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ESTHER AND HERBERT TAYLOR
JEWISH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT OF ATLANTA
AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE**

MEMOIRIST: VICTOR D. MASLIA
INTERVIEWER: LEONARD COHEN
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<Begin Tape 1, Side 1>

INTERVIEW BEGINS

COHEN: <Begins in progress> Road, NW for the Jewish Oral History Project of Atlanta co-sponsored by the American Jewish Committee, the Atlanta Jewish Federation, and the National Council of Jewish Women. Tell me what you recall of your grandparents here in Atlanta, including things where they lived, their occupation, where they were born, and any of the stories that you recall about the history of the family, how they sometimes recount them.

MASLIA: I was very fortunate because I remember all four of my grandparents. They were all born in Turkey. My grandparents on my mother's side were Ham [Abraham] and Rebecca Cohen. Moved from Turkey to Havana, Cuba. They came to this country with my mother when my mother was about 16 or 17 around 1920. My father's parents, Victoria and Abraham Maslia, were born in Turkey, moved to the Island of Rhodes, and then came to this country in 1939. My mother's mother, that is, my grandmother Rebecca Cohen, died in 1937. My grandmother on my father's side, Victoria, died in 1941. I remember that vividly because it was the week before my *bar mitzvah*.¹ Everything was canceled.

COHEN: It was a sad time.

MASLIA: A very sad time. I had no part in it but everybody else did. That was a very minor thing. But she died in 1941. My grandfather's . . .

COHEN: You were close to her?

MASLIA: She had only been in this country for a couple of years. She happened to live with

¹ 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.

us. When she died, she and my grandfather lived in our house on Central Avenue. My mother's father died in 1942 or 3. My other grandfather, my father's father, Abraham Maslia died in 1947 while I was in the army. Strangely enough, the way I found out, they didn't want to tell me, was that I read it in the newspaper when I was in Seoul, Korea, 1947. That's how I found out my grandfather died. They didn't want to upset me, so, they never told me, but I used to get the paper there. As I said, coincidentally, they were all born in Turkey. My father [David Maslia] came here early around 1916 or 15, something like that. My mother [Rachel Maslia] came here later around 1920 or 21. They met here because it was a very small Sephardic² community here in Atlanta at that time. That's how they met. They were married in 1926. I was born in 1928.

COHEN: How many siblings did you have?

MASLIA: I have two brothers.

COHEN: What are their names?

MASLIA: I have two brothers, one is Albert Maslia and Danny Maslia. All three of us still live in Atlanta. We are all still very close. My brothers are fairly successful. All three of us graduated from Emory University. The ironic part of it is, two of us went to Emory on the G.I. Bill.³ That was Danny and myself. Albert got a four-year scholarship. All three of us graduated from Emory without having to pay tuition because we couldn't have. Danny is president of the largest private credit union in this area that's Associated Credit Union. Albert, after 25 years as vice-president of Rich's [Department Store],⁴ resigned and opened up a chain of stores called Social Expressions, which primarily is gift and card shops. Most of them are located in big malls throughout the city of Atlanta. I've been in the real estate business since the middle 1950s. That's a brief history of the family. I have four children now. My son, Richard, just turned 25. [I have] three married daughters. Two live in Atlanta and one is living in Houston, Texas. One daughter is Donna Chimberoff. She works for me in my office. Another daughter, Angela Weiland is married to Skip Weiland who has a printing business with his brother here in Atlanta.

² Sephardic Jews are the Jews of Spain, Portugal, North Africa and the Middle East and their descendants. The adjective "Sephardic" and corresponding nouns Sephardi (singular) and Sephardim (plural) are derived from the Hebrew word '*Sepharad*,' which refers to Spain. Historically, the vernacular language of Sephardic Jews was *Ladino*, a Romance language derived from Old Spanish, incorporating elements from the old Romance languages of the Iberian Peninsula, Hebrew, Aramaic, and in the lands receiving those who were exiled, Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, Greek, Bulgarian and Serbo-Croatian vocabulary.

³ The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, also known as the 'G.I. Bill,' was a law that provided a range of benefits for returning World War II veterans. It provides low-cost mortgages, low-interest loans to start a business, as well as educational assistance to service members, veterans, and their dependents.

⁴ Rich's Department Store was a department store retail chain, headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia, that operated in the southern U.S. from 1867 until March 6, 2005 when the nameplate was eliminated and replaced by Macy's.

And the third daughter, Elena, married a young attorney in Houston, Texas, by the name of Kenny Marks. She is an attorney in Houston, but she doesn't practice law anymore. She opened up an employment agency for lawyers. She does very well. She has two children. Angie has two children. Donna doesn't have any as yet.

COHEN: A little earlier you mentioned Central Avenue. Do you have any recollection of life on Central Avenue?

MASLIA: I have plenty of it.

COHEN: Can you kind of draw a picture?

MASLIA: If you had come in my carport, you would have seen an old street sign that said Central Avenue.

COHEN: I noticed that when I came in, as a matter of fact.

MASLIA: Those street signs were part of the city street signs going back to 1920 and 1930s. When I was on city council, well let's say I borrowed two signs. One says Pryor Street and one says Central Avenue.

<Interview pauses, then resumes>

MASLIA: We were talking about Central Avenue and Pryor Street. Actually, I was born in the old Piedmont Hospital, which was located where the stadium⁵ now is, in 1928. All three of us were born there.

COHEN: That was the Jewish area.

MASLIA: That was the Jewish area, Washington Street, Capitol Avenue, Central Avenue, Pryor Street. Most of the Sephardic Jews lived on Central Avenue and Pryor Street. Our synagogue was located on Central and Woodward Avenue. That's part of the freeway system now. I was born, as I say, in the hospital. Then we lived at 555 Pryor Street. The reason I remember that so well is because the house is still standing.

COHEN: Is it really?

MASLIA: A friend of mine, Jack Spielberg, owns it and he wants to sell it to me but I passed on that house because there's not much left. It was pretty old when we lived there. We all grew

⁵ Turner Field was a baseball park located in Atlanta, Georgia. From 1997 until 2016, it served as the home ballpark to the Atlanta Braves of Major League Baseball (MLB). Originally built as Centennial Olympic Stadium in 1996 to serve as the centerpiece of the 1996 Summer Olympics, the stadium was converted into a baseball park to serve as the new home for the Braves. Turner Field was located less than one block from the site of the Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium, their home ballpark from 1966 to 1996. When the Braves moved to a new stadium, SunTrust Park, which opened in north Atlanta in 2016, the stadium was reconfigured for the second time, redesigned for college football as Georgia State Stadium.

up there.

COHEN: A lot of memories.

MASLIA: Yes, a lot of memories. Within three blocks, about half of the synagogue [congregants] lived in that area there. We all grew up there. One thing that is amazing when I look back today, we were all poor, but we just didn't know it. I grew up in the [Great] Depression⁶ years and so did my brother. I was born in 1928, and the depression came in 1931, 1932, 1933. I'm four, five, and six. I didn't know anything about a depression. All I know is that I was a happy child growing up. I had good parents, very caring. My father had a little shoe repair shop on <unintelligible>. Barely made enough to exist, but we did. My mother was very frugal.

COHEN: On what street?

MASLIA: On Auburn [Avenue]. That's where he had his shoe repair shop. We all grew up together. All Sephardic Jews in that same neighborhood, practically. There may be a few who lived on Washington Street but most of them lived on Central Avenue and Pryor Street.

COHEN: Your mother didn't work?

MASLIA: No, no she had enough to do with us.

COHEN: I'm sure.

MASLIA: She barely could speak English. Growing up, I think I learned Spanish before I learned English because my folks at home spoke Spanish. They didn't speak English as much as the normal people.

COHEN: Ladino.⁷

MASLIA: That's right. So, we grew up speaking Spanish. My Spanish is not bad today. I can understand it, but back then I could understand it and speak it better than I can now. My mother, I think, learned English from us as we were going to school. That was part of our growing up. All of us lived together, as I say. The synagogue was only about a ten-minute walk from the house. The Ashkenazi⁸ synagogue [Ahavath Achim Congregation]⁹ was on

⁶ The Great Depression was a severe worldwide economic depression in the decade preceding World War II. The time of the Great Depression varied across nations, but in most countries it started in about 1929 and lasted until the late 1930s or early 1940s. It was the longest, most widespread, and deepest depression of the twentieth century

⁷ Also known as 'Judeo-Spanish,' Ladino is a Romance language derived from Old Spanish originally spoken in the former territories of the Ottoman Empire (the Balkans, Turkey, the Middle East, and North Africa) as well as in France, Italy, the Netherlands, Morocco, and the United Kingdom. Today, Ladino is spoken mainly by Sephardic minorities in more than 30 countries.

⁸ Ashkenazi is an ethnic division of Jews which formed in the Holy Roman Empire in the early 1000's. They established communities in Central and Eastern Europe.

⁹ Ahavath Achim Congregation (often referred to as "AA") was organized in 1886 as Congregation Ahawas Achim

Washington Street, the big one.

COHEN: Was that very far away?

