INTERVIEW BEGINS

Mrs. Berman: I’m here in Rome, Georgia today with Lyons Heyman. We are interviewing him for the Esther and Herbert Taylor Oral History Project for the William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum and the American Jewish Committee. I’d like to begin by asking Mr. Heyman just a little bit, if he could just give us a little background to his family, his parents, their names, when he was born, his siblings, their names, and just a little bit of background about the personal aspect of the family.

Mr. Heyman: My mother was Helene Joel, who was born in Atlanta [Georgia] in 1903, one of three children of Lyons Barnett Joel and Ray Deborah Samuels Joel. Ray Deborah Samuels came from Savannah. I’m not sure where Lyons came from. She was born in 1903. My father was Charles Simon Heyman, whose mother was Minna Simon from New Orleans [Louisiana], and whose father was Arthur Heyman from West Point, Georgia. My father was born in 1900. It

1 Rome, Georgia, is the largest city in Northwest Georgia, and the home of Darlington School, Berry College, and Shorter University. Rome is located in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains approximately 70 miles northwest of Atlanta.
3 Joel, Lyons Barnett (1872-1933) was a native of Milledgeville, Georgia. In 1897, he co-founded the Bass Dry Goods Store in Atlanta, Georgia with his brother Benjamin Franklin Joel. He was conferred the honorary title "lieutenant-governor" while serving on the staffs of two Georgia governors, Clifford Walker and Lamartine Hardman, from 1923 to 1931.
4 Rachel "Ray" Samuels Joel (1876-1952) was a native of Savannah, Georgia who resided in Atlanta, Georgia after marriage to Lyons Barnett Joel. She was a member of the National Council of Jewish Women and The Temple. She was a Gold Star Mother as a result of the death of her son Yoel Lyons Joel in the Argonne Forest during World War I.
5 Charles Heyman (1900-1983) started his career as an office boy for Fox Manufacturing Company in Atlanta, Georgia in 1920. He bought the company, moved it to Rome, Georgia in 1936, and relocated his family to Rome in 1938. Charles was a past president of the Southern Furniture Manufacturing Association.
6 Minna Simon Heyman (1873-1952) was a native of New Orleans, Louisiana who relocated to Atlanta in 1896 when she married Arthur Heyman, Sr.
7 Arthur Heyman (1867 - 1951) was a prominent Atlanta attorney born in Chambers County, Alabama. He was a graduate of the University of Georgia and a member of Phi Beta Kappa, the Standard Club, and the Hebrew
was very easy to keep up with his age because he went right with the year. They were married . . . Charles and Helene were married on October 23, 1923 in Atlanta at The Temple\textsuperscript{8} by Rabbi David Marx.\textsuperscript{9} They lived in Atlanta until 1936. They lived at 1303 Briarcliff Road. I found some old pictures of that house, which I have upstairs. The house was . . . I think that my grandfather, Lyons Joel, helped my dad buy the house at that particular time. I’m not sure what year it was. It must have been around 1925 or 1926.

I was born on January 25, 1928. I was named, of course, for my grandfather, Lyons Joel, my name being Lyons Joel Heyman. I have a younger brother, who is three and a half years younger than I. He was born on June 30, 1931. He was named for my dad, Charles Simon Heyman, Junior.\textsuperscript{10} We lived in Atlanta until 1937, actually, when my dad went to work for the Fox family, Lawrence Fox\textsuperscript{11} and Al fox, Alfred Fox.\textsuperscript{12} He had a very good friend, Philip Shulhafer,\textsuperscript{13} who was a good friend of my dad’s. After dad got out of college at the University of Georgia\textsuperscript{14} in 1920, he suggested he see his Uncle Lawrence, maybe get a job. My dad went to see Uncle Lawrence. He did get a job. He was, as he says, a glorified office boy for a great many

\textsuperscript{8} 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.

\textsuperscript{9} Rabbi David Marx was a long-time rabbi at The Temple in Atlanta, Georgia. He led the move toward Reform Judaism practices. He served as rabbi from 1895 to 1946. When he retired, Rabbi Jacob Rothschild took the pulpit that Rabbi Marx had held for more than half a century.

\textsuperscript{10} Charles Simon Heyman, Junior was born in Atlanta, Georgia in 1931 and moved to Rome, Georgia as a child when his father founded Fox Manufacturing Company in Rome. He was a graduate of North Carolina State College in Raleigh, North Carolina and was a salesman for Fox Manufacturing Company.

\textsuperscript{11} Lawrence Moyes Fox (1889-1959) was an Atlanta businessman who was born in Streator, Illinois. He succeeded his brother Alfred Fox as president of National Manufacturing and Stores Corporation and was a director of Fox Manufacturing Company in Rome, Georgia. He served as president of the Standard Club, vice-president of the Atlanta Art Association and the Atlanta Jewish Home, and was on the board of the Atlanta Jewish Community Center.

\textsuperscript{12} Alfred "Al" Fox (1876-1932) was an Atlanta businessman who was born in Indiana. He was the owner of Southern Upholstery and president of National Manufacturing and Stores Corporation. His wife Lena Guthrie Fox was the model for the character ‘Miss Daisy’ in the play \textit{Driving Miss Daisy}, written by their grandson, Alfred Uhry.

\textsuperscript{13} Philip Emanuel Shulhafer (1898-1961) was the personnel director at Montag Brothers, Inc. during the 1950’s when the firm became one of the first businesses in the South to have white employees working side-by-side with black employees. He was active in the Atlanta Urban League and the Southern Regional Council, inter-racial organizations. He was president of the Atlanta Jewish Community Council, one of the predecessors that merged to form the Atlanta Jewish Federation. He attended University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School before serving in the military in World War I.

\textsuperscript{14} The University of Georgia, founded in 1785, also referred to as UGA or simply Georgia, is an American public research university in the city of Athens in the U.S. state of Georgia.
years and what we would today call a gofer. But he was a very successful, very personable, very charming young man. The Foxes both were crazy about him. In the middle 1920’s, Lawrence Fox became very much interested in the retail furniture business. They formed a new corporation, which they called the National Manufacturing Stores Corporation. Lawrence really looked after that part of the business. Al Fox ran the factory. My dad was more involved in the factory part of it. In 1931 and 1932, when Al Fox died, my dad kind of helped manage the factory with Lawrence because Lawrence was interested in the retail business.

Around 1936, they were in a very old, dilapidated four-story building on Marietta Street in Atlanta. The facilities were just horrible. Lawrence was much more interested in the retail business than the manufacturing business. This is what I’ve been told. How true it is, I’m not sure. My dad went to Lawrence and said, “You know, we’ve been partners for a long time. I don’t own any of this business. I’m going to have to leave. Nobody’s paying any attention to what I’m saying. You’re not really interested in the factory part of it.” According to the story, Lawrence said, “No, whatever you do, Charles, I want to do it with you.” They agreed to buy Fox Manufacturing Company from the National Manufacturing Stores Corporation. There was available in Rome, Georgia, a former furniture manufacturing plant called the Rome Furniture Company. They negotiated, and they bought that factory. They bought that building, and they moved here in 1936 in December. At that point, Lawrence Fox and Charles Heyman each owned the same amount of interest in the company. Each of them had 25 percent. The other 50 percent they made available to five other people, each with ten percent, who were close friends. One was Welborn Cody. One was Ralph Uhry, who was Lawrence’s nephew-in-law, married to Alene Uhry, who was Alfred [Fox]’s daughter. That made the 100 percent at that time.

