INTERVIEW BEGINS

Pola: We are speaking to Kalman Held . . . K-A-L-M-A-N H-E-L-D. Today is Tuesday, September 12, 2000. This is the Legacy Project for the William Breman Holocaust Museum. We are going to interview Mr. Held about his life before the war, how he came to Atlanta, and the life that he’s built since he came here. We would like to start. Would you tell us please where you were born?

Kalman: I was born in a place called Czernovitz . . . C-Z-E-R-N-O-V-I-T-Z,\(^1\) which was—at the time that I was born—part of Romania. Really [it] was originally part of the Austria-Hungarian monarchy.\(^2\) As such, my native tongue is actually German.

Pola: What year were you born?

Kalman: I was born in 1935.

Pola: What was your birth date?

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\(^1\) Czernovitz or Czernowitz is a city of the southwest Ukraine in the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains near the northern border of present-day Romania. During the 19\(^{th}\) and early 20\(^{th}\) centuries, Czernovitz became a center of both Romanian and Ukrainian nationalist movements. In 1908, it was the site of the first Yiddish language conference, the Czernovitz Conference. When Austria-Hungary dissolved in 1918, the city and its surrounding area became part of Romania. As part of the Bukovina region, the city was occupied by the Soviet Union in 1940. In July 1941, the Romanian army retook the city. In 1944, the Red Army drove out the Axis forces and the city was reincorporated into the Ukrainian SSR. Today, the city is known as Chernivtsi, Ukraine. In 1930, the city reached a population of 112,400, 26.8% of whom were Jews. The remaining population was composed of Romanians, Germans, Ukrainians, and Poles. Less than 1/3 of the Jewish community survived the Holocaust.

\(^2\) The Austro-Hungarian Empire was a union of the Empire of Austria and the Kingdom of Hungary that existed from 1867 until 1918. It was ruled by a constitutional monarchy. Until it collapsed as a result of defeat in World War I, it was the second largest country in Europe after the Russian empire and one of the world’s great powers. Czernovitz was located close to its eastern border.
Kalman: I was born September 23, 1935. I am named after my grandfather—his name was Kalman, which is obviously a Hungarian name—who died a few months prior to my birth.

Pola: In your home in Czernovitz, what language was spoken at home?

Kalman: We were speaking in German.

Pola: Did you begin school?

Kalman: Actually, no. I remember that I had a maid. I remember that she has taken me around. I remember dimly attending temple . . . High Holidays, with my father. He had a dry goods store . . . a very successful dry goods store. He and my uncle, Sigmund, actually were running that store. I remember some of my relatives having left in 1938 for Palestine. My father—having been an officer in the Austria-Hungarian army—didn’t believe that anything would happen to him. Besides, he wanted to continue in business. As such, he stayed on. I remember being tutored to some degree at home. I remember a very nice apartment. I remember the Russian army capturing the city—I don’t remember what year it was—at which point, two other families were bivouacked in our apartment. I remember my father being taken away by the Russians and my mother going to jail every day. Afterwards, the city was captured by the Germans. My mother, and I, and my grandmother moved into a much different apartment, or room, where they were making . . . I remember them sewing the star . . . the Jewish star, which we had to wear. I actually remember being sent to movie theaters because the teacher that was

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3 The Jewish High Holidays, also called the High Holy Days, consist of Rosh Ha-Shanah (Jewish New Year) and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement).

4 ‘Palestine’ was the name of the area that is now Israel and Jordan. After World War I, the area came under the administration of the British and was called the “British Mandate.” In the early 1930s, Jewish immigration from Europe to the British Mandate for Palestine rapidly increased due Zionism and the rise of Nazism. Nationalist uprisings and opposition to the mass influx of Jewish immigrants led to The Arab Revolt of 1936–39 and caused Great Britain to dramatically limit the numbers of immigrants allowed into Palestine in subsequent years and throughout the Holocaust.

5 In the early stages of World War II, Romania tried to remain neutral, but foreign powers and events created heavy pressure on Romania. In June 1940, a Soviet ultimatum demanded territories in its northern border regions. In order to avoid war with the Soviet Union, the Romanian government and army retreated from the border regions of Bessarabia, Northern Bukovina, and Hertza. Czernovitz became the administrative center of the province known as the Chernivtsi Oblast.

6 Soon after the Soviets occupied Romania’s border regions around Czernovitz, Romania formally joined the Axis military campaign. The border areas were occupied by Russia until Romanian and German troops recaptured them in 1941 during the Axis invasion of the Soviet Union.

7 After Romania entered the war in 1941, atrocities against Jews became common. Prime Minister Ion Antonescu’s regime played a major role in the Holocaust in Romania and copied the Nazi policies of oppression and genocide of Jews and Gypsies. The yellow badge was imposed in several cities and Romanian Jews were subject to a wide range of harsh conditions, including forced labor, financial penalties, and discriminatory laws. Jews were concentrated into ghettos, deported to concentration camps, or murdered in pogroms and massacres by death squads. At least 250,000 Romanian Jews were murdered during the Holocaust.
teaching me . . . his son-in-law or somebody was running this movie theater. I saw these Italian movies most of the time. Things turned worse. I remember my grandmother being ill. I remember my mother having to be constrained with ropes as a result of the fact that she was bleeding all over her body because of nerves . . . because of the fact that my father had to be taken away. I don’t remember at which point, but we moved back to Braila [Romania].

8 Braila [or Brăila] was a port on the lower Danube in Romania. The presence of Jewish merchants in Braila was first documented in the seventeenth century. By 1930, there were 11,327 Jews in Braila, involved mainly in grain exports, local trade, crafts, industry, and banking. Just before World War II, there were 14 active synagogues in Braila. By 1947, only 5,950 Jews remained in Braila. Today, only about 135 Jews live in Braila.

9 Romania formally joined the Axis alliance in November 1940 under fascist dictator General Ion Antonescu.

10 In the fall of 1941, Romanian army and police massacred thousands of Jews in the border regions of Romania along the Ukraine. Those left alive were deported to camps and ghettos. Braila is southeast of the border regions and may have temporarily provided a safe haven for Kalman, his mother, and his ailing mother.

11 Bucharest is the capital of Romania. It is the largest city in Romania. In 1940, 95,072 Jews lived in Bucharest. This number increased to at least 102,000 by 1941 due to the influx of refugees into Bucharest from other parts of Romania. Kalman, his mother, and grandmother joined the influx of refugees. In a pogrom carried out in Bucharest in October 1941, 120 Jews were killed. Antisemitic legislation downgraded the identity of Jewish citizens to second-rate status, they lost the rights to education and health care, their property was confiscated, and they were forced to perform humiliating hard labor. In September 1942, approximately 1,000 Jews were deported to Transnistria. Despite this harsh treatment, many Jews in Bucharest survived the Holocaust, and after World War II ended, a great influx of Jewish refugees arrived in the city from concentration camps and other areas in Romania. Kalman, his mother and grandmother joined the influx of refugees into Bucharest.

12 Scarlet fever is an infectious disease that most commonly affects four to eight year old children. Symptoms include sore throat, fever, and a characteristic red rash. It is usually spread by inhalation. Before the availability of antibiotics, scarlet fever was a major cause of death.