MASLIA: Another ten-minute walk, fifteen-minute walk. We very rarely went up there. For some reason or another we thought they had their synagogues and we had ours. We felt a little uncomfortable, there for no reason. They didn't make us feel uncomfortable. We just felt that way. The memories that I have of Atlanta growing up is that the German Jews were the first ones here in Atlanta. They came in the 1800s. The Russian Jews followed in the early 1900s. Then we followed around 1915 to 1920, 1925, something like that. I think that each group stood on its own. Now, things are different. I don't even know who is a Russian Jew, who is a German Jew, who is *Ashkenaz*. I don't even know anymore. You know my wife is Ashkenazi, or was. She would not say that now but, she was. She was a member of the AA [Ahavath Achim] synagogue and was one of the first *bat mitzvahs*¹⁰ there back in 1943 or 1944.

COHEN: You mean that there was much less distinction made at that time?

MASLIA: No. There was more distinction then than there is now.

COHEN: Yes, that's what I meant.

MASLIA: Now, I don't even know one from another. We were the first generation and we mixed better. Our parents were interested in one thing, and that was raising a family and making a living. They didn't care about anything else.

COHEN: To survive.

MASLIA: That's all. That was their main function in life. Growing up on the south side was . . . once in a while I'll take a car and go back down there because I like to see my old house. It's

(Brotherly Love) and is Atlanta's second oldest Jewish congregation. Organized by Jews of Eastern European descent, the congregation's founding members felt uncomfortable in the established Hebrew Benevolent Congregation (The Temple) comprised primarily of Jews from Germany, who by the late 1800s had begun to liberalize their Orthodox doctrine. Originally located in a rented room at 106 Gilmer Street, the congregation would make a succession of moves, to 120 Gilmer Street, to a hall on Decatur Street in 1895, to its first building in 1901 on the corner of Gilmer Street and Piedmont Avenue, to its second building on Washington Street in 1921, and finally, to its present location on Peachtree Battle Avenue in 1958. Four different Rabbis, Rabbi Mayerovitz (1901 – 1905); Rabbi Joseph Meyer Levine (1905 – 1915); Rabbi Yood (1915 – 1919); and Rabbi A.P. Hirmes (1919 – 1928) provided spiritual leadership for Ahavath Achim until 1928, when Rabbi Harry H. Epstein was hired as Rabbi. He retained that position for the next 50 years. Rabbi Epstein became Rabbi Emeritus in 1986 and was succeeded by Rabbi Arnold Goodman. During the early years of Rabbi Epstein's tenure, he slowly made innovations and modifications in congregational activities. By 1952, Ahavath Achim joined the Conservative Movement, with the most noticeable shift from Orthodoxy being the gradual change to mixed seating. Today, Ahavath Achim Congregation is the largest Conservative congregation in Atlanta.

¹⁰ Hebrew for 'daughter of commandment.' A rite of passage for Jewish girls aged 12 years and one day according to her Hebrew birthday. Many girls have their *bat mitzvah* around age 13, the same as boys who have their *bar mitzvah* at that age. She is now duty bound to keep the commandments. Synagogue ceremonies are held for *bat mitzvah* girls in Reform and Conservative communities, but it has not won the universal approval of Orthodox rabbis.

a lot smaller than I remember it, obviously.

COHEN: Have you ever gone through it?

MASLIA: No. I wanted to.

COHEN: Does somebody live there?

MASLIA: Yes, it's rented out. I'm sure there are two or three families. There were two families living there when we were living there. My uncle lived downstairs with my mother's parents. We lived upstairs. We had my mother, my father, and the three boys. We had maybe two bedrooms. Again, we didn't know we were crowded. Who knew? We were happy.

COHEN: It was normal then.

MASLIA: Yes, of course it was normal. Everybody had the same thing. One of the things I remember about the house is, believe it or not, is gas light. The gas jets were still there. We had electric lights but the gas jets were still there. That was a long time ago. My first memories would have been about 1932, 1933, something like that. Maybe even 1934. I remember the gas jets in that house. The gas was not operable. We were a close-knit community. As I say, our synagogue was important to us. We went to Hebrew school. I listen to these kids today gripe and complain about Hebrew school. We went five days a week. We went on Sundays to Sunday school. Never thought anything of it. Today, they go twice a week, and they complain all of the time. The parents complain more than the children. I really believe that. I listen to these parents complaining. "We have to take them in carpools." Of course, we were walking. It didn't bother us. Back in those days you could walk. We walked everywhere. It didn't bother anything. But five days a week we went to Hebrew school. And we went in the summer. We went every day in the summer. Our rabbi came to us in 1934, I believe, or 1933. Rabbi [Joseph] Cohen.¹¹ He was the first rabbi we knew. He was there for . . . until 1960s. He lived on Washington Street. He would walk to synagogue, and we would walk to synagogue. <Unintelligible> we called him. I found out later on meant village. That was our heritage. I'll tell you another good thing about it. Growing up, I am still close to so many of those boys and girls that grew up on that side of town. I mean I see them every day.

COHEN: You shared a great deal.

¹¹ Rabbi Joseph Cohen received his training for the rabbinate in Turkey and accepted his first pulpit in Havana, Cuba in 1920, where he was spiritual leader of the Congregation Union Hebraic de Cuba. In 1934, he moved to Atlanta, Georgia, and was installed as Rabbi of Congregation Or Ve Shalom three days after his arrival. In addition to his rabbinical duties, he served as the teacher and principal of Or Ve Shalom's Hebrew school. Rabbi Cohen was also active at the Atlanta Bureau of Jewish Education, the Adult Institute of Jewish Studies, the Atlanta Jewish Federation, and was the first president of the Atlanta Rabbinical Association. Rabbi Cohen retired in 1969 and died in 1985.

MASLIA: Sure. In fact, last week we went to Hilton Head [South Carolina]. Ten guys. Of the ten, eight of them were born here and grew up here and went to the same synagogue and still go to the same synagogue. This is 50 or 60 years later.

COHEN: That's wonderful.

MASLIA: That's very close. We are still very close together.

COHEN: What other significant memories can you recall of life there?

MASLIA: I've been working since I was nine. It wasn't for pin money. It was working because we needed the money in the house. I used to go door to door and sell magazines from the time I was nine, then newspapers, and the football colors which you can't do today. Newspaper routes. All three of us worked. It was not because we wanted to work, necessarily. We always did want to work, but it was a necessity. We had to bring some money into the house. We just turned it over to our mother, and she knew how to handle the money. When I hear these kids talk about working today and they need it for their cars . . . to be very frank, we didn't even have a car. We rented a house. We didn't even own a house. In fact, I think I'm the first person in my family to even drive a car. That wasn't until I was 19 that I even bought my first car. We had no car, but we didn't miss it. We could catch the streetcar. We could walk anywhere we wanted to go. Today, there's the element of safety and fear involved in everything we do. Unfortunately, we convey that to our children, too, or grandchildren, in my case.

COHEN: Do you feel there's been any change? Today, there are generally more material things like cars. Do you feel that there was any change in the value structure of what they had as poor people then and if you look at it and try to look at both then and now in terms of what happens and the closeness, do you see any change?

MASLIA: I'm sure there is a change. You have to remember, growing up we didn't know we were poor. We didn't know about these material things that other people had. We didn't even think about a car. It never bothered me that we didn't have a car. That was just part of it. We never knew anything about air conditioning. I use that as an example. I mean, how many people did you know who had conditioning back in the 1930s. I guess a little education can't be bad for you. I'm sure that material things today are more important. We see things, and there are more things that people covet. I like to believe that we had a simple life. I know we had a simple life. We couldn't afford anything else, but it was a happy life. I'm sure my folks had a hard time. Listen, I can remember times when we had nothing but corn muffins and milk for supper. I enjoyed it. I liked it. I didn't know that you were supposed to have meat. As far as I'm

concerned, you're not supposed to have meat three times a day or anything like that. We didn't. I don't think that I'm run down or anything.

COHEN: Do you think people are happier today?

MASLIA: No, no, no. Especially on children. I see too many pressures on children today that I don't think we had when we were growing up. I think most people would agree. We didn't have the little leagues. We didn't have all those extracurricular activities that they now have in schools and in social life. We didn't have any of that. Our life revolved around our home and our synagogues every afternoon for Hebrew school. We would work when we could from the age of nine on. We enjoyed. We did some things that other kids . . . we played ball. Maybe we were mischievous a little bit. I can tell you some history about a few little things we did when we were wrong, but they were not malicious. For example, Halloween is coming in a couple of days. Now they talk about, "Don't give your kids . . . be sure you check the fruit they get and the candy because of all the poison." We never thought of things like that. I don't ever remember trick or treating when I was a kid anyway. I just remember going out and throwing acorns around town. That's about all I remember.

COHEN: Now you've got to x-ray the candy.

MASLIA: That's right. Isn't that pitiful? But that's what they tell you. Because of one kook running loose somewhere, you've got to be careful of all those things. I don't know, times have changed. But our kids are growing up not knowing anything else, so, to them I guess this is a normal way of life. We think differently.