The family . . . My mother, being born and raised in Atlanta, was not really interested in coming to Rome. After about two years of my dad’s commuting every day—long

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15 An employee whose duties include running errands. The term originated as a simplification of the two words go + for.
16 Also known as National Manufacturer and Stores Corporation, it was established in 1927.
17 Welborn Butt Cody (1899–1976) was an attorney in Atlanta, Georgia. He was a partner in a law firm with Harold Hirsch which was eventually called Hirsch, Smith, Kilpatrick, Clay, and Cody.
18 Ralph Kahn Uhry (1904–1955) was a native of Plaquemine, Louisiana who lived in Atlanta, Georgia where he became a vice-president for National Manufacturing and Stores, a firm founded by the family of his wife Alene Fox Uhry. He was a furniture designer and artist. He was the father of playwright Alfred Uhry, the author of *Driving Miss Daisy*.
19 Alene Fox Uhry is Alfred Uhry’s mother. Alene’s mother was Lena Guthman Fox. Lena was the model for the character ‘Miss Daisy’ in *Driving Miss Daisy* by her grandson, Alfred Uhry.
before there was an 1-75 and long before U.S. 41 was four-laned—it was a two-lane road—she
finally decided that if she wanted to maintain a family life, she had better come to Rome. In
1937, they started construction on a home in Rome, and we moved into it in 1938. At that time, I
was ten years old. We moved to Rome. The family actually moved to Rome about three or four
months before the house was completed. We lived at the General Forest Hotel20 for about those
three months and finally moved into our home on Horseleg Creek Road. On Horseleg Creek
Road at that time, we were the second house down the road. The third house belonged to the
[Julian K.] Morrison21 family. He was the general manager of the . . . What do they call it in
those days? Brighton Mills, I think, in those days. Beyond that point, Horseleg Creek Road was
merely a dirt path. Today that’s totally different. We moved in there. We were next door to the
O’Neill family.22 It was a lovely home. Both Charles Junior and I grew up there. I was of the age
that I immediately went to Darlington School23 in the sixth grade. In those days, we only had 11
years of high school. I had the sixth, seventh . . . I went into the sixth grade. Charles went to the
school that was called Cooper Hall. That was a school that was founded by the Cooper family
here who had a bunch of daughters. They were not satisfied with the public schools, so they
founded Cooper Hall, which was in existence as long as there were Cooper children and
grandchildren. That school is no longer in existence. When Charles eventually was old enough,
he went to Darlington. He ended up going from Darlington to Sewanee Military Academy24 at
Monteagle [Tennessee]. He actually graduated from Sewanee. I graduated from Darlington and,
in 1944, went to Vanderbilt [University]25 with the purpose of studying medicine.

20 The Forrest Hotel opened in 1915 in Rome, Georgia. The first-class hotel was host to Ronald Reagan and many
movie stars of the day. The landmark building, now known as Forrest Place, was named for Nathan Bedford Forrest,
a Confederate Army general during the American Civil War who is known for deterring an attack on the city of
Rome by the Union Army in 1863. He is a controversial historical figure who was a slave owner before the Civil
War and was elected the first Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan in 1967.
21 Julian Knox Morrison (1896-1949), a native of Statesville, North Carolina, was CEO and manager of Brighton
Mills in Shannon, Georgia from 1927 to 1949. He served overseas during World War I, first as a volunteer
ambulance driver and then as a tank corps captain in the United States Army.
22 James Jasper O’Neill Sr. (1900-1971), wife Margaret (1901-1983), children James J. O’Neill Jr.(1924-2003) and
23 Darlington School is a co-ed, independent boarding and day school in Rome, Ga., for students in pre-K through
high school.
24 Sewanee Academy was founded as the Junior Department of the University of the South and became Sewanee
Grammar School (1869-1908), then the Sewanee Military Academy. In 1971, Sewanee Military Academy dropped
its military program and became known as the Sewanee Academy. It is located in Sewanee, Tennessee.
25 Vanderbilt University (informally Vandy) is a private research university in Nashville, Tennessee. Founded in
1873, it was named in honor of New York shipping and rail magnate Cornelius Vanderbilt.
After about two years, I decided medicine was not my cup of tea. I talked to my dad, and I said, “If I don’t study medicine, could I come to work for Fox Manufacturing Company?” He assured me he would be delighted. He had never pushed me to do that, but he tells me he was very thrilled that I would consider. I did. I changed my major to a B.A. from a B.S. and I graduated in 19... actually I got out of school in December of 1947. I had to go back and take some extra credits in the summer of 1948. I’m actually in the class of 1948 at Vanderbilt. I started work on January 1, 1948, with Fox Manufacturing Company. The company had been very successful. Both my dad and my mother, Charles Heyman and Helene Heyman, were very well-absorbed into the Rome community, both socially and business. Being a manufacturing company, as opposed to a merchant on Broad Street, for instance, we were fortunate enough to have maybe a little more resources than some of the other people. We were able to do things for our synagogue and do things in the community and for the community in a very nice way. My dad was a great photographer, an avid photographer, an avid tennis player, and very interested in the YMCA, of all programs, for a Jewish man. He grew up in the Atlanta YMCA and felt like it really did a fine job for him and for his friends and even his siblings. He played racquetball. There was no YMCA building because they had a racquetball court over one of the retail stores on Broad Street. Dad and a couple of other people got together and decided they needed to have a building, a facility. In 1950 or 1952, he and Don MacLaughlin, who was the YMCA executive at that time, and Tom Harbin, who was a very close friend and a physician here, along with the members of the “Y” board, decided to raise money to build a YMCA building. In those days... and they did. They went out to raise $485,000. That was an unheard-of amount of money to raise in a small town other than for the churches. They raised it. My dad and I say this with no pride or anything. Just say it factually. He went out to the industry in this town. He explained to them that they would have to give big money, that we are not talking about $500. We are talking about $50,000. He was able to get sufficient seed money to put this thing

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26 Commonly known as the ‘YMCA’ or the ‘Y.’ The ‘Y’ is a worldwide organization founded in 1844 that aims to put Christian principles into practice by developing a healthy body, mind, and spirit. They offer recreational facilities, parent/child education programs, and youth and teen development with after school programming.

27 Donald Taylor MacLaughlin (1909-1987), a native of St. Louis, Missouri, was the YMCA director in Rome, Georgia during the 1950’s.

28 Thomas “Tom” Shelor Harbin (1916-1998) was a third-generation medical doctor in Rome, Georgia, who followed in the footsteps of his father Dr. Will Harbin and grandfather Dr. Wylie Reader Harbin. His family established the Harbin Hospital in Rome in 1908, which was converted to a private medical clinic in 1948. He served in the United States Navy during World War II.
over the top. They raised $492,000 at that time. The building, of course, exists today. It has been added on to. For years, those in the know kind of said, “This is the house that Heyman built.” It was a great compliment to him and to the family.

My mother was very active. She was involved with the Darlington Mother’s Club. She was involved with the Red Cross\(^\text{29}\) during the war. At the end of the war, she was very actively involved at whatever assistance and associates that people did with Community Chest\(^\text{30}\) and Red Cross and Open Door Homes. She was very much involved in the ladies’ women college . . . Just a minute. She was very much involved with the Association of University Women.\(^\text{31}\) She was very much involved with the Music [Lovers] Club\(^\text{32}\) of Rome. She played bridge. She was quite a hostess. My father was quite a host. They loved to entertain, and they entertained beautifully.