TRANSCRIPT ID: OHC10259
Jewish school in Bucharest. I remember that we had to always say something about the king. We said, “Trăiască majestatea sa regală Mihai entee,” [Romanian: Long live his royal highness Michael I] which means God live the king—whomever he was.\textsuperscript{13} Also, there were a lot of bombardments by American bombers.\textsuperscript{14} At that point, I got scarlet fever. I almost died. I also remember that they got a doctor to see me because I think I was like a skeleton from this disease. I remember my mother telling me not to pull my pants down so the doctor will not know that I was Jewish. At a certain point, we all went by train to the harbor, by the name of Constanta [Romania].\textsuperscript{15} It was also my uncle, his daughter, and his mother-in-law. Now, the question is what happened to his wife, my uncle’s wife. What happened was something very sad. She, too—in the presence of her husband—took up with a Romanian retired officer. As a result of that liaison, as they were going by car, that officer shot her dead in front of her husband. He [the Romanian officer] was actually in love with her. Her name was Tilly. I don’t think that my cousin—her name is Penina. She lives in Israel—was fully aware of it because she was four years younger than I at the time. We wound up on . . . a Bulgarian boat.\textsuperscript{16} That took us to then Constantinople [Turkey].\textsuperscript{17} There wasn’t that much food on the boat, but that wasn’t so serious. We then were put on a cattle train of some sort and wound up in Aleppo, Syria.\textsuperscript{18} Here again, I remember us being deloused and some questions about some of us—boy children—taking showers with the women, because whatever age at least . . . I don’t remember that. We wound up

\textsuperscript{13} Michael I (born 1921) is the former king of Romania, reigning via regency from 1927-1930, when his father King Carol II reclaimed the throne. In 1940, he was reinstated as king, albeit with no real power, under General Ion Antonescu’s regime. In August 1944, Michael joined pro-Allied forces in a coup that successfully overthrew Antonescu. Michael ruled until 1947 when he was forced to abdicate to the Communist Party of Romania and was exiled from Romania. Since the late 1990s, Michael has been allowed to return to Romania.

\textsuperscript{14} Allied bombings of Romania during World War II began in June of 1942 with a series of bombing campaigns aimed at facilities supplying Germany with oil and petroleum products. Allied bombings lasted until August of 1944, when the German \textit{Luftwaffe} briefly bombed Bucharest in a failed attempt to regain city after King Michael’s coup.

\textsuperscript{15} The port of Constanta is located in Constanta, Romania, on the western coast of the Black Sea.

\textsuperscript{16} This was probably in the winter of 1944, after Kalman had recovered from Scarlet Fever. In August 1944, Romania was realigned with the Allies after a coup deposed Antonescu’s regime and put King Michael in control. By mid-September 1944, Bulgaria had also ended participation in the Axis and joined the Allies. It probably would not have been feasible or safe for two Jewish families to travel out of Bucharest and into Bulgaria before the late fall or early winter of 1944.

\textsuperscript{17} Constantinople was the capital city of the Roman, Byzantine, Latin, and Ottoman empires. When the Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923, the city was renamed Istanbul and the capital was moved to Ankara. Istanbul remains the largest city in Turkey, however, and constitutes its economic, cultural, and historic heart. Turkey remained neutral throughout most of World War II, but sided with the Allies in February 1945.

\textsuperscript{18} Aleppo is the largest city in Syria, and serves as the capital of Aleppo Governorate, the most populous governorate in Syria. Aleppo is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. The Allies had controlled Syria since 1941.

TRANSCRIPT ID: OHC10259
in a place called Atlit, which is now Tzrifin.

Pola: Who was with you during this trip?

Kalman: My mother, my uncle, and his daughter, Penina.

Pola: Could you give us your mother’s name?

Kalman: My mother’s name was Eleonora.

Pola: What was her maiden name?

Kalman: Her maiden name was Eckstein. My mother—unlike the people from Czernovitz—was more of a Romanian-type-bred person. Braila was truly Romania. She was . . . came to Czernovitz at some point together with her sisters because they wanted to make a living. There was another sister. Her name was Rachel or Rachela. She wound up in Vienna [Austria]. She actually lived in Vienna just prior to the war. That’s another story, but it will come as my history progresses.

Pola: You said that you wound up in Atlit? Do you have any idea how old you were at that time?

Kalman: It must have been 1944. In that case, that makes me nine.

Pola: What do you remember of your experience in Atlit?

Kalman: I remember that there was plenty of food. I remember that we were locked up. All the newspapers were pink because there was a scarcity of newspaper at the time. I don’t know how many weeks we actually were in Atlit, but somebody had to get us out of there. It so happened that my . . . the fellow that later on became my step-father, drove by with a bomb in the hold of the ship to keep it from sailing, but the bomb was stronger than intended, and when it exploded, 216 refugees were drowned. The survivors returned to Atlit, and were released a few months later. The camp was temporarily shut down between 1942 and 1945, when it was reopened to handle Holocaust survivors. After 200 detainees broke out of the camp on October 10, 1945, the British began to send refugees to Cyprus instead. Atlit later became a detainee camp for Arabs, and later for Egyptian prisoners of war in 1967. Today, the site houses a museum.

19 Located on the Mediterranean coast, about 15 miles south of Haifa, Atlit served as a detention camp for Jewish refugees from Nazi Europe who arrived on Israel’s shores during the British Mandate. Established in the 1930s, the camp was set up by the British to appease the Arab population. Built with barbed wire, the men were separated from the women. They had to strip, were sprayed with DDT (an insecticide), and entered showers, reminders of Europe. Many thousands of Jews were interred at Atlit, some staying for as long as two years. In November 1940, the British decided to send 5000 refugees to Mauritius, an island on the southeastern coast of Africa. The Haganah placed a bomb in the hold of the ship to keep it from sailing, but the bomb was stronger than intended, and when it exploded, 216 refugees were drowned. The survivors returned to Atlit, and were released a few months later. The camp was temporarily shut down between 1942 and 1945, when it was reopened to handle Holocaust survivors. After 200 detainees broke out of the camp on October 10, 1945, the British began to send refugees to Cyprus instead. Atlit later became a detainee camp for Arabs, and later for Egyptian prisoners of war in 1967. Today, the site houses a museum.

20 Tzrifin is an area in Gush Dan (Dan Region) in central Israel, located on the eastern side of Rishon LeZion, and including parts of Be’er Ya’akov. It is an “area without jurisdiction” between the two cities. Nearly the entire area of Tzrifin proper is taken up by the central Israel Defense Forces base, Camp Yigael Yadin. Camp Yadin contains a multitude of training bases, as well as Prison Four, the largest Israeli military prison. Tzrifin was named after a historical city with that name located in the area and mentioned in the Talmud, the central text of Rabbinic Judaism.

21 Vienna is the capital and largest city of Austria, and one of the nine states of Austria. It is Austria’s primary city, with a population of about 1.8 million, and is the cultural, political, and economic center of Austria.
motorcycle. [He] recognized my mother because his brother, who remained in Czernovitz, was one of my mother’s friends prior to her having been married. He knew us. He must have vouched for us and gotten us out. I remember my mother living in a room in Tel Aviv [Israel], and working as a maid in a hotel, the Dan Hotel. She didn’t have any money for me to stay there, so I wound up . . . eventually wound up in three kibbutzim. I was first in Gan Schmuel. They kicked me out because they gave me a test and thought that I had some kind of a disease . . . a communicable disease . . . but that wasn’t true. I then spent, I believe, three or four years in a kibbutz by the name of Shefayim, which was very nice. I remember fasting on Yom Kippur. All the people from the galut were fasting—not the locals . . . and then they threw us in a horse trough because of the fact that we were fasting that particular evening. I remember . . .