COHEN: You mentioned that you were close to other members of the family, your brothers.

MASLIA: Still are. We're still close.

COHEN: Do they live in a close proximity to you?

MASLIA: In Atlanta, everybody thinks it's a big city, it's really not. One brother lives about five minutes away from me. The other one is about 15 minutes away. We see each other and talk to each other at least once a week. We're still very close. We're also close to other members of the synagogue. I mean, people we grew up with. It's hard for people to understand that, especially those who have just moved to Atlanta, how we can still remain so close. We've had arguments and disputes but, so what.

COHEN: It's almost like a family.

MASLIA: It is a family.

COHEN: Even though you may not be related by blood, although you get to be.

MASLIA: When something happens to one of our members, it hurts. One of my good friends was killed about 12 years ago on the day of my son's *bar mitzvah*. Do you remember Mr.

Galanty? That tore us all up.

COHEN: Yes, sure. The one that was shot?

MASLIA: That's right. The funeral was the day of my son's *bar mitzvah*. It just tore us all up because we're all so close. Some of us, I was married in 1950. Some of my friends [married] outside the faith. I didn't marry a Sephardic girl. Back then, we were already breaking up and marrying Ashkenazis and Sephardics. It didn't make any difference back then. We were already changing. Growing up, I remember another thing that was very important in our lives was the Jewish Alliance which is a forerunner to the Jewish Community Center.¹² That was on Capitol Avenue, about a ten-minute walk from my house. We used to love to go up there and play basketball. They welcomed us. If we didn't have the money to pay, it didn't make any difference to them.

COHEN: Was that an important element in the life of the Atlanta Jewish?

MASLIA: Very important.

COHEN: Tell me a little bit more about that.

MASLIA: The Jewish Alliance was located on Capitol Avenue. This is where all the boys and girls used to congregate every Sunday. Most of those clubs began when we were about 11 or 12. I think AZA¹³ started when you were about 12 or 13. I don't remember the exact age, but that was just part of our whole lives, all of us. Every Jew in Atlanta used to go to the Alliance. This is going back to the 1930s and 1940s. It meant a lot to us because that was the place where they had basketball and softball. They had other activities.

COHEN: Describe the Alliance.

MASLIA: As I remember it now, it was an older building located . . .

COHEN: A house or a building?

MASLIA: A building. It was located about five minutes from the present state capitol. The capitol was there then, too. In the back of the Alliance was a gymnasium where we used to play basketball. The reason I remember that gymnasium so well, when it got cold, it was cold in that

¹² Atlanta Jewish Community Center was officially founded in 1910, as the Jewish Educational Alliance. In the late 1940's it evolved into the Atlanta Jewish Community Center and moved to Peachtree Street. It stayed there until 1998, when the building was sold and the center moved to Dunwoody. In 2000, it was renamed the 'Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta.'

¹³ The Grand Order of the Aleph Zadik Aleph (AZA) is an international youth-led fraternal organization for Jewish teenagers, founded in 1924. It currently exists as the male wing of B'nai B'rith Youth Organization, an independent non-profit organization. AZA's sister organization, for teenage girls, is the B'nai B'rith Girls (BBG).

gym. There was no way to heat that place up. All we did was play basketball a little faster, that's all, just to keep warm. In the building itself, there was an upstairs where they had dancing for the older kids. Downstairs, they had ping pong. They had a shower room. I remember the shower because every time somebody took a shower . . . I remember the hot water. If they turn on the hot water, the guy in the next stall would get cold. There were no stalls. It was a happy, happy life.

COHEN: Was Ed Kahn¹⁴ the executive director?

MASLIA: Ed Kahn was the executive director. Then we moved from there to the present community center. That would have been in the 1940s sometime. I don't remember when that community center was built. When I got out of the army in 1948, the Jewish Alliance was still there because we had our services in the synagogue. We were in the process of moving from Central Avenue to Highland Avenue, so we had our services there. I remember that very well. But the old Alliance was a very important part. If you're going to talk to people who were born here and grew up in the 1930s, they will remember the Alliance better or as well as I did.

COHEN: What role do you think it played in the Jewish community?

<Interview pauses, then resumes>

MASLIA: You asked me what role it played?

COHEN: What role did the [Jewish] Educational Alliance¹⁵ play in the life of the general community as well as the Jewish community?

MASLIA: It kept us Jewish. It kept us from having to go elsewhere to play basketball or doing things. We did things as Jews. That was very important. One rule they had up there that I remember vividly, in the high schools in the city of Atlanta, they had basketball and football

¹⁴ Edward M. Kahn (1895-1984) was an immigrant from Bialystok, Poland. He became a leader in Atlanta's Jewish community and served as executive director of several organizations including the Jewish Educational Alliance (presently: Atlanta Jewish Community Center), the Atlanta Jewish Welfare Fund, and the Atlanta Federation of Jewish Social Service (presently: Atlanta Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta), an earlier incarnation of the current Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta and the Morris Hirsch Clinic (presently: Ben Massell Dental Clinic). Mr. Kahn also became Executive Secretary of the Atlanta Jewish Welfare Fund and of the Atlanta Jewish Community Council. He held these various positions until his retirement in 1964. Kahn was prominent in both local and national social work organizations as well as in Jewish organizations such as B'nai B'rith, the Jewish Children's Bureau, the Jewish Home and the Atlanta Bureau of Jewish Education. He also worked with *Southern Israelite* as a writer and adviser.

¹⁵ The Jewish Educational Alliance (JEA) operated from 1910 to 1948 on the site where the Atlanta- Fulton County Stadium was located. The JEA was once the hub of Jewish life in Atlanta. Families congregated there for social, educational, sports and cultural programs. The JEA ran camps and held classes to help some new residents learn to read and write English. For newcomers, it became a refuge, with Temple Sinai programs to help them acclimate to a new home. The JEA stayed at that site until the late 1940's, when it evolved into the Atlanta Jewish Community Center and moved to Peachtree Street. It stayed there until 1998, when the building was sold and the center moved to Dunwoody. In 2000, it was renamed the 'Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta.'

teams. There was a rule that if you played with the Jewish Alliance, you could not play with the local high school basketball teams. I don't know whose rule it was, but almost every Jew in this city that played basketball, and there were some good ones, would not play on their high school teams. They would rather play at the Jewish Alliance. That shows you the cohesiveness that we had in our community. That remains very vivid.

COHEN: Why was that?

MASLIA: I don't remember why the rule was established or who established the rule whether it was the public schools or the Alliance. I don't remember which one established that rule. But it was a rule that you could not be in both.

COHEN: They wanted to play the Jewish group.

MASLIA: They wanted to play with the Jewish groups. They had AZA groups. We had a little Sephardic group. Our basketball skills were not as well as some of the others, but we had a good time. This was when we were teenagers, 13, 14, 15. That was a rule.

COHEN: Did boys and girls participate at the Alliance?

MASLIA: There were girl's teams, too. Yes.

COHEN: It was also a social thing?

MASLIA: That's how we met a lot of the girls up there.

COHEN: So, you met girls.

MASLIA: A lot of girls' clubs were there. Another thing, the girls' clubs, AZA chapters, and some of the boy's clubs all had their meetings there. Sometimes when you didn't play ball, you would go up there for your meeting and you would mix and you would meet them. In fact, I met my wife at one of those girls clubs functions, not at the Alliance but somewhere else. I don't remember. It was on a hayride. That's right. That's how so many of us met each other through that Alliance. It was a meeting place for the kids. It was just wonderful. It kept us off the streets, first of all. It gave us that sense of identification.

COHEN: Do you have any recollection . . . you first talked about the Or Ve Shalom¹⁶ group, not because they didn't invite you to some of the others, but they felt more comfortable in their own group. Was there any intermixing between the various synagogues at any level and if not then, later on? What was the evolution of any kind?

¹⁶ Or VeShalom was established by refugees of the Ottoman Empire, namely from Turkey and the Isle of Rhodes. The Sephardic/Traditional congregation began in 1920 and was based at Central and Woodward Avenues until 1948 when it moved to a larger building on North Highland Road. The current building for Or VeShalom is on North Druid Hills Road.

MASLIA: There was some mixing. Some of our members belonged to other synagogues if they happened to live near there. We had a couple of professional people, doctors and so forth, who were members of another synagogue, the AA especially. I don't think we had anyone who was a member of the Reform¹⁷ synagogue, the Temple.¹⁸ But we did have members who were there at the Ahavath Achim Synagogue, not very many but a few. Mostly we stuck together.

COHEN: Did they impact at any point on the development of the other either this way or that way?

MASLIA: I think the change came after World War II¹⁹ when the boys all came back from the service. They were all together. Life changed at that point. I was in the service.

COHEN: Can you tell me about your military? When you went in? How you went in? What you did?

MASLIA: I graduated from high school in January, 1946. The war was over in August of 1945. I graduated from Commercial High School here in Atlanta. Commercial High School was one of the four city high schools that was designed to train students for bookkeeping, typing, who were going straight into the work field, not into college. That's where my plans were because my folks could not send me to college. So, from January until June I worked here in Atlanta for the federal government. It was the <unintelligible> administration, counting all the inventory that was left after the war. In September of 1946, I joined the army, which was about a month before the G.I. Bill expired.