In the business world, my dad was very much involved with the Southern Furniture Manufacturers Association,\(^\text{33}\) which was the largest furniture manufacturers association in the country. The bulk of the manufacturing business of furniture was located in the Carolinas\(^\text{34}\) and Virginias.\(^\text{35}\) Even though we were located in Rome, Georgia, he was of such prominence among his peers that he was asked to become a member of the board of directors of the association. No one other than the North Carolina-Virginia manufacturers had ever had such an honor. Eventually, he was asked and did serve as president of the Southern Furniture Manufacturers Association. The company in Rome grew quite well. We expanded in 1960. We

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29 The American Red Cross (ARC) is a humanitarian organization that provides emergency assistance, disaster relief and education in the United States. It is the designated United States affiliate of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The ARC was founded in 1881 by Clara Barton.

30 The Community Chests in the United States and Canada were fund-raising organizations that collected money from local businesses and workers and distributed it to community projects. The first Community Chest, “Community Fund,” was founded in 1913 in Cleveland, Ohio by the Federation for Charity and Philanthropy. By 1963, and after several name changes, the term “United Way” was adopted in the United States.

31 American Association of University Women (AAUW)

32 The Rome Music Lovers’ Club is club that was organized in 1904 in Rome, Georgia by Edith Lester Harbin. It became associated with the National Federation of Musical Clubs in 1917. The 50-member club continues to meet monthly.

33 Southern Furniture Manufacturers Association originated as the North Carolina Case Workers Association (NCCWA), formed in 1905 by 14 Southern furniture manufacturers in Gainesboro, North Carolina. In 1911 the name was changed to the Southern Furniture Manufacturers Association (SFMA) to reflect its growing membership outside of North Carolina. The purpose of the SFMA was to disseminate the newest management and technical information to members and to act as a watchdog against burdensome regulatory requirements and government intervention. The SFMA ceased to exist in 1984 when it merged with the National Association of Furniture Manufacturers to become the American Furniture Manufacturers Association.

34 States of North Carolina and South Carolina.

35 States of Virginia and West Virginia.
built a new plant down in Dothan, Alabama. In the late 1950’s, we built what we called a “dimension plant” out on property that we bought toward Lindale [Georgia]. We, therefore, operated three plants. At the peak of our production, I guess we employed almost 1,000 people between Rome and Dothan. The Dothan operation . . .

Mr. Heyman: . . . made our tables to go with our upholstery pieces that we shipped out of Rome. We brought all the tables into Rome so we could coordinate shipments of upholstery with the tables at one time.

My dad was active in the chamber of commerce. He served on its board. He was an avid Rotarian. He joined the Rotary Club as soon as he came to Rome. He was one of the . . . He was invited immediately. In 1960—I believe it was—he was asked to be and did accept the presidency of the Rome Rotary Club. No, it was 1964, because it was the fiftieth anniversary of the Rome club. The club was founded in 1914, so it was 1964, 1965. He held that presidency for one year, as is normal. We were very much involved in what in those days they called the Community Chest. My dad was actively involved in bringing the United Way to Rome. They felt, as a manufacturer, that we wanted to give money in lump sums rather than a little bit here and there. United Way did eventually come to Rome. Although Fox Manufacturing Company was not nearly the size of GE, Burlington Mills, Lindale Mills, or Inland-Rome, our contributions per capita were larger than any other industry in this town. [This] was really right
remarkable, because in those days, the budget of the United Way was very small. We became a pretty good part of that amount of money that was raised.

The life for Charles Heyman and for Helene Heyman in Rome was really very rewarding. My dad was very interested in music. He helped form the Community Concert Series.\textsuperscript{43} He had a very close friend at Shorter College\textsuperscript{44} who was head of the music department, Dr. Wilbur Rowand\textsuperscript{45}. Cundy Bryson . . . not Cundy Bryson . . . Jim Bryson\textsuperscript{46} was one of the major musicians with the Rome Symphony.\textsuperscript{47} He, Dr. Rowan, and my dad were all close friends. I can remember many Sunday afternoons—when we lived on Horseleg Creek Road—that they and several others would come over to the house. They would have impromptu music sessions and concerts. Because Dad went to New York [City] regularly for business, they asked him to communicate with the Community Concert Series, which he did, and brought it to Rome. He served as president for a number of years, and lavishly entertained the musicians and the artists who came and presented music programs for the community. Rome was a great place to live and a great place for me and my brother, Charles, to grow up.

When I came to work for the company, in 1948, I was a general flunky. My dad had always been very strict. Neither Charles nor I received any favors for anything. I guess I carried that down to my children’s generations. I think that one of my greatest backers was Lawrence Fox. I don’t remember what I was hired at, but I do have a letter that somewhere in 1949 my wages were raised to $55 a week. That included overtime for 48 hours, so that I should work 48 hours, and I made $55. That was the way it worked. I think I probably still would have been making that if it hadn’t have been for Lawrence. I think Lawrence finally went to my dad

\textsuperscript{43} The Community Concert Association was organized in 1928 in New York City as a way of bringing concerts to member audiences in smaller towns and cities across North America.

\textsuperscript{44} Shorter College is the former name of Shorter University which is a private, coeducational, liberal arts university located in Rome, Georgia. Founded in 1873, it is a Christian university affiliated with the Georgia Baptist Convention. In 2010, Shorter College changed its name to Shorter University to reflect the institution's growth and expansion.

\textsuperscript{45} Wilbur Hartzwell Rowand (1903-1993) was born in North Manchester, Indiana. He was a Professor of Organ at Shorter College in Rome, Georgia, Wesleyan College in Macon, Georgia, and University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). The Rowand-Johnson Music and Speech Building at UAB was named for Professor Rowand and Professor T. Earle Johnson.

\textsuperscript{46} Possibly James William Bryson (1909-1993) who was born in Atlanta, Georgia and resided in Rome, Georgia. His mother’s maiden name was Cundy. His brother’s name was Cundy Albert Bryson, also known as Albert Cundy Bryson (1905-1989).

\textsuperscript{47} Rome Symphony Orchestra (RSO) is a professional U.S. orchestra located in Rome, Georgia. The organization was founded in 1921, disbanded around 1930, and reestablished in 1948. The RSO is currently the oldest symphony in the South.
and said, “Charles, you got to bring him along and help him out and get him to where he’s going to be a part of this company and this community.” I was. I came along. I was . . . I went to the . . . with the sales department. Then I went on the road and traveled for two years.

They gave me a wonderful territory. We had a man with us by the name of Jack Shoaf, S-H-O-A-F, as a matter of fact. Jack and Edie Shoaf lived here in Rome. They came to Rome with the company. Jack was originally from Tennessee. Jack had kind of a territory that included Mississippi, Tennessee, and Kentucky. He was only going to Memphis [Tennessee] Nashville [Tennessee] and Louisville [Kentucky]. He really wasn’t working the territory. They carved out a territory for me of all the small towns in Tennessee and Kentucky. Our Texas salesman also had the State of Arkansas. He didn’t give a hoot for Arkansas after Texas. He volunteered that he would give me Arkansas. Therefore, I had the whole state. I would go to Little Rock, Arkansas, and stay in a hotel that had about nine floors. I think at that time, Arkansas . . . Little Rock had a population of about 80,000 people. I thought I was in New York City when I went there because in Tennessee I did not have Knoxville or any of the Eastern Tennessee towns. I didn’t have Memphis or Nashville. I had Kentucky, but I didn’t have Louisville or Lexington [Kentucky]. I went to the coal fields of Harlan [Kentucky], Hazard [Kentucky], Pineville [Kentucky], and all those places. When I would go out to Arkansas, it was really absolutely great.