Pola: Can you clarify that? You mean they were not approving of your fasting?
Kalman: They thought it was fun.
Pola: Were these peers? These were other kids?
Kalman: Yes, these were other kids. The kibbutz was really very nice. The only problem was their educational methods. If we didn’t understand something, we were beaten up . . . at least those of us that didn’t understand it were beaten up. I was so bad the first year that they actually called my mother. They weren’t giving any grades. [They] said that they were going to kick me

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22 Tel Aviv is Israel’s largest metropolitan area and second most populous city, after Jerusalem. Founded by a Jewish community in 1909 on the outskirts of Jaffa, it is located on the Mediterranean coast in central-west Israel.
23 The Dan Hotel is a luxury hotel on the sea front in Tel Aviv, Israel. It was the first hotel of the Dan Hotels chain. The building where the hotel is located was built in the 1930’s and, for a time, it served as the headquarters of the Haganah. The Dan Hotels Corporation, which owns the hotel today, was established in 1947.
24 A kibbutz (plural: kibbutzim) [Hebrew: gathering, clustering] is a collective community in Israel that was traditionally based on agriculture, although today they are also based on industrial plants, and high-tech enterprises.
25 Gan Schmuel [Hebrew: Schmuel’s Garden] is a kibbutz in the Haifa District of Israel, east of Hadera. It is named for Rabbi Schmuel Mohilever, one of the founders of religious Zionism. Gan Schmuel Group, a large citrus and fruit manufacturer and exporter, began at the kibbutz in 1942.
26 Shefayim [Hebrew: High Hills] is a kibbutz in central Israel located two and one-half miles north of Herzliya along the Mediterranean coast. Immigrants from Poland established it in 1931. The name is taken from Isaiah 41:18: “I will open rivers in high places.” During the British Mandate, Shefayim was a base for clandestine immigration. In the 1970’s, it established a plastics factory; in the 1980’s, it established a biotechnology plant; and in the 1990’s, it acquired a cotton-ginning plant. Shefayim is one of the wealthiest members of the kibbutz movement. Its main source of income is a shopping mall that is located on real estate previously classified as agricultural land. It also has a hotel, conference center, and water park.
27 Yom Kippur [Hebrew: “Day of Atonement”] is the most sacred day of the Jewish year. Yom Kippur is a 25-hour fast day. Most of the day is spent in prayer, reciting yizkor for deceased relatives, confessing sins, requesting divine forgiveness, and listening to Torah readings and sermons. People greet each other with the wish that they may be sealed in the heavenly book for a good year ahead. The day ends with the blowing of the shofar (a ram’s horn).
28 The Hebrew term galut [exile] expresses the Jewish conception of the condition and feelings of a nation uprooted from its homeland and subject to alien rule.

TRANSCRIPT ID: OHC10259
out. My mother couldn’t afford me. It’s because [of this incident that] I never went for first, second or third grade, I believe. There were not too many pedagogy methods, but what happened is that I read the entire library around the summer time in Hebrew. While I still don’t understand the grammar, it didn’t really matter. I was able to spell and do everything that was necessary at a certain point. Those were the years between . . . actually, I was in school in Tel Aviv, too, for a very short period of time, and then wound up in the kibbutz. I was in . . . must have been in the kibbutz for about three years. In the kibbutz, you shared everything. You had to . . . if your mother sent you some goodies, you had to share it with everybody . . . which was fine. It was really a very nice place. Around that time . . . I know it must have been 1948, because that was when the Palmach, the pre-military Israeli army, were training over there.29 There were planes coming from the United States on a dirt strip. What happened is we had to clean the [air] strip of stones. They would just drill holes in the belly of those private planes. People would take up each one with a bomb, and fly, and drop the bombs by hand somewhere near Safed.30 We were not allowed to go on trips with the pilots who were training over there, but if you really cleaned up real well for the planes, sometimes you got lucky. I did get lucky, and wound up taking one of the trips with one of the pilots. That evening at supper—each kibbutz had a security officer—the security officer grabbed me. [He] took me up by my collar and said, “I know you didn’t follow instructions. You were on a plane.” I said, “No way, you couldn’t see me.” He said, “Yes, I saw you from the water tower.” There you are. The kibbutz was really nice. It wasn’t exactly what I was used to. There used to be one telephone. When the dining room had a fire, people ran there. They didn’t try to save the food, or the dishes, or anything, but the tapes for the movies that were being shown once a week.

Pola: Did the kibbutz have in it both refugee children and Israeli children?

Kalman: It had people that could pay from the outside. The kibbutz . . . it was somebody from the outside was paying for my keep.

Pola: Was it a children’s home?

29 The Palmach [Hebrew: “Strike Force”] was the elite fighting force of the Haganah, the underground army of the Yishuv (the Jewish community in Palestine during the 19th century and until the creation of the state of Israel in 1948) during the period of the British Mandate of Palestine. It was established in 1941, and by the time it was forcibly disbanded, it consisted of over 2,000 men and women. The Yishuv began covertly acquiring arms and military equipment in 1946, including airplanes from the United States.

30 Safed is a city in the northern district of Israel. It is the highest city in the Galilee, and in Israel. On May 6, 1948, the Palmach attacked the Arab section of Safed as part of an effort to capture Safed, and secure the Lebanese, and Syrian borders before the British Mandate ended on May 14, 1948.
Kalman: The children were in separate rooms. You shared . . . four to a room. The boys and the girls were separated. We were three or four kilometers from the sea. We had to work. I remember that I was fertilizing the fields with cow urine . . . take a donkey and a carriage and you fertilize the field. I had to wash my hair with Lysol every night. It’s better to have the smell of Lysol than the smell of something else.

Pola: Did you have much contact with other children or young people? By that time, you were how old?

Kalman: I must . . . it would have been 1946 [or] 1947. I would have been nine [or] ten years old . . . something like that. I had some opportunities. I went to school with some of the people that were related to some of the poets, like Katznelson, and so on . . . but I really didn’t know what was going on. You have to realize that—besides the fact that my mother couldn’t afford me—it was the wrong thing for me to be near my mother. My mother had a mental problem ever since they took my father away. It was affecting me. That’s why they tried to keep us apart, if possible. Although she loved me and all that, but it wasn’t that easy. Come 1948, my mother remarried the same gentleman who helped us out of Atlit. What happened is he had a wife—she was a very nice lady and I remember her—but she died in a car accident in 1946. That’s how I got two brothers. Elan was the younger one and Daniel, who lives in Haifa [Israel] today. Daniel is a month older than I. Elan died about eight years ago in Toronto [Canada]. Danny is in Haifa. At that point, Danny and I ended up in another kibbutz called Ma’abarot. That was a little bit more left-leaning. It was interesting because some of the things that I remember is that there was switching of . . . you didn’t always get married on a timely basis. If the woman was pregnant and the rabbi came up riding on a donkey to perform marriage ceremonies, in order not to step on the rabbi’s sensitivities, you would have a stand-in for the real lady that was getting married. Because she already had shown the fact that she was pregnant.