COHEN: You volunteered?

MASLIA: I volunteered because it gave me 18 months in the service, and it gave me three

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ The Temple, or 'Hebrew Benevolent Congregation,' is Atlanta's oldest Jewish congregation. The cornerstone was laid on the Temple on Garnett Street in 1875. The dedication was held in 1877 and the Temple was located there until 1902. The Temple's next location on Pryor Street was dedicated in 1902. The Temple's current location in Midtown on Peachtree Street was dedicated in 1931. The main sanctuary is on the National Register of Historic Places. The Reform congregation now totals approximately 1,500 families (2015).

¹⁹ World War II (often abbreviated to WWII or WW2), also known as the Second World War, was a global war that lasted from 1939 to 1945, although related conflicts began earlier. It involved the vast majority of the world's countries—including all of the great powers—eventually forming two opposing military alliances: the Allies and the Axis. It was the most widespread war in history, and directly involved more than 100 million people from over 30 countries. Marked by mass deaths of civilians, including the Holocaust (in which approximately 6 million Jews were killed) and the strategic bombing of industrial and population centers (in which approximately one million were killed, and which included the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki), it resulted in an estimated 50 million to 85 million fatalities. These made World War II the deadliest conflict in human history.

years of college.

COHEN: Was that the main reason?

MASLIA: That was the only reason.

COHEN: To get your college degree because you couldn't have it any other way.

MASLIA: I couldn't go any other way. I had no reason not to go in. I enlisted by myself. When I say by myself, there were supposed to be a couple of guys going with me, but they didn't show up at the recruiting office that morning, so, there I was all alone. That was in September of 1946. In November, I was shipped to Korea. This was before the Korean War.²⁰ The Korean war didn't break out until 1950. I went to Korea in 1946. We were in the occupation troops <unintelligible> World War II because Japan had occupied Korea. I stayed in Korea until January, 1948. Came back in February of 1948. I was enrolled in Emory University in March of 1948 and graduated in . . .

COHEN: Under the G.I. Bill?

MASLIA: Under the G.I. Bill. Graduated in June of 1951.

COHEN: In what field?

MASLIA: I was a journalism major, but I was an advertising major within the journalism department. The G.I. Bill allowed me to go to Emory University. I had to pay for only one quarter because the G.I. Bill covered everything else except for one quarter. That was all I had to pay. When I came out, I immediately started working on weekends. I was in the [Army] Reserves. I met my wife a few months after I got back from Korea. That would have been probably March of 1948. In September of 1950, we were married. I still had one year of school to go.

COHEN: It was the year before you finished. What do you remember of the Jewish experience in terms of going into military service and/or among your friends?

MASLIA: You mean while I was in the army?

COHEN: Yes, during the period when you first went in and even preceding and immediately thereafter, around the Atlanta area.

MASLIA: I was the only one from the Atlanta area that enlisted. I mean the only Jewish boy from Atlanta. I met several while I was overseas. To be very honest, we didn't go to too many

²⁰ The Korean War began when North Korean forces invaded South Korea on June 25, 1950. American troops entered the war in defense of the Republic of Korea to the south against the Soviet-backed Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the north. Fighting ended on July 27, 1953, when an armistice agreement was signed maintaining a border between the Koreas near the 38th Parallel and creating the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between the two Korean nations that still exists today.

services. We were stuck way out in an island in the middle of nowhere in Korea. I went to a few services but not very many. I never received. I went straight from Atlanta to Korea and Korea back. There was no in between.

COHEN: So, there weren't too many Jewish fellows serving. As far as the numbers leaving from Atlanta, you were . . .

MASLIA: Not then. Remember this was 1946. This was after the war. Everybody was coming back.

COHEN: It was either during World War II that there was a large influx or maybe towards the real Korean conflict.

MASLIA: That's right. A lot of them went in in 1950. I had already been in in 1950, so I was not called back up even though I was in the reserves. I had already served my term.

COHEN: I see.

MASLIA: In 1946, that's when everybody was getting out. When I went in, there weren't too many recruits then because . . . now that I look back, it was a good thing that I did. Had I not enlisted in 1946, I would have been drafted in 1950.

COHEN: How would you describe your military experience as so far as its impact on you?

MASLIA: The only impact it had on me was that it taught me that I don't ever want to go back into the service. That was the impact. Korea was not exactly Tokyo or New York City. Where I was, it was out in the quonset huts out in the sticks somewhere.

COHEN: Was it cold?

MASLIA: Cold. We got there in November or December of 1946. I think it was something like three or four degrees below zero. I mean, a boy coming from the south, that's awfully cold. Think it's cold coming from the north for that matter. We didn't have that much clothing, but we got used to it quickly. The only impact the service had on me, it sure taught me a good lesson. When I was in high school, I learned to type. When I got over there in Korea, there were very few men who could type. Because of that, I was able to become the company clerk, and I had inside duty and not outside duty.

COHEN: In a key position.

MASLIA: It was a nice thing to know. Most people who were in the army really don't remember the bad things. They remember the fun that they had. There weren't that many but we do remember them. Korea was not exactly the place to be.

COHEN: So you came home and you got married.

MASLIA: No, I went to school and then I got married two years later.

COHEN: A year before you finished you got married. Then once you completed school, tell me about your life.

MASLIA: Once I completed school then I went to work. I was working as a trainee at the Kroger stores, ultimately, hoped to move up the chain. I frankly realized that after about a year there, I was going nowhere. First of all, there was no room for the Jewish boys in the higher management. That I knew. I found that out real quick. You can call it discrimination. Call it whatever you want to, but they were not going to move.

COHEN: That's the way it was.

MASLIA: That's the way it was. Back then, there were no kids in the banking business. People tell me, a lot of my gentile²¹ friends, and I have many of them, thank goodness, ask me why so many Jews are doctors, lawyers, professional people. They don't understand when I say, "Look, we didn't have the opportunities in the 1940s and the 1950s that we have today." We did not have the opportunity to work for General Motors and move up the ladder. We had to shift ourselves, and the way to do it was to be your own boss. They don't understand that. Anyway, when I went to work for Kroger, I was there for a year. Then I went to work for a couple of other places. Then a friend of mine called me and wanted to know if I wanted to go into business with him. He was already in business. I went in with him, stayed with him. That was in the retail business, selling typewriters and encyclopedias. I would do anything. It didn't make any difference. I didn't have any children then. It was just my wife who was a legal secretary. We were very comfortable. You know, a young couple with no real expenses.

COHEN: Was Lenore [Sater Maslia] working at that time?

MASLIA: Lenore was a legal secretary for Irving Kayla [sp]. He was a big lawyer here in town.

COHEN: I know Irving.

MASLIA: Irving died a few years ago. She was a very good one, too.

COHEN: If she worked for him, he was a stickler.

MASLIA: Yes, up until the time he died he always asked her jokingly, "When are you coming back?" This is 30 years later. I went to several locations. Finally, my brother-in-law, my wife's brother, who was working for the Massell companies at this time, wanted to go out on his own. He joined me selling in the retail business. That's about a year <unintelligible>. We finally said,

²¹ A gentile is a person of non-Jewish faith.

"We ought to do what he knows best," which was at the building business. He knew it backwards and forwards. So, in 1958, we built our first little building. It turned out pretty good. We kept on going, and that's what I've been doing ever since then. That's how I got started. I knew nothing about building. My brother-in-law knew everything. He died in 1975.

COHEN: What was his name?

MASLIA: Stanley Sater.

COHEN: That was Stanley.

MASLIA: He died in 1975. He knew the business backwards and forwards. It was a good relationship. He knew the building business, and I thought that I was pretty good at making deals and working with people. We each had our little specialty. It worked out real good. As I say, he died in 1975. Now his son is up there in the office. Not in my company but in another company, but we still work together. When he died, there were a lot of properties that were jointly held and I still manage with his son. In 1958 is when we started our building.

COHEN: Which was not that long ago really.

MASLIA: No. In 1980, I sold out to my partner. That company is no longer in existence. All I do now is buy and sell and manage some property. Two of my children work with me.

COHEN: Richard?

MASLIA: Richard and Donna both work with me. That's part of their learning. It's a terrible time to learn the real estate business in some ways. At least you're learning it from a negative standpoint. It's a terrible market right now, but that's okay. It will change. Maybe when it does change, they'll remember these days. That's really my business career from the sense that from 1951 when I graduated from Emory to 1958, I had several different things. But in 1958, that's when we started.

COHEN: Tell me something about your political experiences.

MASLIA: I've been pretty active in the city of Atlanta, being a native here. I became a city councilor for two years in 1988 and 1989 when our councilor resigned in this district, who is also a Jewish fellow, Richard Guthrie. He resigned. I was appointed by the city council. There were about seven or eight different applicants, but I received the majority. I served for two years. I was not re-elected. Sometimes I don't know if that's good or bad. I wanted to be re-elected, but since then I've had so many other physical problems, that perhaps I couldn't have served anyway. But I'm still active in the city. I'm heading up a couple of big committees there. I'm in touch with the city hall people at all times. I've enjoyed it because the city is still my city. Just

because you're not on the city council, you still ought to know what's going on and care what's going on. I've seen the city change.