I got married in 1949. I met a very nice young lady in February of 1948, who was a student at Shorter College. She was from Albany, Georgia. She was Jo Marks. Her mother was Mable Goldman Marks from Florida. Her father was Henry Charles Marks. He was from Albany. I met Jo and we dated for a while. She finally convinced me that we ought to get engaged. I think we did. We got engaged in February, I think it was, of 1949. We married on June 23, 1949. That’s about 52 or 53 years from now, back ago. I bring that up only because she was a junior at Shorter College when we married. Part of the marriage agreement was that she would

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48 Elmer Leland “Jack” Shoaf (1906-1988), a native of Sutherland in Ashe County, North Carolina. He was a vice-president of sales at Fox Manufacturing in Rome, Georgia. He was a World War II veteran.
49 Elizabeth Brown Shoaf (1908-1987) was married to Elmer Leland “Jack” Shoaf.
50 Betty “Jo” Marks Heyman (1929-2009) was born in Ocala, Florida, grew up in Albany, Georgia, and moved to Rome, Georgia in 1951 after marrying Lyons Joel Heyman. She was involved with Rodeph Shalom Congregation Sisterhood and Sunday School, Hadassah, and B’nai B’rith in Rome.
52 Henry Charles Marks (1904-1969) was born in Americas, Georgia and operated a liquor business in Albany, Georgia.
have to go back and finish her degree, which would be 1950. Fox Manufacturing Company put me on the road in January of 1949 . . . Was it? Am I wrong? 1949? Cut it a minute.

We married in June of 1949. I went on the road in January of 1950. Jo, of course, was still in college. When she got out of school in June of 1950 and graduated, she traveled with me for about the next four or five months. Then I would make trips without her. Finally, in March . . . February of 1951, my dad called me. We were in Nashville. He said, “I want you to come back to Rome. The man that we had heading our sales department is leaving. I want you to come back and head the sales department.” From then on we were in Rome.

Mrs. Berman: Just to backtrack a little bit. I want to know, your parents both grew up in Atlanta. How difficult was it for them to make that transition from Atlanta to a much smaller community in Rome? Did they try to . . . did they miss some of the Jewish connections that they had in Atlanta?

Mr. Heyman: The answer to the Jewish question is yes and no. My parents grew up in a time in Atlanta when Reform Judaism was very Reform. Rabbi Marx was not called Rabbi Marx. He was called Dr. Marx. Although there was never any question about my dad and mother being Jewish, they weren’t—what you would call today—observant Jews. I went to five years of Sunday School at The Temple. When we moved to Rome, the synagogue here was a synagogue. It was an Orthodox congregation. Being like any ten-year-old, I didn’t want to go to Sunday School. I convinced my parents that all they were doing was talking Hebrew, that it was a foreign language, and I didn’t want to go to that kind of Sunday School. I dropped out with their permission. There was a Jewish connection in Atlanta that was nonexistent in Rome. Most of my mother’s friends were Jewish. In Rome, that was not the case. There were very few Jewish women here that were—I don’t know how to put this—friendly-type people to her kind of Judaism, with the result that my mother really . . . From a social point of view, most of her friends were non-Jews. There were a few people here that were Jewish that they became close to:

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53 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.

54 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.
their neighbors, their future neighbors, Joe and Jenny Rothman.\textsuperscript{55-56} The others basically were not . . . They didn’t fit together.

\textbf{Mrs. Berman:} This was because the congregation . . .

\textbf{Mr. Heyman:} . . . were very, very, very Orthodox. Over a period of eight to ten years, they began to move a little bit more toward Conservatism.\textsuperscript{57} Eventually they moved to the point where they were using a student rabbi from Hebrew Union College [HUC]\textsuperscript{58} to come here on alternate weekends. When they did that, my dad said, “If you are to use this facility, then we ought to become a member of UAHC.\textsuperscript{59} It’s not right not to be.” On one of his many New York trips, he went to see the Union office in New York, and we formally and officially became a UAHC affiliate congregation.

\textbf{Mrs. Berman:} The name of the congregation?

\textbf{Mr. Heyman:} Rodeph Shalom Congregation.\textsuperscript{60} It was actually established in 1876. It was 100 years old in 1976. We are now, this year, celebrating our one hundred and twenty-fifth [anniversary].

\textbf{Mrs. Berman:} Are you active there today?

\textbf{Mr. Heyman:} Very active. I have . . . My dad, of course, was president of the congregation. I have been president of the congregation. Currently I still serve on the board. I’m the old-man member of the Rodeph Shalom Congregation board. Jo has been president of the sisterhood more years than she’s not been. This year is an off-year for her, but she has held the sisterhood together

\textsuperscript{55} Joseph Richard Rothman (1911-1982) was a native of Norristown, Pennsylvania. He was a captain in the United States Army during World War II. He operated a radio and television repair business, the Rome Radio Company in Rome, Georgia.

\textsuperscript{56} Jenny B. Rothman (1919-2011) moved to Rome, Georgia after marrying Joseph Richard Rothman. She was a saleswoman at Rome Radio Company in Rome. She was president of Congregation Rodeph Shalom’s sisterhood in Rome.

\textsuperscript{57} 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).

\textsuperscript{58} 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 workers in Reform Judaism. It has campuses in Cincinnati, New York, Los Angeles and Jerusalem.

\textsuperscript{59} The Union for Reform Judaism, formerly known as the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), is an organization, which supports Reform Jewish congregations in North American. In 1875 they created the Hebrew Union College (HUC) in Cincinnati, Ohio to train rabbis and later cantors and other Jewish professionals.

\textsuperscript{60} Rodeph Shalom Congregation, a Reform synagogue in Rome, Georgia, was established in 1875 by David Jacob Meyerhardt. The congregation occupies a building built in 1938. It is affiliated with the Union for Reform Judaism. Rodeph Shalom's rabbis have been: David Esserman, Morris Miller, Samuel Rubenstein, Morris Jaffe, Selig Auerbach, Harold A. Friedman, Joseph Spear, Morris Shapiro, Nathan Bark, Scott Saulson, and Judith Beiner.
for all these many years. It’s also interesting from a Sunday School point of view. When our children came along, it was very important for Jo to have these children raised as Jews. It’s very hard in a small community. None of their friends were Jewish. There were no . . . When Lyons, Junior was in Darlington, he was the only Jewish child in Darlington. The same thing in high school. The same thing in elementary school. When my kids went to the first six years of school, they were the only Jewish children in the school, or just about, maybe one or two. It was very difficult. In years gone by, a lady by the name of Ruth Borochoff had always held the Sunday School together. She and her husband, Oscar, just saw to it that the Sunday School existed. As she got older, the next generation was run by Rose Esserman Levin. Rose was a member of the Esserman family, a very prominent Jewish family here. Her husband was Jule Levin. He was from Cincinnati [Ohio]. He originally . . . When they got married, he went to work for the Esserman store here. Eventually he managed it until he left to go back to Cincinnati. Meantime, Rose held the Sunday School together. Rose, as her children left the Sunday School, became less involved. It fell to Jo. Jo picked it up from that point. Through all the years that our children, all three of our children, were in Sunday School, she was there. She was a teacher. She and Murray Stein convinced me at one point in time to become the Sunday School superintendent. We all

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61 Ruth Mendelson Borochoff (1906-2001) was a native and life-long resident of Rome, Georgia. She was the first president of the sisterhood of Congregation Rodeph Shalom, where she was a religious school teacher. She was president of the Rome chapter of Hadassah. Her civic activities included volunteering for the American Red Cross, Rome Girl Scouts, and serving as secretary for the Rome Retail Merchants Association.

62 Oscar Borochoff (1902-1992) was born in Louisville, Kentucky, moved to Atlanta, Georgia as a child, and relocated to Rome, Georgia in 1927. He was a salesman and general manager in the retail furniture business. He was superintendent of the religious school at Congregation Rodeph Shalom in Rome for 20 years, served as the congregation’s president, and was president of the B’nai B’rith chapter in Rome. He held leadership positions in other organizations, including the Rome Retail Merchants Association and the Elks Club.