Pola: You knew all these things?

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31 Lysol is a brand of cleaning and disinfecting products distributed by Reckitt Benckiser.
32 Berl Katznelson (January 25, 1887 – August 12, 1944) was one of the intellectual founders of Labor Zionism, instrumental to the establishment of the modern state of Israel, and the editor of Davar, the first daily newspaper of the workers’ movement. He was widely known for his desire for peaceful coexistence between Arabs and Jews in Israel.
33 Ma’abarot is a kibbutz in Israel that was founded in 1932. It was founded by graduates of the left-wing Hashomer Hatzair Zionist youth movement in Romania who organized themselves as a settlement group and immigrated to Palestine in 1924. Today, it has a population of approximately 850 people, and is under the jurisdiction of the Hefer Valley Regional Council.

TRANSCRIPT ID: OHC10259
Kalman: A child always knows everything.

Pola: Did you have a bar mitzvah\(^{34}\) anytime during that period?

Kalman: Yes, I had a bar mitzvah in Tel Aviv. I don’t remember the circumstances. I also went to high school after . . . you see, what happened is Danny and I went . . . they did not want to keep my brother in the kibbutz Ma’abarot. Therefore, they took both of us out. I wound up in a high school by the name of Geula\(^{35}\) in Tel Aviv. I did have my bar mitzvah over there.

Pola: Thereafter, did you serve in the Israeli army?

Kalman: I never did because one of the things that my [step]father did at that particular point. He sent me away at age of 16 1/2—again because of my mother primarily. He had a part-share of a restaurant. He also had . . . another restaurant in the army camp, Sarafand.\(^{36}\) He also had a sausage factory . . . but he didn’t want me around, I guess. Being a child, I was eager to see the world. I don’t know why, but obviously there was a reason for that. I went by boat. I wound up in Naples [Italy]. Then [I] took a train via Rome [Italy], to a place in Carinthia, Austria,\(^{37}\) where my uncle—who was married to my mother’s older sister—picked me up. I wound up in a hotel school, in a place called Bad Gastein [Austria],\(^{38}\) which is near Salzburg [Austria].\(^{39}\) I didn’t particularly enjoy that because the teachers were ex-POWs [prisoners of war],\(^{40}\) except for the principal, who was an anti-Nazi. One of the teachers was saying that the Germans invented the atom bomb and all that. I would get up, smash the door, and stuff like that. I wound up in Vienna the following year.

Pola: How old were you then?

\(^{34}\) A bar mitzvah [Hebrew: son of commandment] is 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.

\(^{35}\) The Ort Geula High School in Tel Aviv is a vocational school that currently focuses on science and technology.

\(^{36}\) Tzrifin (see note 20 above) was founded in 1917, during World War I, as a British base named Sarafand, after the nearby Arab village Sarafand Al-Amar. Sarafand was a central British base in a strategic location, having a railway connection to Jaffa and Lydda (Lod). The Transjordan Frontier Force (TJFF) was established at Sarafand on April 1, 1926 with a cadre from the Arab Legion. During World War II, the Jewish Brigade was formed in Tzrifin. On May 14, 1948, one day before the Israeli declaration of independence, British forces vacated Sarafand for the Jordanian Arab Legion. After a two-day battle, between May 18 and 19, 1948, the base was captured by Jewish forces.

\(^{37}\) Carinthia is Austria’s southernmost state. Located in the Eastern Alps, it is noted for its mountains and lakes.

\(^{38}\) Bad Gastein is a spa town in the Austrian state of Salzburg. Its name “Bad” means “spa,” reflecting the town’s history as a health resort. It is located at the head of the Gastein valley, about 3,280 feet above sea level.

\(^{39}\) Salzburg is Austria’s fourth largest city, located north of the Alps, along Austria’s western border with Germany.

\(^{40}\) The former prisoners of war that Kalman encountered in Austria were possibly former members of the Nazi party and likely harbored resentment at having been imprisoned after losing the war.
Kalman: I would have been 17 or 18.
Pola: You would already have gone through hotel school at that time?
Kalman: In two years, yes . . . I have a diploma from hotel school . . . which is like a completion of high school and everything else . . . from the hotel administration school in Vienna, Austria. I lived with my aunt and uncle, who didn’t have any children. My aunt and uncle, my uncle Erich . . . they didn’t have any children because Erich was a cousin to my aunt. Therefore, they decided not to have any children. It’s an interesting story about how they survived. My uncle used to work for the largest confectioneries factory in Vienna prior to the Second World War. Some of the people that he was playing cards with turned out to be real Nazi officers. Prior to the war breaking out, they . . . both of them came—the Nazi officers—in uniform . . . took my aunt and uncle, and drove them to the Belgian border, saying that while they hate the Jews, they didn’t hate him.
Pola: This was in Bucharest?
Kalman: In Austria, in Vienna. My aunt and uncle hid in a cellar in Belgium all during the war. Then, because my uncle was a Socialist party functionary, he was invited by the President of the Republic to come back to Austria, which he did. Therefore, he had a business . . . an importing business . . . going for him. He wanted me to take over the business, which I did not. The reason I did not is because I could not stand it. The reason I could not stand it is because there was so much antisemitism in Austria. I wasn’t afraid because anytime I was introduced to somebody I would say, “My name is Kalman Held and I’m Jewish.” That wasn’t really the way to advance over there. I eventually left and immigrated to Canada at age 18. Yes, all by myself.
Pola: At this point, what were the languages that you were fluent in?
Kalman: Actually, for some reason, I always knew English. Don’t ask me why. Even in Israel, I had no problem with the words. I always knew it, although no one has really taught me that. I

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41 MODUL is a private university in Vienna that was founded in 1908. It is a vocational training school with a long tradition in tourism and hospitality education.
42 Austria’s Socialist party has its roots in the original Social Democratic Workers’ Party founded in 1889. It supported revisionist Marxism and the use of democratic methods to establish working-class rule in a democratic government. From 1934 to 1945, the party was outlawed. Immediately after World War II ended, the party was refounded as the "Socialist Party of Austria" (Sozialistische Partei Österreichs, SPÖ). When Austria regained its full independence in 1955 and officially became the Republic of Austria, the Socialist and Conservative parties joined forces to form a grand coalition government, focused on rebuilding the country. That coalition lasted until 1966. Today, the party is known as the Social Democratic Party of Austria. After World War II and around the time Kalman was in Austria with his uncle, Austria’s first two presidents, Karl Renner (1945-1950) and Theodor Körner (1951-1957), were Social Democrats.
wound up . . . I spoke German but I wasn’t able to write it until I went to school in Austria.

Pola: You spoke German. That was your native tongue?

Kalman: My native . . . but I couldn’t write it . . . but I did learn it once I was in Austria. Of course, I did know Hebrew. I mean, after all my traveling . . . I did know Hebrew. Those were the three languages I knew.

Pola: Where did you meet your wife?

Kalman: We are now 20 years later or I don’t know when. I am the one who brought my parents into Canada. I bribed an immigration officer in Montreal [Canada] and gave him $300.00. That’s how I got visas for my parents, who were then in Vienna helping out my uncle. I was no longer there. I was in Canada.

Pola: Your parents, meaning your stepfather . . .

Kalman: . . . and my mother . . .