COHEN: I want to go into that. Is that what prompted your interest in the political?

MASLIA: Just those two years. I was involved in city hall for years because of the building. You're always involved with permits and zoning, so I knew the mechanics of city hall. When this opening came up, I had no intention . . . if it required a campaign and running, I wasn't going to do it. But the only thing it required was to get the approval of a city councilor because it's two years to go in a term. I knew most of them up there.

COHEN: You had a good relationship.

MASLIA: I had a good relationship with them. So, I won that out. The city is still important to me. I've seen it change dramatically.

COHEN: I'd like to have you give a panorama of that because you've lived here all your life.

MASLIA: Almost.

COHEN: You've seen the changes. Can you trace it and see, like you're painting a picture for somebody about Atlanta as it was and as it's evolved and where it is now. That's a tall order.

MASLIA: In the early 1930s, unfortunately, segregation was the way of life. My own children have asked me, "How could you have done this to these black people?" Well, it was wrong, but as a child growing up, how did we know it was wrong. This was the way things were. It was wrong. There's no question about it. They were mistreated. They were segregated. As a Jew, who knows better than me what discrimination is? But that's what life was in the 1930s and 1940s. In the 1950s, it began to change, as you know. Perhaps that's the biggest evolution we had in this city. We're now 67 percent minority. When I say minority, I'm referring to blacks as opposed to whites. This city is 67 percent black.

COHEN: Is that right? I didn't know that.

MASLIA: That's the city limits I'm talking about, not the metro. We've seen changes. We've seen it go from the white dominating administrations to the black. During that period of time, we had very little racial turmoil in this city. I'm very proud of that. We had some, of course. You have some today probably, but we had very little. It was the wrong way to live. I remember going to school, whites only, blacks only. I never thought anything of it. I know it was wrong, as I look back. I remember water fountains, colored and white. Restrooms, colored and white. I remember that very vividly. On the buses, the blacks sat in the back. They were called colored then. Sat in the back. The whites sat in the front. We didn't think anything of it.

It was absolutely ludicrous when you think back of the way they lived and the way we forced them to live. It was terrible. So many people say today, "Well, they had it good." What? They had it good. They were subservient to the whites. "Yes, sir. Yes, sir." That was their way of life. Perhaps that's the biggest single change. Other than the minority taking their rights. This is one of my pet peeves today, and I don't know how we're going to ever solve it, is our drug problem. You ask me what our biggest change is, that's the biggest change we've got.

COHEN: It's frightening.

MASLIA: It's terrible. I was on the grand jury. [I] served as foreman on the grand jury for two months about three years ago. The grand juries indicted. They indicted people. That was their job. If there was enough evidence before the grand jury, then they would indict whoever was involved. We were indicting 150 persons a week, on an average. Seventy percent of them were drug related. Today it's probably even higher. I don't think people are aware of that problem. When I hear drugs, I look at my children and I feel like I've been very fortunate. Then I see my grandchildren coming up. I think to myself, "What exposures, what temptations are they going to have?" This is not just true with Atlanta. This is everywhere, the whole country.

COHEN: It's insidious.

MASLIA: It's in rural areas, too. Don't think that it's just in big cities.

COHEN: The thing is it invades even upper crust and politicians. Look at Mayor [Marion] Barry²² in Washington [DC].

MASLIA: Yes. Do you know the difference between upper crust and the lower crust is whether they spend \$20 for a bag of coke or do they spend \$200. That's the only difference. It's just the amount of money involved.

COHEN: It's scary.

MASLIA: Anyway, let's talk about the city. If you look downtown Atlanta, you see a vibrant . . . forget the real estate depression we're now in. Generally speaking, you see a pretty good city. You see buildings come up. We've got the Olympics²³ coming. We've got the super bowl coming. We just got the heavyweight championship of the world here. And the Falcons won last night. They're rarities.

COHEN: Good things are happening to Atlanta.

²² Marion Barry (1936-2014) was born in Itta Bena, Mississippi. He served as the second mayor of the District of Columbia from 1979 to 1991 and again as the fourth mayor from 1995 to 1999.

²³ The Summer Olympics were held in Atlanta from July 19 to August 14, 1996. A record 197 nations took part in the games, comprising 10,318 athletes.

MASLIA: I hope that the Olympics are going to be successful. I'm heading up a committee called the infrastructure committee. I've been doing that for several months to determine, to see what is wrong with the infrastructures in Atlanta. That is, the bridges, the roads, the water, the sewer. I've got seven committees working under me. This is a result of my being on the city council.

COHEN: I want to volunteer.

MASLIA: That is becoming such a big job that the people of this city don't realize how bad off we are with our roads, sewer, water, bridges, and so forth.

COHEN: A lot has to be done.

MASLIA: A lot. You're talking about millions and millions of dollars. One of the problems is the government won't give us what they expect us to do on EPA requirements.

COHEN: You mean the federal government?

MASLIA: Yes, the Federal government. They had nothing to do with the fact that one of our bridges is going to collapse. In fact, when Underground [Atlanta]²⁴ opened up last year . . . was it last year it opened up? There was a bridge they had to shore up because so many people coming over it. That was not publicized. That would have scared everybody away. Our parks are a disaster right now. They're terrible.

COHEN: They need money.

MASLIA: They need money. We hear the same thing over and over and over. We don't want to raise taxes. I'm talking about our politicians, whether it be local or federal. We don't want to raise taxes. We don't want to do anything. You don't want to raise taxes? Cut the spending and put the money somewhere else. But you know I'm just talking to a wall. I'm getting off on the subject.

COHEN: Do you mean they don't have the right priorities?

MASLIA: That's exactly right. Unfortunately, this is more true in Washington than anywhere else. The first priority in Washington is to get re-elected. It isn't to do the job you're there for. It's to get re-elected. I know we're getting off of this tape here.

COHEN: But that's a whole thing in itself in terms of what happens.

²⁴ Underground Atlanta is a shopping and entertainment district in the Five Points district of Atlanta, Georgia. During the 1920's, construction of concrete viaducts intended to relieve traffic congestion in downtown Atlanta elevated the street system one level. Merchants moved their operations to the second floor of their buildings, leaving the old fronts for storage and service. As Atlanta continued to grow above the viaducts, the original street level was raised by one-and-a-half stories, and a five-block area was completely covered up. The lower facades of historic buildings constructed during the city's post-Civil War Reconstruction Era boom remained relatively untouched until the area was rediscovered and opened as a tourist attraction in 1969.

MASLIA: They're not getting re-elected. Therefore, their votes are only going to be determined by that number. Don't get me started on that.

COHEN: I understand. What do you have to say about the relationships between the Jewish and the non-Jewish community as an evolutionary perspective?

MASLIA: I'm hoping it's getting better. I think there's still a lot of undercurrent antisemitism. There always will be. My relationship, as a child, I saw it more than I see it now, but I think the conditions are probably improving somewhat. I'll tell you this, as economic conditions worsen, you can bet the Jews are going to get blamed for a lot of these problems, whether it be Israel or the fact that the Jews control the media, which I hear every day. You know we're going to get blamed for that. But overall . . .

COHEN: You were not during the Leo Frank case?²⁵

MASLIA: No, that was 1918.

COHEN: Did you hear any stories about the aftermath of that when you were growing up?

MASLIA: No, I was only a kid. I was born ten years after the fact. Naturally, I've read a lot about it. A lot of my relatives were here then. They remember it vividly.

COHEN: How about the Ku Klux Klan?²⁶

MASLIA: I remember the Klan. I remember as a college student at Emory University, I was a member of the TEP²⁷ fraternity, which is the Jewish fraternity at Emory. I remember one night we had a couple of Jewish boys from Eastman, Georgia, South Georgia, who were tough as nails. I remember one night all of them saying, "We're going to go to a Klan meeting." So, we went. We went to a Klan meeting. I never will forget. The Klan at that time . . .

²⁵ Leo Frank (1884-1915) was a Jewish factory superintendent in Atlanta, Georgia. In 1913, he was accused of raping and murdering one of his employees, a 13-year-old girl named Mary Phagan, whose body was found on the premises of the National Pencil Company. Frank was arrested, tried, convicted and sentenced to death for her murder. The trial was the catalyst for a great outburst of antisemitism led by the populist Tom Watson and the center of powerful class and political interests. Frank was sent to Milledgeville State Penitentiary to await his execution. Governor John M. Slaton, believing there had been a miscarriage of justice, commuted Frank's sentence to life in prison. This enraged a group of men who styled themselves the "Knights of Mary Phagan." They drove to the prison, kidnapped Frank from his cell and drove him to Marietta, Georgia where they lynched him. Many years later, the murderer was revealed to be Jim Conley, who had lied in the trial, pinning it on Frank instead. Frank was pardoned on March 11, 1986, although they stopped short of exonerating him.