63 Rose Esserman Levin (1914-2002), a native of Rome, Georgia, spent her childhood and her early married life as a resident of Rome. A graduate of Shorter College, she was a salesperson and buyer at Esserman and Company in Rome. She was a Sunday School teacher at Congregation Rodeph Shalom in Rome and a volunteer with the American Red Cross during World War II. She was an activist during the Civil Rights era in Rome. She relocated with her husband and family to Cincinnati, Ohio in 1963.

64 Jule G. Levin (1903-1994) was a native of Cincinnati, Ohio, who lived in Rome, Georgia after marrying Rose Esserman. He was a graduate of University of Cincinnati, College of Law. He was a co-founder of the Jewish Community Center in Cincinnati, and served as its secretary and first membership president. While he lived in Rome, he was a partner in Esserman and Company and an activist during the Civil Rights era. He returned to Cincinnati in 1963, where he worked for I.C. Elman Company, which later became Elmex Inc., a national toy wholesale company.

65 Esserman and Company was founded by Pressley Esserman in 1896 in Rome, Georgia as a dry goods store. His sons Ben and Hyman Esserman operated the store with their father. The business became Esserman Department Store, or Esserman’s, which closed in 1987. Esserman’s was the first store in Rome to address black customers as “Mr.” and “Mrs.” and Rome’s first downtown store to employ a black salesperson to wait on both black and white customers.

66 Murray Stein (1924-2009), a native of Savannah, Georgia was a dentist in Rome, Georgia. He held a doctorate in
had a good time. We kept the Sunday School going. Today our congregation is down to about 25 families, if that many. Many of them are mixed . . .

<End Video, Part 2>

<Begin Video, Part 3>

Mr. Heyman: . . . marriages. That doesn’t mean that they are not active, because they are. We have a young president, first female president, Shelly Stein Peller. They do a fine job. They are doing a real good job.

Mrs. Berman: When you were growing up and living here in Rome, were your parents concerned for you and your brother to have a Jewish connection? Did they try to encourage you to . . .

Mr. Heyman: No. The answer to that is no.

Mrs. Berman: Were they later concerned that you might not . . . because you didn’t have those introductions, that you might not marry within the Jewish community?

Mr. Heyman: If they had that concern, I didn’t know it. It’s strictly by an accident of fate that I married a Jewish girl. My brother Charles did not. If I had not met Jo, I don’t know who I would have married. I never dated a Jewish girl until I went to Vanderbilt, with one exception. I did date Harriet Zaban. I did. I had two exceptions. There was Harriet Zaban, and Lou . . . Gosh, I can’t even remember her name now, from Atlanta. Basically I did not date Jewish girls. Our social life involved dances and parties in Rome at Darlington, birthdays, and those kinds of parties. I dated Baptist girls and Episcopal girls and Methodist girls. In those days, they had social groups, young people that met usually on Sunday evenings . . . BTU, the Baptist Training Union. I went to all those things. My dates . . . There would be five or six “couples” of us that would go to the Episcopal church, the Baptist church, or the parish houses. I’ve been to many Catholic midnight

dentistry from Northwestern University in Chicago. He served in the United States Army during World War II. He served three terms as president of Rodeph Shalom Congregation in Rome and taught in its religious school. He was president of Rome’s B’nai B’rith chapter.

67 Shelly Stein Peller, born in 1958, is a physical therapy specialist in Rome, Georgia. She is a past president of Rodeph Shalom Congregation in Rome and a past president of its Sisterhood.

68 Possibly Harriet Zaban Eisner, a native of Atlanta Georgia born in 1929. She attended Girl’s High School and University of Georgia in Athens, Georgia.

69 Baptists are individuals who comprise a group of Evangelical Christian denominations and churches that subscribe to a doctrine that baptism should be performed only for professing believers (believer’s baptism, as opposed to infant baptism), and that it must be done by complete immersion (as opposed to affusion or sprinkling).

70 Baptist Training Union was a part of Christian education designed to instruct all church members in basic bible beliefs, Baptist doctrine, church membership, discipline, policy and procedures. It was traditionally held in most Baptist Churches on Sunday evenings, prior to evening worship.
masses at Christmas time. I sang Christmas carols with the best of them. I knew I was Jewish. There was never any question about my being Jewish. I had no idea that I would . . . I didn’t even think about it, as a matter of fact.

Mrs. Berman: You had family in Atlanta.

Mr. Heyman: Yes.

Mrs. Berman: Was there requests from them to perhaps come there and go to Ballyhoo with them. Ballyhoo was still very popular in 1946. Was there that urging from either the relatives in Atlanta or your parents to maybe . . .

Mr. Heyman: None from my parents. I guess my cousin, Arthur [Heyman], probably told me about Ballyhoo and about Jubilee and Falcon. I don’t think I ever went to a Ballyhoo. I did go to Falcon. I did go to Jubilee. In fact, I took Jo to one of them, to Jubilee, which was in Birmingham. Jo stayed with my Aunt Dorah. I don’t know where I stayed. We went to one Jubilee. I think I may have taken Harriet to one of the Jubilee or Falcon picnics. No, there was no real urging.

Our family in Atlanta and our family in Rome were on different sides of the political fences. We didn’t talk politics or religion basically. As my cousin Arthur just wrote me four or five months ago, the reason that maybe the Rome part of the family got along as well as it did with the Heyman part . . . with the Atlanta part . . . was because we didn’t talk about politics or religion. There was not any real urging. My grandparents, the Heyman grandparents, were more observant than any of us, mainly because of their close personal relationship with Rabbi Marx and his wife. I don’t . . . I remember going to, I think, Passover sometimes out at Pinehurst. We had Passover, I’m sure, in Rome. I don’t remember.

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71 From 1931 to the late 1950’s, courtship weekends in southern cities included Montgomery, Alabama’s ‘Falcon,’ Birmingham, Alabama’s ‘Jubilee,’ Columbus, Georgia’s ‘Holly Days,’ and Atlanta, Georgia’s ‘Ballyhoo.’ They were attended by college-age Jewish youth from across the South who participated in rounds of breakfast dates, lunch dates, tea dance dates, early evening dates, late night dates, formal dances, and cocktail parties, with the goal of meeting a “nice Jewish boy or girl” who might well become a spouse.

72 Arthur Heyman II was born in Atlanta, Georgia in 1926. He graduated from Druid Hills High School and graduated from the University of Georgia with a degree in Economics. He served in the United States Navy during and after World War II. He sold life insurance and later went into real estate development.

73 Dorah Heyman Sterne (1896-1994) was a native of Atlanta, Georgia who resided in Birmingham, Alabama. She served a three-year term as president of the Birmingham chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women and was active in the League of Women Voters in Birmingham.

74 The home of Minna Simon Heyman and Arthur Heyman I was called Pinehurst. It was on a four-acre plot of land on Peachtree Road near the intersection of Piedmont Road in the Buckhead area of Atlanta.
Mrs. Berman: Did you ever think about in your growing, your teenage, or your young adult years, about leaving Rome and moving back to a big city?

Mr. Heyman: No. Very simple. Never. There was no pull of the big city for me. I grew up here. The friends that I knew in Atlanta I went through five grades of grammar school. By the time I went to Darlington, it was just a whole other life. I went to school with people like Sam Massell and Sonny Held. They are about the only two that I can remember at this time. I was never pulled to Atlanta for anything. After about four or five years, my mother became very much acclimated to Rome life. Although she enjoyed going to Atlanta, she really enjoyed going to New York and Chicago a great deal more.