Pola: . . . and your mother, who you had left behind in Israel?

Kalman: Yes. They were also in Eritrea. My parents were in Eritrea because my [step]father was a meat expert. He was running a kosher meat factory in Eritrea. My mother . . .

Pola: You want to tell us where Eritrea is?

Kalman: Yes, it’s where the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea occurred very recently. It was part of Eritrea . . . North Africa. The thing is . . . what happened is . . . because of my mother’s mental problems, a smart docent . . . a professor . . . thought that it would be good for her to have another child at age 40 or 41. She had my sister by my stepfather, at that age. They were running this factory in Eritrea . . . but the climate did not agree with my sister. They moved to Austria, from where I brought them into Canada.

Pola: How many years difference are there between you and your sister?

Kalman: 14 . . . Yes. Now, you asked me, “How did I meet my wife?” That’s . . . I was running a hotel already, but in Canada. I should say—before we go into my wife—I should say that I worked as a desk clerk in a place called Mont Tremblant Lodge in the province of Quebec

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43 The State of Eritrea is a country in the Horn of Africa. It is bordered by Sudan to the west, Ethiopia to the south, and Djibouti to the east. Eritrea is a multi-ethnic country, with nine recognized ethnic groups. It has a population of approximately six million.

44 An unresolved border dispute between Eritrea and Ethiopia erupted in May 1998 in what is know as the Eritrean-Ethiopian War. Although the UN determined that the disputed territory belonged to Eritrea when the war ended in June 2000, As of 2014, Ethiopia still occupies the territory.
It was owned by an American—a Mrs. Ryan out of Philadelphia [Pennsylvania, United States]. They discriminated against the Jews. I wrote a letter . . . was 18 or 19 . . . I wrote a letter to the Canadian Jewish Congress\(^46\) saying what was going on. Instead of them coming to see me—or at least calling me—and asking me what’s going on, they wrote me a letter saying that they are aware of that fact but there is nothing they can do about it. [I decided] there is something I could do about it. There was a very large convention. There was no machinery over there . . . you had to take money by hand and make the bill by hand. I waited until there was a very large line up of people to check out, closed the drawer, took the key to Mrs. Ryan, and told her that I was quitting right then and there. She asked why I was quitting. I pointed out to her that I was Jewish, which didn’t sit well with her because I was going out with her daughter who was only 14. That was my little upcommance\(^47\) to her. Getting back to a little later: how did I meet my wife? My stepfather had a cousin in New York [United States]. She told him that her sister—who she thought was dead as a result of the war—was living in Miami [Florida]. My mother and father went to Miami to visit her because he [my stepfather] was living in Canada already. She introduced him to her son, who had a daughter. They invited her to visit Toronto, Canada. I met her there and nothing happened really. But I did go to Miami six months later and called my mother to tell her that I was engaged. To tell you how much my mother knew or my father knew about what was going on, she asked me to whom I was engaged.

**Pola:** This was actually the lady who became your wife, whose name is . . .

**Kalman:** Lois.

**Pola:** What was her last name at that time?

**Kalman:** Neiman . . . N-E-I-M-A-N. Her grandmother was a relative to my stepfather.

**Pola:** That’s a very interesting circle. Where was your wife born?

**Kalman:** She was born in Philadelphia. Of course—little did she know—we are different

\(^{45}\) Mont Tremblant is a city in the Laurentian Mountains of Quebec, Canada, approximately 80 miles (130 km) north-west of Montreal. The area is well known for its ski resorts and other outdoor activities.

\(^{46}\) The Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC) was, for more than 90 years, one of the main lobby groups for the Jewish community in Canada. The CJC was active before and during World War II in lobbying the government (with limited success) to open the borders to Jewish refugees fleeing Europe. After the war, the CJC organized relief aid for Holocaust survivors who were detained in displaced persons camps. In the later decades, the CJC launched campaigns to pressure the Soviet Union to allow Jewish emigration, to pressure the Canadian government to prosecute Nazi war criminals who had settled in Canada, and to enact and use hate crimes legislation against antisemites and Holocaust deniers. The CJC also worked to promote tolerance and understanding between religious and ethnic groups, promote anti-racist work, and other campaigns.

\(^{47}\) “Upcommance” is a vernacular term used to describe revenge that will occur later on.
backgrounds. I brought her to Canada. Actually, we were in Montreal at the time. We spent our honeymoon in Quebec City [Canada]. I used to run a hotel in Montreal at that particular time. We spent . . . first, we also lived in Toronto, but after three years, I moved to the [United] States because Marriott made me an offer that I could not turn down.

Pola: Where did you live?
Kalman: [Washington,] D.C. . . . actually, we lived in Arlington [Virginia], but then we moved to D.C.

Pola: At what point did you come to Atlanta [Georgia]?
Kalman: I was transferred to New Jersey first, and lived in a place in River Edge, and was running . . . I was Director of Catering of the Marriott in Saddle Brook, New Jersey. They, in turn, asked me if I would move to Atlanta. Interestingly, my wife was all opposed to that. I convinced her that it was a good idea. After I got here, and Marriott wanted to move me elsewhere, she refused to leave. As a result, we are still here 30 years later.

Pola: In these various places that you’ve lived—Canada, New Jersey, Washington, D.C., and Arlington—what communities did you become attached to or did you become attached to any community?
Kalman: The only community that actually I was attached to was for about five years in Toronto, Canada, because our son—our oldest son, Gary—was born there and we had quite a lot of friends within the Jewish community. It’s just that the weather wasn’t fully in agreement with my wife. Having moved to Montreal . . . we then eventually wound up in Atlanta. Obviously we’ve been here ever since. Toronto was the only other community where I felt some belonging.

Pola: Do you want to tell us a little bit more about that—about the longing—and Israel and the role it played?
Kalman: I always felt that I would have liked to be part of the military over in Israel because I

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49 Marriott International, Inc. is an American diversified hospitality company that manages and franchises a broad portfolio of hotels and related lodging facilities.
50 River Edge is a borough in Bergen County, New Jersey, United States. It is located approximately 5 miles northeast of Saddle Brook, New Jersey.
51 Saddle Brook is a township in Bergen County, New Jersey, United States. It is located approximately 20 miles northwest of New York City, New York.
felt that it was my home. I spent about five years all together on a kibbutz. You cannot forget it. That was my childhood, for better or worse. My experiences on the kibbutzim were actually very good. This is where I learned that part of Zionism, although religion was anything but in those places. I remember meeting some of the original people that created the state . . . like I have been speaking with Moshe Shertok, who became Moshe Sharett later on. We learned a lot. Also having been to high school a little bit . . . two years worth of high school in Israel made quite an impression . . . a difference on me. I had never been to Jerusalem [Israel] until I came to visit later on because it was impossible to go to Jerusalem due to the war. I remember driving between Haifa and Tel Aviv with my [step] father’s pistol at the ready because we were being shot at by Arabs between those two cities. I would have liked to have gone to school, continued university over there . . . but you cannot make up for what you would have liked. You have to keep going. I am very happy with the way things are . . . having three children, and now three grandchildren, and having a wonderful wife, and . . . I’m sorry. Go ahead, you ask the questions. **Pola:** I was going to ask: where were your other two children born?