²⁶ The Ku Klux Klan (or Knights of the Ku Klux Klan today) is a white supremacist, white nationalist, anti-immigration, anti-Jewish, anti-Catholic, anti-black secret society, whose methods included terrorism and murder. It was founded in the South in the 1860s and then died out and come back several times, most notably in the 1920s when membership soared again, and then again in the 1960s during the civil rights era. When the Klan was re-founded in 1915 in Georgia, the event was marked by a cross burning on Stone Mountain. In the past it members dressed up in white robes and a pointed hat designed to hide their identity and to terrify. It is still in existence.

²⁷ Tau Epsilon Phi (TEΦ, commonly pronounced "TEP") is a fraternity founded by ten Jewish men at Columbia University in New York in 1910 as a response to the existence of similar organizations that would not admit Jewish members.

<End Tape 1, Side 1>

<Begin Tape 1, Side 2>

COHEN: Maslia at his home in Atlanta at 3969 Parian Ridge Road, NW. This is a project of the Atlanta Jewish Federation, the American Jewish Committee, and the National Council of Jewish Women. We were just talking here about the Ku Klux Klan.

MASLIA: What I was thinking was, the whole TEP fraternity decides to go to a Klan meeting which was being held at Stone Mountain, which they still hold them incidentally. This was in 1950. So, we go out there. They were very cordial. I don't know if they knew we were a Jewish fraternity or not. They welcomed us. There were men and women and children out there. They had that big cross burning out there. One of my fraternity brothers went up there and introduced himself to the Klan, whatever they call the Klan biggies or wiggles, whatever they call those guys. It was an experience.

COHEN: Weren't you frightened?

MASLIA: No. A kid 19 or 20 years old, he's not frightened about things like that. Some of them wore masks back then. Most of them were not masked. We got there towards the end of the meeting. They were pretty well unmasked at that point. I remember another incident about the Klan. Do you want to hear that one, too?

COHEN: Yes.

MASLIA: This was maybe 1954 or 1955. A friend of mine and I were driving towards Jacksonville [Florida] to go to a football game or something down there. Maybe it was a fishing trip. This was in Cochran, Georgia. All of a sudden, we find ourselves in a procession. We had no idea. This guy, he must weigh about 250 pounds, smoking a big cigar. We were driving a new Oldsmobile. Going through Cochran, and we run into a Ku Klux Klan parade. We had no idea how we got in it. But there we were in the parade, and there were all these little black kids on the side waving. Very few people were there. We realized we were in the Klan parade because we could see the car in front of us with the hoods and the car behind us with the hoods. But we didn't know what we were doing. Anyway, we get to this turn off. Everybody turns off. There on the left, we could see the Klan rally where the kids, the women, the children, with their hoods - I don't think they were masked - were having a picnic. And the blacks were there having a good time, not in the picnic, but they were surrounding and thought nothing of it. I think it must have been an everyday occurrence down there. Those two experiences I vividly remember about the Klan. I don't ever remember any hangings or lynchings. I think that was probably

more of the thirties than they were later on.

COHEN: I'm surprised the blacks stood by and were not frightened by it all.

MASLIA: They weren't frightened a bit. I think in the back of their mind they were probably saying, "Look at those nuts." I agree with them. Those are the only two Klan experiences I really remember. I don't remember any of the violence. Most of those took place in the thirties. I do remember writing a term paper on the Klan. I studied the Klan and its history. Somewhere I have it in the house. The term paper on the Klan is from its history back in Pulaski, Tennessee all the way to the end. It was strong. You have no idea how many members belonged to the Klan in 1920.

COHEN: It was strong up north, too.

MASLIA: That's where it was really strong. Indiana. Illinois.

COHEN: Contrary to what somebody thinks.

MASLIA: In fact, most people don't know this but I'm sure you're familiar with our Shearith Israel synagogue²⁸ here on University [Drive]?

COHEN: Yes.

MASLIA: In front of Shearith Israel, there is a little building, just right on the point there.

COHEN: I used to belong to Shearith Israel.

MASLIA: Right on the point, you know where that little building is on the corner, that was Lanier University which was the Ku Klux Klan University.

COHEN: Was that the Ku Klux Klan University?

MASLIA: That's right.

COHEN: That's a separate building.

MASLIA: That was called Lanier University. One of the Klan owns it. I don't think it lasted very long.

COHEN: Kind of ironic that a synagogue . . .

MASLIA: Is adjacent to it. I have a picture of that building in the 1920s, I think it was.

COHEN: When it was still Ku Klux Klan? Isn't that amazing.

MASLIA: Yes. I think most people at Shearith Israel don't even know that.

COHEN: Yes, I belonged there for a number of years before I came over to Or Ve Shalom.

²⁸ Founded in 1904, Shearith Israel began as a congregation that met in the homes of congregants until 1906 when they began using a Methodist church on Hunter Street. After World War II, Rabbi Tobias Geffen moved the congregation to University Drive, where it became the first synagogue in DeKalb County. In the 1960's, they removed the barrier between the men's and women's sections in the sanctuary, and officially became affiliated with the Conservative movement in 2002.

MASLIA: That was the Klan university. The Klan, it rears its head every once in a while, but I'm glad our anti-defamation league keeps tabs on it pretty closely.

COHEN: And they do.

MASLIA: Yes, they do.

COHEN: What do you recall of some of the Jewish organizational structures as you became aware of them when you were growing up? Like you mentioned the Educational Alliance.

MASLIA: That was the biggest thing when I was growing up, was the Alliance. Of course, we had the [Atlanta Jewish] Federation,²⁹ which was the Jewish Welfare Fund that used to help a lot of poor people and poor Jews in Atlanta. There were a lot of them then. I guess those two are probably the two I remember most besides the synagogue, of course. Those two. The Educational Alliance was just a lifesaver for kids, for all of us. We had nothing, and it was a chance to meet each other. We learned from each other, I guess that's the way to talk about it.

COHEN: Was that what you would call the predecessor of the Jewish Community Center?

MASLIA: Exactly what it was. In fact, they moved from the Alliance to the Jewish Community Center. The Jewish Community Center is just a continuation of the Alliance on a much larger scale.

COHEN: Then the Federation kind of . . .

MASLIA: The Federation is the old Jewish Welfare Fund. I feel like we do pretty good with the Federation in this town. I've been active in it in the past. I think we're up to about 10 million, which is a pretty good number for the 60,000 Jews in Atlanta.

COHEN: That was surprising, the numbers that . . .

MASLIA: You have to remember, of the 60,000, only half are affiliated.

COHEN: There may be some . . .

MASLIA: Who knows, probably many who were not even designated as being Jewish. I don't know. As a whole, Atlanta has done real well when it comes to the Federation. I think a lot of it has to do with the upbringing of the kids in Atlanta. I really do. I can't tell you how much the Jewish Alliance and the synagogue meant to us growing up. Where else would we go? Would we go to the YMCA?³⁰ Of course not. I have to tell you something else, I was very active in

²⁹ The Atlanta Jewish Federation was formally incorporated in 1967 and is the result of the merger of the Atlanta Federation for Jewish Social Service founded in 1905 as the Federation of Jewish Charities; the Atlanta Jewish Welfare Federation founded in 1936 as the Atlanta Jewish Welfare Fund; and the Atlanta Jewish Community Council founded in 1945. The organization was renamed the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta in 1997.

³⁰ The Young Men's Christian Association, commonly known as the 'YMCA' or the 'Y' is a worldwide organization founded in 1844 that aims to put Christian principles into practice by developing a healthy body, mind

growing up which is the Atlanta Boy's Club.³¹ It had nothing to do with the Jewish Community Center.

COHEN: I've heard of that from people like Meyer Balser.

MASLIA: In 1939, the Boy's Club was started here in Atlanta. I was one of the first ones to join. I was 11 years old at the time. A gentleman named W.W. Woolfolk, I'll never forget his name, came to our schools and solicited us to join the Atlanta Boy's Club.

COHEN: Was that a nonsectarian group?

MASLIA: Yes. I'll admit it, the Jewish kids had plenty of fights up there. I was in a lot of fights. I think I lost most of them, but I was in a lot of them. But it was still good. It was a good place. Originally, the Boy's Club was located about a half a block from the AA synagogue on Capitol Avenue. Then in about 1941, something like that, they bought the old Jewish Progressive Club³² on Pryor Street. The Jewish Progressive Club moved out to Tess Street. Boy's Club bought that building. For years, they were there. I was active there, too.

COHEN: What was the purpose of the Boy's Club?

MASLIA: To get the boys off the street. Have a place for the kids to go. We played basketball, softball, football. We had table tennis.

COHEN: How was that different from the Educational Alliance?

MASLIA: It wasn't. It was just an everyday place.

COHEN: The Educational Alliance wasn't?

MASLIA: No, it wasn't open every day.

COHEN: It wasn't always open? Is that it?

MASLIA: There, we didn't have big softball fields and everything like that.

COHEN: You had a wider array of athletic facilities.