Mrs. Berman: What about the relationship between the small little Jewish community here and the greater Rome community? Were there times during that relationship that were tense ever? Was there any overt or subtle antisemitism that you may have experienced?

Mr. Heyman: I would answer basically no. There is always antisemitism. There were two or three people that I knew that talked about the Jews in a derogatory manner, but not the people that I really was involved with. The Rome Jewish community, to my knowledge, had then and has today a very fine relationship with the large community, one of the reasons being that the Jewish community was so small. We were not big enough to really make that much of an impression or create that much diversity in a town like Rome. Most of the merchants, or many of the merchants on Broad Street, were Jewish. They were regarded well by the Rome Merchants Association. Oscar Borochoff, Isadore Levinson, all these people headed the Rome Merchants Association. They were presidents of that group from time to time. Jule Levin was even president of the Chamber of Commerce, very active in the community, well thought of, and even remembered today. The Rome Jewish community melded in and became part of the overall community. I can’t tell you that there were any overt or even subtle acts of antisemitism. Now, let

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75 Sam Massell (b. 1927) is a businessman who served from 1970 to 1974 as the fifty-third mayor of Atlanta. He is the first Jewish mayor in his city’s history. A lifelong Atlanta resident, Massell has had successful careers in real estate brokerage, elected office, tourism, and association management.

76 Sigmund “Sonny” Held (1928-2010) grew up in Atlanta, Georgia and relocated to Nashville, Tennessee to manage the Southern Envelope Manufacturing Company after it was acquired by the Atlanta Envelope Manufacturing Company in 1951. He was the eldest grandson of Sigmund Guthman, founder of the Atlanta Envelope Company.

77 Isadore Maxwell “I. M.” Levinson (1903-1963) was born in Columbus, Georgia. He lived in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and Rome, Georgia. He owned “The Vogue,” a women’s wear retail shop in Chattanooga and Rome. He was president of Rome’s B’nai B’rith chapter, a treasurer for United Jewish Appeal and a vice-president of the Rotary Club in Rome.
me back up. From time to time, there are people that come to town, the skinheads\(^78\) today and that sort of thing, who will write something on the synagogue doors or something. When that happens, the Rome police department is very actively involved. They let it be known real quick that that’s not accepted behavior. We really have not had any small-town antisemitic activities, to my knowledge. Somebody else may tell you different. I went through my years at Darlington, certainly my growing up, my early business career, and my business career generally in Rome. I have been honored by a lot of different organizations here. I’ve been involved. I just don’t detect it.

**Mrs. Berman:** My next question is also about community relations, but more specifically the relationship between the African-American community and the general community here. During the full era of civil rights\(^79\) and the integration of schools, how did that affect Rome? How did that affect the Jewish community here in Rome? Did they have an active voice either for or against? In general, how do you remember that era?

**Mr. Heyman:** I don’t remember it as being a controversial era in Rome. You also must understand that the Jews in Rome—for the most part, back in the 1940’s, 1950’s, and 1960’s—were products of small-town thinking. We were not like the Atlanta Jewish community that banded together, that actively supported black “independence,” if you want to call it that. I don’t recall that the Jewish community took a real stand in that era. I didn’t hear of it. You got to understand, too, that in those days I was very deeply involved with my work. I traveled a lot for business. Jo and I traveled a lot for meetings with the association and various organizations involved with the industry. We were just not politically inclined. As far as the family was concerned and, to my knowledge, as far as the Jewish community is concerned . . . I may be wrong, [but] my impression is that this was not an overly active group. The Jewish group was not overly active for or against [the Civil Rights Movement].\(^80\) I’m sure that individually we all

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\(^78\) A skinhead is a white male belonging to any of various sometimes violent youth gangs whose members have close-shaven hair and often espouse white-supremacist beliefs.

\(^79\) The American Civil Rights Era generally encompasses events beginning with the Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court decision in 1954 and ending with the Fair Housing Act of 1968, which was a follow up to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

\(^80\) 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
sympathized with black people. We all felt that they should have all the rights of anyone else. As far as politically involved or involvement, I don’t remember any.

Mrs. Berman: Darlington was a private school, correct?

Mr. Heyman: Correct.


Mr. Heyman: Not in those days.

Mrs. Berman: And today?

Mr. Heyman: Today there are plenty. Today Darlington’s enrollment includes not only African-Americans or black, but a lot of foreign country . . . A lot of Asians are here and a lot of Hispanics. Darlington, to my knowledge, was never restricted as far as Jewish students. There were two or three Jewish students all the time that I was in school. One of them was from Atlanta. Joe Freitag\(^\text{81}\) went to Darlington for a year or two years. I’m not sure. There was another boy from Macon, a Jewish boy, that was in Darlington. Both of them were older than I. We had, from time to time, Jewish students. Understand that when I went to Darlington, I went to chapel. I sang the songs and listened to all the preaching. I didn’t accept any of it, naturally, but I was one of the fellows. I didn’t stand out. I didn’t boycott the chapels. I didn’t boycott singing the songs as maybe kids today would.

Mrs. Berman: This is a very general question. If you want to take a moment to think about it, please feel free. How has growing up and living in a small community affected how you view the world and your life in general?

Mr. Heyman: That’s not a difficult question. It’s one that I have considered quite often. You also must understand that although I lived in Rome and grew up in Rome, in my business career we traveled an awful lot. From 1949 when we married until 1970, we were in Chicago, New York, and New Orleans. We went to Bermuda. We went to Jamaica. We went to the Bahamas . . . all with our business, most of it connected with business. In 1970, Jo and I took our first trip overseas. From 1970 on, we were—if you want to call it—world travelers. In my view, and I would even say our view—and she’ll correct me when I’m wrong, and she will—our view . . . My view of the world is not confined to Rome, Georgia. I can see a lot of people who live here

\(^{81}\) Joseph Victor Freitag Jr. (1924-1981) was a native of Atlanta who relocated to New York City. He was a graduate of Parsons School of Design and had a career as an Interior Designer. He served in the United States Army during World War II.
who have very confined views. We read the obituaries every day. Somebody was born and never left Floyd County [Georgia]. There’s an awful lot of very conservative people in this community. We are not quite that conservative, but we are certainly much more conservative than the Jewish community in Atlanta, personally that is. I don’t speak with a Southern accent. Don’t ask me why, except that I don’t. I used to go to camp when I was 10, 11, and 12 years old in northern Michigan. My brother Charles went to the same camp. At the end of the summer . . .

<End Video, Part 3>

<Begin Video, Part 4>

Mr. Heyman: . . . all of Charles’ friends talked like Southerners. I talked like the Yankees. My view of the world is a lot different than Atlanta. Still, in Rome, I’m almost considered a liberal. You’ve got to view it . . . have I answered your question?

Mrs. Berman: What is it about small-town life here, or smaller community life, that you would like to instill or you would try to instill in your children?

Mr. Heyman: I think the best example of that is when Lyons married, when Lyons, Junior married Gail Goldstein.82 They lived in Rome for a couple . . . three . . . more than that. They lived in Rome for about four or five years. Gail’s comment was that you have no anonymity. In a small town, particularly as it used to be, everybody knew who you were. This was very comforting. We felt like we were part of a larger community. We escaped a lot of the problems that Atlanta people had, one of them being integration type of thing. We had a very confined life, shall we say. We didn’t . . . Our parties were not wild. Growing up, I didn’t smoke or drink until I went off to college. When you had a date [and] if you held hands, that was very exciting. I think that living in a small town was very comforting. Today, I wouldn’t change it for the world.