**Kalman:** Gary was born in Toronto at the Salvation Army Hospital. I remember that clearly because all the nurses were lined up. They had never seen a Jewish bris and they wanted to see what was going on. The only thing that I found of interest was the mohel came over on Shabbos and did what he had to do. I told him, “I guess I am going to pay you tomorrow

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

53 Moshe Shertok, who later changed his name to Moshe Sharett, was born in 1894 in the Ukraine, and immigrated to Israel at age 12. His family was among the founders of what became the city of Tel Aviv. He was a member of the first graduating class of the first Hebrew high school in the country – Herzliya Gymnasium. In 1931, he joined the political section of the Jewish Agency, the “almost-government” of the Jews in Palestine. He was head of the political section from 1933 to 1948, and was the chief negotiator and spokesman of the Yishuv [Hebrew: settlement] with regard to the British Mandatory administration, and an important architect of Zionist policy. He was a signatory of Israel’s Declaration of Establishment, and became Israel’s first Minister of Foreign Affairs (1948-1956). He served as Prime Minister of Israel from 1953 through 1956. He died in 1965, at the age of 71.

54 Some of the heaviest fighting of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War occurred on the road between Tel Aviv, on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, and Jerusalem, approximately 40 miles inland.

55 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.

56 A mohel is a Jewish person trained in the practice of brit milah, the covenant of circumcision. He performs the religious ceremony as well as the actual circumcision when Jewish boys are eight days old.

57 Shabbat [Hebrew] or Shabbos [Yiddish] is the Jewish day of rest, and is observed on Saturdays. Shabbat observance entails refraining from work activities, often with great rigor, and engaging in restful activities to honor the day. Shabbat begins at sundown on Friday night, and is ushered in by lighting candles, and reciting a blessing. It is closed the following evening with the recitation of the havdalah blessing.
because it is *Shabbos.*” He said, “No, make up the check right away.” So much for that!

Deborah was born in Alexandria General Hospital, when we were in Washington, D.C. David is born in Patterson General in New Jersey. The interesting thing about that is his current wife is also born in Patterson General . . . although obviously they didn’t know . . . we didn’t know the families and all that at that particular time. Yes, I . . . the only affinity we have right now is obviously I have my relatives in Toronto. I have a sister-in-law, who is a widow, over there. I have my brother, with whom I am very close, in Haifa, and his wife and many children. I have my sister and her husband, and two nieces, who live in Vienna.

**Pola:** You mentioned earlier a trip you and your siblings took to Germany. Tell us about that—who you went to visit and why.

**Kalman:** It’s more than that. There were three sisters. The older sister . . . my uncle died a long time ago—the one in Vienna—Uncle Erich . . . because he was . . . because of being in a cellar for so many years and not eating right. Anyhow, my aunt wound up in a . . . my aunt there, Rachel, wound up in the Jewish home . . . in Austria. I went every year to visit her, too. They really were responsible for me being in the hotel business and all that. The place is very nice. There are some Americans who live there in the Jewish home in Austria . . . but you have the gendarmes with guns at the ready surrounding the building because of the fright that there might be somebody who might try to do those people harm. My aunt Jenny is in a Jewish home which is entirely different. It’s much more quiet . . . much nicer . . . the nurses are much nicer, in Dusseldorf, Germany.\(^{58}\) The state does take care of those people who can no longer afford to pay. It’s like over here, you have to put everything you have in the hands of the Jewish home, but the people in the Jewish home in Dusseldorf are being taken care of in a very, very nice way by those nurses from Russia. As a matter of fact—I know that is crazy, but it’s true—one of the nurses is a former military surgeon who was a personal surgeon to [Dr. Mohammad] Najibullah\(^ {59}\) in Afghanistan with the Russian army. They are all Jewish. They left . . . and they are doing what they can. They really have a lot of concern for the patients. They are very much . . . very well taken care of over there. I am visiting her once a year and talking to the lawyer that represents her affairs—who happens to be born in Haifa but he is a German lawyer.

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\(^{58}\) Dusseldorf is the sixth most populated city in Germany. It is located on the Rhine River in western Germany, near the border of The Netherlands.

\(^{59}\) Dr. Mohammad Najibullah Ahmadzai (August 6, 1947-September 27, 1996) was President of Afghanistan from 1987 to 1992, when the mujahideen took over Kabul. His administration was supported by the Soviet Union.

**TRANSCRIPT ID:** OHC10259
Pola: I sense from you, in the stories that you told us, a strong feeling of Jewishness and a strong loyalty to family. At the same time, you kind of wandered around from place to place. I wonder: where did the Jewish side of you come from and also your strong attachment to your aunts and to your family?

Kalman: Yes. The Jewish side is something that obviously came from me having been to Israel. I remember I very much liked to read. Also in the kibbutz, we were forced to read a book between five and seven aloud. Most of it had to do with the Russian Revolution, but still you were able to read. You learned a few things. It was during a very, very important time. When I was in Ma’abarot, all the kids . . . that particular kibbutz was looking after the kids from the kibbutzim in the Negev that, at the time, were being surrounded by the Egyptian army. They took the kids out of there. There was a certain amount of . . . I don’t know, I felt like I belonged over there and that I had things that I had in common with them. Plus, when I was in school there, a lot of books would show the people that have fallen. I went to school with a lot of kids that came from Iraq. Those families . . . they all fell . . . some of them fell during the wars of independence. I always had that particular attachment and wanted to come back. For one reason or another, it didn’t happen . . . because I was looking after a family and all that. As far as my own family is concerned, I’ll be perfectly honest with you that the ones that really made what I am are my aunt and uncle in Vienna because they were able to teach me. You see, I was always alone. I was never really with a family. Even when my mother and father were married, they tried to keep me away as much as possible for whatever reason . . . it doesn’t really matter. My aunt and uncle to me were very important. Like Jenny, as an example, she attended my daughter’s wedding over here. My aunt and uncle . . . I saw them quite often . . . when I came to see them. They were really my . . . should I say . . . my surrogate parents.

Pola: What kind of education did you give your own children?

Kalman: Gary is now 37. He has his own business in San Francisco [California]. He went to

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60 The Russian Revolution is the collective term for a series of revolutions in Russia in 1917, which dismantled the Czarist autocracy, and led to the creation of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. The emperor was forced to abdicate, and the old regime was replaced by a provisional government in the first revolution of February 1917. The second revolution, during October, resulted in the removal of the provisional government, which was replaced by a Bolshevik (Communist) government.

61 The Negev is a 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.
Hebrew Academy here. He went to Georgia State [University]. He wanted to become a poet, but this didn’t quite work out. I’m sorry that he didn’t. He wanted to go to school to become a poet but it seemed that he did . . . he came out very well, because he is very much interested in music. That is the kind of business he is in today. Deborah, on the other hand, she went to Northwestern University, also Hebrew Academy . . . Northwestern University, graduated there. She is a mother. She is taking care of her daughter. We are very happy that we at least have one of them over here. David is more of a wanderer like me but he was the right kind of wanderer because he went to all kinds of yeshiva in Israel. I never thought that he was going to settle down. I think finally when he went to Baltimore, the yeshiva there, that did it. As a result, he graduated from Georgetown [University]. We were hoping he was going to come here. Actually, he interviewed here a few places. He did get a better deal—or what he thought was going to be a better deal and it seems right—in New Jersey. He is an attorney over there. His wife, Beth, comes from a very fine family. I don’t know that you are aware of that . . . but Rabbi Weinberger of the yeshiva, came to his wedding in New Jersey.