MASLIA: That's right. The Boy's Club was tied in a lot to schools. So, we were able to do that too. Between the Boy's Club and the Alliance, high school, grammar school, and working,

and spirit. They offer recreational facilities, parent/child education programs, youth and teen development with after school programming, etc.

³¹ The Atlanta Boys Club Inc. was established on 314 Washington Street to address a growing trend of youth delinquency in the South Atlanta area. In 1956, it changed its name to the Metropolitan Atlanta Boys Club to reflect its growing metropolitan reach.

³² The Jewish Progressive Club was a Jewish social organization that was established in 1913 by Russian Jews who felt unwelcome at the Standard Club, where German Jews were predominant. At first the club was located in a rented house until a new club was built on Pryor Street including a swimming pool and a gym. In 1940 the club opened a larger facility at 1050 Techwood Drive in Midtown with three swimming pools, tennis and softball. In 1976 the club moved north to 1160 Moore's Mill Road near Interstate 75. The property was eventually sold as the club faced financial challenges and the Carl E. Sanders Family YMCA at Buckhead opened in 1996.

we kept pretty busy. We didn't get into much trouble. We didn't have time.

COHEN: Did that association in a non-sectarian setting have any impact down the road on friendships?

MASLIA: Absolutely. With non-Jews?

COHN: Yes.

MASLIA: Absolutely. In fact, many of the people that I see now and perhaps some of the people I do business with were members of the Boy's Club. That doesn't mean that because of the Boy's Club we're still friends. I mean, we're friends, but it helped. We all grew up together. Unfortunately, it was a completely segregated place. There were no black kids in the Boy's Club in the 1930s and 1940s. But every kid down there came from the same boat. They didn't have anything, no money, no clothes. Again, we didn't know we were that poor.

COHEN: Because everybody else was the same.

MASLIA: Everybody else was the same. As I say, the city has changed, obviously as everything else has.

COHEN: What significant buildings and developments do you see? Even since I've been here, there have been significant growth.

MASLIA: Buildings? I'll tell you what, I could take you downtown, and with the exception of maybe four or five buildings, tell you each one of those buildings and remember when it was built. I do not remember, for example, the Healy Building or the Candler Building. I don't remember the Hurt Building or the William Oliver Building. But I can remember the First National Bank Building, the Fulton National Bank Building. <Unintelligible> built in the 1950s and 1960s.

COHEN: I remember the Hurt Building only because . . .

MASLIA: It was remodeled.

COHEN: It was across the street from where I started to work when I came here.

MASLIA: That building was built in the 1920s, I think.

COHEN: It was beautiful.

MASLIA: It was remodeled a couple of years ago. I can remember almost every big building downtown. I can remember when the buildings were built. I can remember about the year they were built. In fact, Rich's Department Store is a good example of what I remember. I remember when the escalators first got to Rich's Department Store in the 1930s.

COHEN: The escalators?

MASLIA: The escalators. I spent two hours riding up and down those escalators until they threw me out.

COHEN: What year was that?

MASLIA: I don't know, probably 10 or 11 years old, probably late 1930s, middle 1930s. I remember that. I could go on and on about Atlanta.

COHEN: There certainly have been a lot of development in restaurants. I remember when I first came into town, you could count them on your hand.

MASLIA: In 1950, there were only about two or three. One of them, I don't know whether it was segregated or not, but there were a lot of restricted restaurants. All of the private clubs were, with the exception of the Mayfair [Club].³³ We had three Jewish clubs in this town.

COHEN: Talk about that.

MASLIA: We had the Progressive. I was never a member. We could never afford to belong. The Progressive Club. First it was on Pryor Street, that's what I first remember. Then it moved to Tess Street. There was the Mayfair Club and the Standard Club.³⁴ The Standard Club, if I remember correctly, was formed in the 1880s.

COHEN: That was an old club.

MASLIA: Yes. It was formed by the German Jews. The Standard Club is the only one that is still in existence. The Mayfair, of course, burned down. The Progressive club closed up. The Standard Club is still in existence. I think it's due primarily to the golf course they have. They've always had a golf course, as I can remember.

COHEN: Now they're located . . .

MASLIA: In Duluth, Georgia. I was with them up until a few years ago. It's just too far to go. It's just a long ways to go, and I'm not much of a golfer even though I love to play, but I'm terrible. It does real well.

COHEN: I'm glad you said you're not very good. Take this golf ball with my compliments and maybe your game will improve.

³³ The Mayfair Club opened in 1938 at 1456 Spring Street in Midtown Atlanta. The two-story club was a focal point of Jewish life in the city for more than 25 years. The club was founded in 1930 and first met at the Biltmore Hotel. Eleanor Roosevelt, Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir, mayors Ivan Allen and William Berry Hartsfield, senators Herman Talmadge and Richard Russell, and Governor Carl Sanders visited the club. Fire destroyed the Mayfair Club on December 4, 1964.

³⁴ The Standard Club is a Jewish social club that started as the Concordia Association in 1867 in Downtown Atlanta. In 1905, it was reorganized as the 'Standard Club' and moved into the former mansion of William C. Sanders near the site of Georgia State Stadium (formerly Turner Field). In the late 1920's the club moved to Ponce de Leon Avenue in Midtown Atlanta. Later, the club moved to what is now the Lenox Park business park and was located there until 1983. In the 1980's, the club moved to its present location in Johns Creek in Atlanta's northern suburbs.

MASLIA: Well, it can't get any worse.

COHEN: I'll tell you a story about that when we're finished.

MASLIA: Those were the three Jewish clubs. The Progressive Club was very, very popular in the 1940s. They had a swimming pool, a restaurant, dance facilities. They had night club entertainment.

COHEN: They were social and athletic?

MASLIA: Social and athletic, too, but mostly social.

COHEN: I think that we've . . . I failed to mention the date is October 29. I think we've had a long thing here. I think you're getting a little tired. I think we'll close now. We can set up another interview and fill in any voids that I see as I listen back. I thank you very much.

<End Tape 1, Side 2>

<Begin Tape 2, Side 1>

COHEN: Interviewing Victor Maslia. Today's date is November 5, 1990. We're seated at his dinette at 3969 Parian Ridge Road. This is a continuation on the second interview on the second tape. We covered quite a bit about Victor's background and growing up in Atlanta. Since tomorrow is election day, we're going to talk about some of the events and the changes in the political situation here in Atlanta. Can you think back, Victor, and going back about how have things changed politically in terms of what your recollections are and to the present day? If you can trace a little panorama for us.

MASLIA: In Atlanta, back in the 1930s and 1940s, it was the good old white boys that controlled everything, the WASPs,³⁵ pardon my expression. They controlled everything. The minorities, blacks, Jews, women were unheard of as far as political office was concerned. It wasn't until the late 1940s and 1950s that that began to change. Women started taking part. The integration problem was faced by the citizens of Atlanta. We started having a lot of black representation. I think that didn't occur probably until the 1960s. Beginning in the 1960s we had women and blacks, and our first Jewish mayor was Sam Massell.³⁶ That occurred, I believe, in about 1968 or 1970, something along those lines. He was a Jewish mayor. Frankly, in my opinion having lived here in Atlanta all these years and seen its evolution, Sam Massell was the last white mayor that this town is going to have unless we change our city limits and incorporate

³⁵ White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) is an informal, sometimes disparaging term, used to describe a closed circle of high-status and highly influential white Americans of English Protestant ancestry.

³⁶ Sam Massell, Jr. (b. 1927) is a native Atlantan and former commercial real estate broker who served from 1970 to 1974 as the 53rd 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.

other parts of the metropolitan area. But if the city limits remain as they are today, I don't think we'll ever see another white mayor simply because we're 67 percent black. That's the ratio in Atlanta. During the last two elections, there were no white candidates for the mayor. The city council is comprised of . . . there are 18 on the city council. If I'm not mistaken, there are about half and half now. That's because we have 12 districts in the city. Each district has one representative. We have six at large. If I take just a moment, I can tell you how many whites and blacks. I believe we're about half and half or perhaps a little majority black. That's probably the biggest single change we're going to have. Fulton County which is the area in which Atlanta is in. There are seven county commissions including commission chairman. I think it's four and three. That probably will change. But that's the way it should be. If 67 percent are black, we should have the majority control in the hands of the blacks. I find nothing wrong with it. There are some good ones, some bad ones. By the same token by the white ones, there are some good ones and some bad ones. By the Jews, there are some good ones and some bad ones. That hasn't really changed in perspective of the whole city.

COHEN: How do you feel it impacted, if at all, in changes on Jews and Jewish community in terms of all of this?

