainly didn't voice them. Generally speaking, when he was there, I was there, or soon thereafter. I did not, at that time, do anywhere approaching what I do now in the way of night meetings or working late or assignments, things like that. They seem to have weathered all that pretty well. They're pretty stable, solid kids. I think in a sense, they appreciated . . . as I did from my father, whatever reasons he gave to me . . . I think I was the same with mine . . . you know what's right and what's wrong. You know what to do or not to do. An ability to pretty much make their own decisions and not interfere. Advice if they want it. Even now, they have to ask me. My middle son, third oldest child, is marrying in May. I just got the word last week. He said, "We'll probably need a lot of advice in making these plans." I said, "If you want advice, you're going to ask for it, because I'm not going to volunteer it."

Libby: It's a lesson that a lot of parents could stand to learn, I think. You have another grandchild about to be born?

Vida: No. I have one. He'll be one year old next month. I have three now. I don't know . . .

Libby: I thought I remembered on the tape that you had a daughter-in-law who was talking about converting before . . .

Vida: . . . then it was longer ago than June for that . . . because that is the baby . . . right over there.

Libby: I have procrastinated longer than I thought. He's gorgeous. She converted?

Vida: She converted. I think she converted, finished her conversion the week before he was born. It was really down to the wire. As a matter of fact, and this may not be quite cricket . . . I'm not sure . . . but because of some other things that were happening. They were living in Jackson, Mississippi. Because of some other things that were happening in the congregation, some special events, I think the rabbi was going to be out of town one week, whatever. It was really touch and go as to whether she would be able to have her public conversion before the baby was born, in front of the congregation. To ensure that, we had a private conversion ceremony with witnesses in the Temple. I went up for it. Then she did happen to be around on Friday night and made her speech to the congregation and confirmed it. It was officially done

ahead of time, in case she didn't make it.

Libby: Contingency planning?

Vida: Yes. They now live in Salt Lake City [Utah]. They've just moved, I guess less than a month ago. He's involved in a project with the university. It's connected to the university there in his field of genetics, bio-statistics, and what have you. I don't claim to understand it. I'm not happy to have them so far away. Jackson, they could at least come down for a long weekend. But again, it's their life.

Libby: Did they have a *bris*?⁵³

Vida: They did not have an official *bris*. They had a doctor's *bris*. The rabbi . . . I think the rabbi . . .

Libby: . . . here . . .

Vida: . . . there. I did not go up for that. I had just come back from the conversion.

Libby: How did that make you feel?

Vida: The conversion?

Libby: Yes.

Vida: I was so proud of her. I was so proud of her remarks that she prepared. It was especially encouraging to me, because from the time that they were engaged, she talked about it and planned it. Somehow they never quite got around to it. At some point in my mind was . . . if she hasn't done it by now, she's not going to. But after she was pregnant and we were talking one evening, just casually, not in the way of advice again, I said, "If Daniel is to be really considered Jewish, then you need to be converted before . . . if you're still thinking of that, then you might want to talk to the rabbi about doing it before he is born." She had not realized that. Although . . . with the patrilineal . . . I guess it wouldn't have mattered much if it had been a Reform congregation . . .

Libby: . . . that's right . . .

Vida: . . . but nonetheless, she immediately called the rabbi and made an appointment to see him and set the wheels in motion and started her studies. I was very, very happy.

Libby: That's a nice story. I think that's a good place to stop, too. I have a lot of other questions. We're going to need to schedule another interview. I'd like to get more into some of

⁵³ A *bris*, formally known as the '*brit milah*' (Hebrew: Covenant of Circumcision) involves surgically removing the foreskin of the penis. Circumcision is performed only on males on the eighth day of the child's life.

the political changes that have gone on and those kinds of things. I'm going to stop it now.

INTERVIEW ENDS

<End Tape 2, Side 1>

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