Pola: Did he get ordination from the yeshiva?
Kalman: No.
Pola: He just studied for a number of years there?
Kalman: Yes. He just studied for a number of years, and . . . He is a practicing attorney for, I think, the second largest legal firm in New Jersey. He’s a corporate attorney.
Pola: He is also observant, religiously observant?
Kalman: Religiously observant. Also, the family that Beth, his wife, is coming from is the same way.
Pola: When your children were growing up, did you share much of your running away from Romania and your personal history with them?
Kalman: Not really. But this is not really that unusual. I will tell you that my uncle’s family in Israel . . . my uncle . . . he married and it was . . . happened to have been a lady from Poland. She eventually wound up in Sweden. She was in a concentration camp. She wound up in Sweden.

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62 The Katherine and Jacob Greenfield Hebrew Academy was the first Jewish day school in Atlanta, and was founded in 1953.
63 Yeshiva is Hebrew for “sitting.” A Jewish religious school roughly equivalent to high school. Also, a Talmudic college for unmarried male students from their teenage years to their early twenties.
64 Rabbi Mosche Weinberger is a Chasidic rabbi, lecturer, and author. He attended Yeshiva University, a private university in New York City, where he is now a Mashpia (a spiritual mentor of person of influence).

TRANSCRIPT ID: OHC10259
She was the grandmother to my cousin’s children. Those children never knew that she wasn’t really their real grandmother. It’s a little different in Israel. I’m not saying everybody is like that. That has been my experience. Of course, now, it’s a little different. I would like to share it. Maybe a little too late, but I guess as long as somebody is alive, it’s never too late.

**Pola:** Are they interested? Have they asked you any questions about your growing up?

**Kalman:** Deborah is, primarily . . . it’s always the female side. I think David is interested. He will be more interested as he gets older. Gary is an entirely different situation. It seems, although the three children are ours . . . each one of them is an entirely different personality.

**Pola:** Then, you must have done a very good job.

**Kalman:** I may have assisted a little bit, but my wife is responsible for most. I was never here. I was always at work.

**Pola:** How many grandchildren do you have?

**Kalman:** We have three. We have Yaakov and Elie in New Jersey, and we have Stella (Kohava) here in Atlanta.

**Pola:** Who were they named after?

**Kalman:** You have me confused for a second, but it’ll come. Stella . . . first is named after my son-in-law, Bruce’s, mother who passed away some time ago. Eliezer and Yaakov are named after members of Beth, my daughter-in-law’s family members . . . Eliezer is going to be four this month. Yaakov is going to be one year old this month . . . Stella is going to be five this month. It makes it easy as far as birthdays are concerned because you can have it . . . you can kind of know . . . do it all together, basically.

**Pola:** When you chose names for your own children, were they named after anybody in particular?

**Kalman:** Yes. My son Gary is named after my father, Gershon. Deborah, we just chose that name. David is one of my favorites in the Bible, and also after somebody in Lois’s family . . . my wife’s family.

**Pola:** Do you know what happened to your father?

**Kalman:** My father was taken away by the Russians because he was a *bourgeois* [French: relating to or belonging to the middle class]. During the Soviet occupation of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina between 1940 and 1941, political persecution of certain categories of locals took the form of arrests, executions, and deportations to eastern parts of the Soviet

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65 Cuban Family Archives

TRANSCRIPT ID: OHC10259
I don’t know that it’s a city . . . it’s probably a village in Siberia, where he was living with a very poor Jewish tailor family. He wrote several letters asking for money . . . which was sent but obviously it didn’t get to him. We don’t know what happened to him. He most likely starved to death. It’s interesting because in one of his letters that is written Jewish, in Yiddish but really German . . . in other words, the words are German but it’s written in Yiddish . . . he mentions that the tailor family has a very nice young girl who was six years old. He felt that maybe I will, at one point, get to marry that particular girl. He was a lawyer as a matter of fact, but he didn’t get to practice.

Pola: Where was he educated?

Kalman: I don’t know. I would assume that he was educated right there in Czernovitz. He was really the head of the family. I remember—having had a nanny tells you part of it—I remember him taking us out to restaurants although I was three, four years old. I remember the apartment. I remember being in the temple with him. Once he was gone, my uncle took me some places . . . I just simply don’t remember any more because it was such a bad time at that particular point. I do remember that for a period of time we played German and that my language had to be pretty good in German. We were . . . my mother was going out . . . we were entertained by Nazi officers. Of course, I didn’t know what ‘Nazi’ was at the time. It was not a good time. I remember people being challenged. I remember when the Russians were there. [I remember] Jews standing in line for bread and the Russian soldier pulling his gun, showing his bullets, saying that the Jews don’t need bread, they need bullets. All that I remember, as a child. Of
course, I knew the Nazis were bad, too . . . but where we were in Braila and Bucharest, if you had money, since it was allied with the Nazis, you could get by to some degree. Of course, it was all temporary. That’s why we tried to get out and we did. You had to pay your way. Even the . . . I remember being on a train between Bucharest and . . . I remember the bombardments when you were sitting in parks. You didn’t want to stay in buildings. I remember that I was told that I must have pulled a whole piece of grass all over [me] because of the bombs coming right and left to us. It’s just . . . it’s from the eyes of a child. One other thing of interest in Israel . . . of course, when I came back, I remember everything having been so big and large. It seemed kind of small when I came for a visit because you look at it from the eyes of a child.

Pola: When you came to Atlanta, what year was that?

Kalman: We came here in 1970.

Pola: How did you feel as a newcomer to Atlanta?

Kalman: I had a recommendation and the President of the Temple\(^71\) took me around.

Pola: What do you mean by a recommendation?

Kalman: We went recommended by Lois’s . . . by my wife’s uncle. He knew people over here because he was doing business in Atlanta. The President of the Temple advised me to visit all the synagogues over here and decide where I wanted to belong . . . [We] wound up belonging to Beth Jacob\(^72\) instead of, say the Temple, or anywhere else. We have some very good friends because we were neighbors. The first people that we met over here—they lived around the corner—was Dr. and Mrs. Maxwell Eidex.\(^73\) We had immediate contact with people once we have come over here. Had I known at the time, we might have been living closer to Beth Jacob, but it was good where we are right now. We still have the same friends. Dr. and Mrs. Eidex don’t live that far from here. We got along just fine. We just fell in love with the place and with the people. We decided not to move. If I have any regrets, it’s possible that I did not bring my

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\(^71\) The Temple on Peachtree Street in Midtown Atlanta is the city’s oldest synagogue, dedicated in 1877. The main sanctuary, constructed in 1931, is on the National Register of Historic Places. The Reform congregation now totals 1500 families (2014).

\(^72\) Beth Jacob is an Orthodox synagogue on LaVista Road in Atlanta founded in 1942 by former members of Ahavath Achim who were looking for a more Orthodox congregation. Beth Jacob is now Atlanta’s largest Orthodox congregation. The first location was a converted house on Boulevard.