All of my children live in Atlanta or Marietta [Georgia] or Smyrna [Georgia], and all of them are involved . . . Two of them are involved in big Atlanta life. That is not for me. I would go crazy with the traffic and with the constant controversies that exist in the political and social community. We don’t seem to have that in Rome. If we do, we ignore it. We love it here.

82 Gail Goldstein Heyman is a dental hygienist who is a native and resident of Atlanta, Georgia. She is a graduate of Northside High School and Medical College of Georgia. She was a past president of the sisterhood at Rodeph Shalom Congregation when she lived for several years in Rome, Georgia. She is a community activist who was recognized for her service by the Martin Luther King Humanitarian award, Woman of Distinction award, and Children’s Legacy award. She is a co-founder of the Fragile X Association of Georgia and a National Commissioner of the Anti-Defamation League. She serves on boards of the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta and Jewish Family and Career Services.
because we are an hour and a half away from Atlanta. We go to operas. We go to theater. We go to symphony. We go to shows. We go to dine. We meet friends in Rome to take to Atlanta. We go to Atlanta for meals and for dinners. It’s close by. We don’t have that kinship with Chattanooga, although it’s the same distance. I think Rome, to me, has been kind of like . . . You cover yourself in small town activities, and you are kind of protected from the world, if that makes any kind of sense.

Mrs. Berman: I think that does. It makes a lot of sense. I wanted to backtrack for just one moment, back to a little bit of earlier years. You told me a lot about what your family did and what their business was. If you have a recollection, what were some of the other Jewish-owned businesses here and what some of the other members of the Jewish community participated in?

Mr. Heyman: The most prominent family was the Esserman family. They had been here since, I guess, the mid-1800’s or the late 1800’s. Esserman’s store was a major department store in the community. The Gavants, who came here from Atlanta, Eva Gavant, who ran Eve’s Jewelry; Louis Gavant, who had Rome pawnshop; Mike Kraft, who later moved to Atlanta, owned the Lad ‘n’ Lassie Shop here; Joe Rothman owned Rome Radio Company, which was a radio repair and sales store. Isadore Levinson owned and operated a clothing store called the Vogue. Sol Schwartz and the Schwartz family had Schwartz’s Department Store, which was here for

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83 The first member of the Esserman family to arrive in Rome, Georgia was Pressley Esserman, who founded Esserman and Company in 1896 as a dry goods store. The business became Esserman Department Store, or Esserman’s, which closed in 1987. His family included his wife Anna Friedman Esserman; sons Benjamin and Hyman, who operated the store with their father; and daughters Mildred Esserman Feinbloom, Edna Esserman, Fay “Fagie” Esserman, and Rose Esserman Levine. Other family members followed Pressley in relocating to Rome, including his brothers Louis, Charles, Harry, Sam, Joseph “Joe”, Edward, and his father David Esserman, a “shochet” who served as the rabbi of Rodeph Shalom Congregation in Rome until his death in 1917. Esserman family members were leaders in the retail business community and the Jewish community in Rome.

84 Eva Isacoff Gavant (1904-1977) was a native New Yorker who grew up in Atlanta, Georgia and relocated to Rome, Georgia in 1939. She was one of the presidents of Rodeph Shalom Congregation’s sisterhood in Rome, Georgia.

85 Louis Gavant (1907-1975) was a native of Lutsk, Poland (now Ukraine). He moved to Rome, Georgia in 1939 and operated the National Loan and Jewelry Company in Rome. He was one of the presidents of Rodeph Shalom Congregation in Rome.

86 Michael “Mike” Kraft (1912-1965) was born in Savannah, Georgia. He also lived in Pearson, Georgia and Rome, Georgia, and Atlanta, Georgia. While in Rome, he owned the Lad ‘n’ Lassie Shop, which he operated with his wife Raye. He was the president of Rodolph Shalom Congregation, and a president of the Shrine Club in Rome. After he moved to Atlanta, he became president of Ahavath Achim Congregation and was chairman for the Israeli Bond committee.

87 Solomon “Sol” Schwartz (1894-1965), born in Kobrin, Russia, owned Schwartz’s, a department store in Rome, Georgia. Before settling in Rome, he resided in Eastman, Georgia and served overseas in the United States Army during World War I. He was a president of Rodeph Shalom Congregation in Rome. Other family members associated with Schwartz’s were Harry, Max, and Lawrence “Larry” Schwartz.
many years. The Blumbergs came here, Babs Blumberg\(^88\) had gone . . . Babs . . . Babette Greenstein or Babette Green-something, had been in Nashville. She was a Nashville girl and had been at Vanderbilt, where I was. She married Herb Blumberg,\(^89\) and they moved to Rome, and he opened Blumberg’s, the Star Jewelers is what it was, the Star Jewelry Company. He was on Broad Street.

Over the years, we had a kosher grocery store here that was a meat market inside one of the grocery stores down on Broad Street, which was owned by Joe Levy\(^90\) and his brother Isadore [Levy].\(^91\) Somewhere in the early 1950’s or maybe middle 1950’s, Joe and Sylvia Esserman\(^92\) —who were cousins of the Esserman family—bought out the Lad ‘n’ Lassie Shop from Mike and Ray Kraft. They went into . . . They moved into Atlanta. One of the old families was the Stock family. They had a store called the Boston Store. They had a branch in Lafayette [Georgia]. Casper Stock\(^94\) married an Esserman girl.\(^95\) They had a store on Broad Street. These were some of the families. In those days, there were very few professional Jewish people here. In fact, one of the first professional people that came was Murray Stein,\(^96\) who was a dentist. He married Louise Stock,\(^97\) who was Casper Stock’s daughter. That, to some extent, was the [Jewish] families.

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\(^88\) Babette Haber Greenspan Blumberg (1925-2005) was a native of Nashville, Tennessee who lived in Chattanooga, Tennessee before relocating to Rome, Georgia, where her husband Herbert Carroll Blumberg established Star Jewelers, a retail jewelry store. She was a president of Rodeph Shalom Congregation’s Sisterhood.

\(^89\) Herbert Carroll Blumberg was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee in 1923 and relocated to Rome, Georgia about 1950. He was a graduate of University of Virginia in Charlottesville, Virginia and was in the retail jewelry business. In Chattanooga he was manager of C & S Jewelers and in Rome he was the owner of Star Jewelers.

\(^90\) Joseph “Joe” Herman Levy (1914-1996), a Georgia native, owned and operated the Phillips Market in Rome, Georgia, along with his brother Isadore Lippman Levy. He later relocated to Los Angeles, California.

\(^91\) Isadore Lippman Levy (1906-1995), a Georgia native, owned and operated the Phillips Market in Rome, Georgia, along with his brother Joseph “Joe” Herman Levy. He later relocated to Los Angeles, California.

\(^92\) Joseph “Joe” Charles Esserman (1906-1973) was born in Rome, Georgia. He served in the United States Army during World War II. He was a retail merchant, first at Friedman and Company, a business started by his father Edward, and later at the Lad ‘n’ Lassie Shop.

\(^93\) Sylvia Weinstein Esserman (1913-2004) was a native New Yorker who lived in the Bronx and Middletown, New York before marrying Joseph “Joe” Charles Esserman and moving to Rome, Georgia. She co-managed the Lad ‘n’ Lassie Shop in Rome with her husband.

\(^94\) Casper Isadore Stock (1897-1982) was a native of New York City who also lived in Savannah, Georgia before moving to Rome, Georgia after World War I. He served in the United States Navy during World War I. He owned the Boston a dry goods store with locations in Rome and Lafayette, Georgia.