\(^73\) Dr. Maxwell Eidex (1938-) received his medical degree from Emory University School of Medicine and practiced internal medicine in Decatur, Georgia with his twin brother, Marshall. He is a member of Congregation Beth Jacob.
parents here earlier. They lived in Florida a long time. They had a home over there, but in order to get the health insurance, I should have had them declared as immigrants to the United States . . . but I didn’t . . . know and it’s too late. My mother died two years ago of Alzheimer’s.\footnote{Alzheimer’s is the most common form of dementia. There is no cure for the disease, which worsens as it progresses, and eventually leads to death. The early stages are difficulty remembering recent events after which comes confusion, mood swings, trouble with language, and long-term memory loss. Gradually, bodily functions are lost, which ultimately leads to death.} My father—my stepfather—died in May. He was in the hospital for a long time. He just passed away so I still have the responsibility for taking care of the probate and all that. That’s because of my brother and my sister being further away than I am. That’s it. It seems that my Aunt Jenny in Dusseldorf is the only member of the family remaining where there is any kind of connection with my own personal past.

Pola: Before she had a stroke, when you went back to visit her every year, did you talk to her about family history or about your own history? Did you try to get details from her?

Kalman: That’s not so easy. It seems that we are a wandering family. Jenny lived most of her life in Bucharest. Her sister Rachel was in Vienna. My mother was in Czernovitz. They didn’t have fast planes and discount carriers to carry you to see everybody just like that. No, we were separate. Sometimes I found out or asked things, but people didn’t tell me a lot.

Pola: When you came to Atlanta, did you get involved with any other survivor groups?

Kalman: I was for a period of time, but I really basically was in business most of the time. [I] tried . . . not so much that I tried not to think about it . . . but it was a chapter that wasn’t very pleasant. I just didn’t think much except going once a year to the cemetery to remember the people that have passed on and were annihilated during the Second World War, the Shoah.\footnote{Shoah is a Hebrew word meaning “destruction”. It became the standard Hebrew term for the murder of European Jewry as early as the early 1940s and is still used in place of the more generalized term “Holocaust”.}

Pola: At any one point, did you become more involved as a survivor?

Kalman: Belonging to Beth Jacob and meeting some of the people who may have had, if not the same type of experiences, but similar-type experiences, made me think of it a little more. As a result, I tried to get back to my past and see what positive can be gleaned from that.

Pola: Looking at your past, your middle, and your present, what are the things that you are most proud of in your life?

Kalman: For one thing, I would not want to have any intermarriage, definitely. I am very happy that my children have not gone to that particular issue. Obviously, I am concerned about
what is going to be the future of the Jewish people in the galut, because of what is going on: that 50 percent of the Jewish people are going to intermarry. I don’t care that they are believers or non-believers. There is a saying in Hebrew which says, “K’shim gerim l’Yisrael k’sepachat.”

**Pola:** Do you want to translate?

**Kalman:** I thought you guys knew it. That means, “there is a little worm that goes through a very strong . . . that can spread and make a stone break apart.”

**Pola:** In that sense, I gather that you feel a sense of ease about . . . the choices that your children have made?

**Kalman:** The way things are, yes . . . right.

**Pola:** In the context of this being a legacy project, what do you see your role being in that legacy for your family, for your mother, your father, your grandfather’s family (we didn’t talk about your grandparents)?

**Kalman:** If I could, I would like to help out those people that are in need. I was thinking of that. When I say ‘need,’ I mean all the people that are in homes whose children may not understand it as much as I do. Those people that are sick or that have dementia. Nobody looks after them or can understand. I don’t say that nobody can understand . . . that’s really not true. I would like to be a little bit more understanding and more helpful to people who can’t help themselves.

**Pola:** Is that something that you are thinking you might do on a voluntary basis after you retire?

**Kalman:** Yes.

**Pola:** Are there any other things that you would like to add that have come to your mind as we have spoken?

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76 Jewish leaders have historically looked upon intermarriage of Jews and non-Jews with very strong disfavor and it remains a controversial issue among them today. According to a nationwide survey called The National Jewish Population Survey 2000-2001: Strength, Challenge and Diversity in the American Jewish Population, which was conducted by the United Jewish Communities, 47 percent of Jews marrying between 1996 and 2001 married non-Jews.

77 The Mishnah, which is a collection of Jewish rabbinic teachings, discusses this reference to a worm used to cut stone in relation to the construction of the Temple built by Solomon. Jewish teachings indicated that the stone for the Temple’s construction could not be cut with metal tools. Abot 5:5, states “the shamir is a small creature which saws the large stones in passing over them, and with it Solomon built the Temple.” The Mishnah is a part of the Talmud, which is the central text of Rabbinic Judaism. The Talmud is the basis for all codes of Jewish law.

78 Dementia is a general term for a decline in mental ability severe enough to interfere with daily life. Memory loss is an example. Alzheimer’s is the most common type of dementia.

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Kalman: Religiously, I would like to . . . it’s not so much of being more or less observant . . . I would like to be more involved. The only thing that I do understand or that I can read real good is the Tanakh, but there is a lot more to it. I have not been able . . . either not been able to or not cared enough to take advantage of it in the past.

Pola: You are thinking that you might devote some of your retirement time to study?

Kalman: Yes. I don’t exactly say that I want to be in a yeshiva, but I can get along quite well. I might try it. It might not hurt.

Pola: Have you gone to any survivor meetings or events?

Kalman: I have attended some. There was one function in New York. I have received invitations to others. I felt that my experiences were not as stark or as serious as some of the other people that I met. I did not . . . I was not in any type of concentration camp. However, the other issue was that most of the other people that I have met were in some type of friendly countries, like Belgium, where they had more help . . . Belgium, France and all that. I did not meet too many people that have been through Romania or the area from Eastern Europe that I am coming from. I did not see that much affinity for my own type situation that others may have felt. I will tell you my first experience as the Director of Catering of the Marriott in Atlanta. There was a major international convention. The chairman was from Alberta, Canada. The first words [he said] to me as a Director of Catering at the Marriott was, “I just don’t want to see any Eastern European types having any tables outside that convention.” I smiled and I said, “Unfortunately, you have to deal with one right now, face-to-face.”

Pola: What do you think he meant by that?

Kalman: He meant he did not want to see any Jewish people over there . . . selling any trinkets.

Pola: Thank you very much.

Kalman: You’re welcome.

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79 The Tanakh, also known as Mikra [Hebrew: reading], is the canon of the Hebrew Bible. The word is an acronym of the first Hebrew letter of each of the text’s three traditional subdivisions: Torah (“Teaching,” also known as the Five Books of Moses), Nevi’im (“Prophets”), and Ketuvim (“Writings”). The books of the Tanakh were passed on by each generation, and according to rabbinic tradition, were accompanied by an oral tradition, called the Oral Torah.

80 In Belgium, there was considerable support for resistance to the German occupation. The Belgian civilian administration refused to cooperate in Nazi deportations. While the Germans deported nearly 25,000 Jews between 1942 and 1944, over 25,000 Belgian Jews avoided deportation by hiding from German authorities. In France, public outcry over the brutality of roundups and the reluctance of French officials to comply with German demands for the deportation of French citizens saved the lives of many Jews. Nevertheless, nearly 77,000 Jews (2/3 of whom were foreign refugees) were deported from French territories.
Pola: I appreciate the time and openness in your sharing your story with us. I hope you will, from this, take up and do some writing as memories open up to you and fill in the details.

Kalman: Thank you very much for coming over here.

INTERVIEW ENDS

<End Disk 1>