\(^95\) Sara Esserman Stock (1900-1988) was a life-long resident of Rome, Georgia. She was the granddaughter of David Esserman, the first rabbi of Rodeph Shalom Congregation in Rome.

\(^96\) Murray Stein (1924-2009), a native of Savannah, Georgia, was a dentist in Rome, Georgia. He held a doctorate in dentistry from Northwestern University in Chicago. He served in the United States Army during World War II. He served three terms as president of Rodeph Shalom Congregation in Rome and taught in its religious school. He was president of Rome’s B’nai B’rith chapter.

\(^97\) Louise Shirley Stock Stein (1923-2018) was a life-long resident of Rome, Georgia. She was a graduate of the
Mrs. Berman: Were most of these residents . . . Most of the Jewish community were in the mercantiles? Were there any farmers?

Mr. Heyman: No.

Mrs. Berman: People who may have owned a dairy?

Mr. Heyman: No.

Mrs. Berman: Anything of that kind of . . .

Mr. Heyman: No. One of the family that I need to mention, and a very prominent family, was the family of Isaac May. Isaac May was one of the founders of our [Rodeph Shalom] Congregation. As a matter of fact, in Rome, there was a man by the name of Max Meyerhardt. He is recorded in history as one of the finest Romans ever to be here. That’s a whole other story.

Ike [Isaac] May had a daughter, whose name was Edna [May Sulzbacher]. She married Joe L. Sulzbacher. His name was really Joel, but he didn’t want to be known as Jews. They were Jewish. Everybody knew they were Jewish, but he pretended he wasn’t. Instead of being Joel Sulzbacher, he was Joe L. Sulzbacher. Isaac May was a big property owner here. He was the one who owned the furniture factory building that Fox Manufacturing Company bought when they moved to Rome. Joe Sulzbacher was prominent in business. He was one of the founders of the Rome Manufacturing Company, which made pants. He and the Burnes family were partners in that business. They were never considered part of . . . The Jewish people never considered them

University of Georgia in Athens, where she studied journalism. She was a president of Rodeph Shalom Congregation in Rome.

98 Isaac May (1862-1953) was born in Alsace, France and became a prominent businessman in Rome, Georgia. He began his career in department store merchandising as an apprentice in Alsace. He immigrated to the United States and after residing in Muncie, Indiana and Atlanta, Georgia, he settled in Rome. In Rome he joined the J. Kuttner Company, a department store founded by his father-in-law Jacob Kuttner. He left J. Kuttner to become president of Rome Furniture Corporation, a furniture plant, and subsequently co-founded Rome Manufacturing Company, a clothing manufacturer. He served on Rome’s City Council and as chairman of its City Commission. He was president of Rodeph Shalom Congregation from 1905 to 1938.

99 Max Meyerhardt (1856-1923) was born in Prussia and immigrated to America with his parents in 1864. They settled in Rome, Georgia. In 1891, he married Nettie Watson. He was a distinguished lawyer and judge who was a board member of the Rome public school system, president of the Carnegie Library Association, officer and active member of the Cherokee Lodge No. 66 F. & A. M., founder of the Masonic Home at Macon, Georgia, and founder of the Rodeph Sholom Sunday School in Rome.

100 Edna May Sulzbacher (1889-1978) was the daughter of prominent businessman Isaac May in Rome, Georgia.

101 Joe L. Sulzbacher (1883-1956) was born in Chillicothe, Ohio. He was vice-president of the Rome Manufacturing Company, a clothing factory established by his father-in-law Isaac May.

102 Brothers Herman Milton Burnes (1898-1955) and Norman Norwood Burnes (1886-1973), along with Isaac May and Joe L. Sulzbacher, were principals in the Rome Manufacturing Company. Norman Norwood Burnes and his family lived near Lyons Joel Heyman’s home on Horseleg Creek Road in Rome, Georgia.
really part of the Jewish community. They didn’t attend synagogue. They may have been members from time to time, but they were not really part of the Jewish community, as such.

Mrs. Berman: Who was the other individual that you said . . .

Mr. Heyman: Max Meyerhardt. Max Meyerhardt was a devoted Roman. He was a judge. There have been books written about him. When Henry Grady came to Rome, Max Meyerhardt was quoted as making some statements about the personality of Henry Grady. There is a plaque at the library that tells you the whole story, or part of the story, of Max Meyerhardt.

Mrs. Berman: When did he come here to Rome?

Mr. Heyman: This was before my time. He was gone when I was here. He was one of the judges. He was one of the founders of the synagogue. I can’t give you much history, although I should know it. Jo can probably give you some history of Max Meyerhardt.

Mrs. Berman: Finally, I know that the Jewish community here in Rome is fairly small. You have such a love of this community. Are you worried, or does it bother you, that this may be, not the last generation or that the synagogue is getting smaller and smaller . . . that in another maybe 20 or 30 years, there may not be a Jewish community in Rome? Is that something that is affecting you or that is bothering you?

Mr. Heyman: Very definitely. When we first came to Rome, there was something like 80 or 90 Jewish families here. It was for us a “big” Jewish community. Today there are 15, 20, or maybe 25 Jewish families, many of those mixed marriages. There’s only one person really left of old Rome in that synagogue, and that’s Shelly Stein Peller, who is Louise and Murray Stein’s daughter. She’s the current president of the congregation. She’s doing a beautiful job. Everybody else . . . We lost Susan Gavant Wall this past year—a young woman, 50 years old—due to pancreatic cancer. I was hoping . . . My hope for the future of our congregation lay in these two ladies. What’s going to happen 25 or 30 years from now, I don’t know. I’m encouraged by the

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103 Henry Woodfin Grady (1850-1889), born in Athens, Georgia, was the foremost American journalist of the “New South”—a term he invented—and a renowned orator. He graduated from the University of Georgia and pursued postgraduate studies at the University of Virginia. He wrote for the Rome Courier and was part-owner of the Atlanta Daily Herald. He became co-owner of the Atlanta Constitution and became its editor. As a solution to the South’s economic and social woes after the Civil War, he promoted industrialization and crop diversification and advocated reconciliation with the North. Grady County in Georgia and Oklahoma were named in his honor and other places in Atlanta named for him include Grady Memorial Hospital, Henry W. Grady High School, the Henry Grady Hotel, and the Henry W. Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia. He was inducted into the Georgia Writers Hall of Fame in 2004.

104 Susan Irma Gavant Wall (1948-2000) was a native of Rome, Georgia and one of the presidents of Rodeph Shalom Congregation’s Sisterhood in Rome, Georgia.
fact that we do have younger people that are coming into the community. We have more professional people than we ever did before. There are more Jewish doctors. There are several Jewish professors out at Berry [College]. Whether they will hold the community together as has been over all these years, I can’t tell you. I don’t know. Yes, it does concern me, because we have a very old and a very proud heritage. There’s only this one person today that’s of the old Rome family. That’s a phrase that we use here quite often. We’ve been in Rome 60 years. That’s a long time for a lot of people. We used to say, if you weren’t born here, you couldn’t criticize Rome. If you hadn’t been here for 40 years, you weren’t really Roman. We’ve been here 60 years. We take seriously old Romans. If we lived in Atlanta, there is no such thing. Yes, it concerns me. It bothers me. I also have a lot of hope for the future, because I think that the group that we’ve got now, be they whatever, will do their very best to continue the congregation, keep it alive, and keep it well.

Mrs. Berman: Thank you very much.
Mr. Heyman: Thank you.

<End Video, Part 4>

INTERVIEW ENDS

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105 Berry College is a private Christian liberal arts college in Mount Berry, Georgia, near Rome, Georgia.