MASLIA: As you know, there are about 60,000 Jews in metro Atlanta. I may have said this before, but going back into the 1940s and the 1950s that I remember vividly, the Jewish people, men, I'm referring to men primarily, did not really have any opportunity to join the business world, to become bankers, to become associated with large companies. In spite of what people say, there was a very restricted market. Therefore, you saw a lot of the Jewish boys going to the professional field or in business for themselves. They didn't have the opportunity. I think also, perhaps the Jewish people are a little more aggressive and a little more demanding of what they are going to get out of life. Not very many were satisfied with the nine to five work. That changed in the 1960s and 1970s when you saw more and more big companies opening their doors to opportunities for the Jewish boys. We've got two or three that are head of large corporations right now that perhaps a few years ago could not . . . I'll use one in particular, Erwin Zaban.³⁷ He started his company his father started that company. Leo Benatar, a very good

³⁷ Native Atlantan, philanthropist and community leader Erwin Zaban (1921-2010) was known by many as the 'Godfather of the Jewish Community.' After quitting school to help in his father's Depression-era business at age 15, Zaban built successful businesses worth billions of dollars and donated millions to worthy causes. He worked alongside his parents to build Zep Manufacturing Company. Zep later merged with National Linen and became National Service Industries, a Fortune 500 Company. He donated and raised money for undeveloped land in Dunwoody that became Zaban Park, home of the Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta. He donated money to the Jewish Home, for which the Zaban Tower is named. He helped create the homeless couples' shelter at The

friend of mine, is chairman of Engraph [Inc.]. That's a public company that was from North Carolina. He's there because he's very competent. Not because he's Jewish or not Jewish or black or white, he happens to be a good man. A few years ago, I don't think he would have had that opportunity. In Atlanta and perhaps other cities where the professional people, the lawyers, the doctors, the dentists, the physicians, the accountants, they're heavily Jewish oriented compared to the population of them. I believe that most of them decided they had better develop their own talents. Perhaps their parents encouraged them. In fact, I know that had to be the case. I, myself, went into the real estate business. I worked for a large firm for about two years. I knew I wasn't going anywhere with them, so I went into business for myself. I think that was covered in the first interview.

COHEN: In these particular businesses, were there use of Hebrew free loans³⁸ or any of that kind of . . .

MASLIA: I think so. We didn't participate in them, but I think that those Hebrew free loans were used . . . I know of a few cases in the 1950s they were loaned to refugees who had just came over after the war who really had nothing. Those loans were made . . .

COHEN: That doesn't exist today, I don't think.

MASLIA: I don't think so. It existed then, but there weren't too many of them that I know of to take advantage of.

COHEN: It was mostly for refugees at that time to start them up in business?

MASLIA: I believe it was. I may be wrong. But I think that's what that was. I know if there were any available in the 1930s . . . I don't know. My father had a little shoe repair shop. I'm sure he didn't get a loan to start it.

COHEN: The political situation changed in the whole advent of equal rights and affected the political structures. From your recollections because not everybody felt and thought exactly the same way, I wouldn't think. Even in Jewish Atlanta, they were cultural southerners. What was their perspective and some of your recollections as things began to show themselves in the way of change?

MASLIA: The Jews were, as you say, culturally southern, but the Jewish people were still a

Temple which bears his name.

³⁸ The Jewish Interest Free Loan of Atlanta (JIFLA) opened its doors in 2010 to provide interest-free loans to help with mortgage arrears, dental or medical costs, temporary unemployment, funeral cost, and debt reduction. It's predecessors in Atlanta included the Morris Lichtenstein Free Loan Fund, founded in the 1890's as the Montefiore Relief Association, the Congregation Ahavath Achim (AA) Free Loan Association founded in 1930. AA's free loan fund existed until the early 1960's when it ceased operating and transferred its remaining assets to the Jewish Home for the Aged.

minority. Most of us, even today, sympathize with the minority. Whether you're . . . they say that the democratic party is the party of minorities and so forth. There are many good Jewish people who are republicans who still sympathize with the minorities and understand their problems. I saw those changes, and I lived through those changes. I think we were more kin to those because of our heritage and our backgrounds. We were persecuted. I guess we resented any kind of persecutors. Most Jewish people are like that in spite of what they say. I think deep down we'll find most very sympathetic to the equal rights amendments, the women's lib [liberation], and certainly the segregation laws which were just almost intolerable if we understood them. But as a kid growing up, that was the way it was. That has changed and all for the better.

COHEN: What recollections do you have of relationships between the black community in Atlanta and the Jewish communities relationship with the black community as well as with perhaps the gentile community and other contrasting relationships within the Jewish community?

MASLIA: To begin with, we didn't call them blacks. We called them coloreds.

COHEN: Why was that?

MASLIA: If you weren't white, you were colored. There was no such thing as a black. It was colored. We grew up in a segregated society. They lived in our backyards. Many of them lived in the alleys. They didn't attend the same schools we did. The relationship was one of . . . how would I say the relationship was? I guess we tolerated each other. I'm sure there was a lot of contempt in the minds of the blacks, or coloreds, as we called them. And there should have been. The Jews primarily treated them, not as equals, but as good people. We helped them when we could. The feeling of being below us or beneath us was there. There's no question about that. That was the white southern, whether you were Jewish or gentile, that's the way we looked upon blacks. As I say, they lived in our back yard. We worked together. They worked for us in most cases. There were no black-owned businesses that I can remember. There weren't too many black-owned homes back in those days.

COHEN: There were some close relationships between blacks and whites, weren't there?

MASLIA: There were plenty of close relationships, but the relationship was not as an equal.

The relationship was a good old boy, let's take care of him. It's my responsibility to take care of that poor black fellow.

COHEN: Paternalistic?

MASLIA: Right, paternalistic. That's the attitude that was taken. In fact, I've often heard

some good white people say, "We always treated our coloreds good." That simply means that we didn't beat them, but that doesn't mean that we gave them an opportunity to be our equal. We just treated them good because we didn't beat them. We didn't shoot them, and we didn't kick them. That was their interpretation of being good. When segregation laws were cast aside, many southerners, and I'm not referring just to the Jews because there were some Jews too, said "We always treated them good. Why do they want to change?" As a Jew, I could understand exactly where they were coming from. It's fine to say, "I'm going to treat you good" and "Yes sir. Master" and all that stuff, but that's not equality. That's not giving them the opportunity that they wanted and deserved.

COHEN: In recent years there has been an influx, especially in the sunbelt communities, of which Atlanta is one. I was wondering with the established Atlanta residents, what was the relationship between Atlanta residents and newcomers to the community?

MASLIA: Are you talking about other Jews?

COHEN: Yes, I think I'm emphasizing more the whole aspect of other Jews.

MASLIA: I think I may have already said this, but when the Germans came here in 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s, they were the only Jews in Atlanta. The Russians and the Polish immigrated around the turn of the century. Of course, I don't remember that, but based on what I know in talking to others, they sort of looked down on the Russians, the Polish Jews, East European Jews. When the Sephardics came over, I think we were looked down upon as the newcomer. After the war [World War II] when the refugees came over, everybody looked upon them as refugees, and they needed help. Since then, I think the Jews have become united as one now. I don't think you see that differential as much or very little, I should say, especially among the young kids.

COHEN: Yes, I think you're right.

MASLIA: I think that's just about disappeared. We've got Germans, Russians, Polish, Sephardics in all walks of life, in all leadership roles in the entire Jewish community. It's good, of course. I can remember as a kid growing up, we had our classes. Not Orthodox,³⁹ Reform, and Conservative,⁴⁰ but we had the Russians, the Germans, the Polish, and the Sephardics. That was the distinction.

³⁹ 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.

⁴⁰ 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*).

COHEN: What are the implications of that? For example, because Sephardim is a particular culture within Jewry. With the youth, if that's the way they become "more democratic," what might be present and future implications for a Sephardic synagogue?

MASLIA: Let's take our Sephardic synagogue. We're a Sephardic synagogue. Our constitution says we're a Sephardic synagogue. Yet 60 percent of our membership is Ashkenazi.

COHEN: Sixty percent?

MASLIA: Sixty percent. I'm sure you, as a member, didn't even know that.

COHEN: I didn't know that.

MASLIA: Right. So, the implications . . . we're a Sephardic synagogue, but we're still open to all Jews. We have a lot of members who are not Sephardic. You don't even think about it.

COHEN: Will they be able to maintain the . . .

MASLIA: Sephardic traditions?

COHEN: Yes, and the culture.

MASLIA: I hope so. I think we will. The leadership of the synagogue is in the hands of a lot of young Sephardics. We've had several presidents who were not Sephardic.

COHEN: Who have respected the traditions and beauty of the culture.

MASLIA: Who have respected and continued the tradition. So, we've had that input. I assume we'll continue to have that, at least I hope so. We are basically known as a Sephardic synagogue even though the majority of our members are not Sephardic.

COHEN: Another area. We sort of have a modern transportation system today. Thinking back to your boyhood days and thereafter, how was early Atlanta from your early recollections, how you got around and how it's developed?

MASLIA: In the 1930s, that's where I begin my memories. We had the old street cars. They were the electric cars with two conductors on them, called the two bells. We also had our feet. I mean, we walked almost everywhere we wanted to go. For two reasons. First of all, the street cars didn't go anywhere we wanted to. Number two, they cost money. We never used the street cars unless we absolutely had to. From the street cars, I can remember as a kid, my father . . . he did not have a car. Some of our friends did, but we didn't. I can remember as a kid my father used to take us for a ride on the street car. At that time, it cost a nickel. We would go all the way to Hapeville which is now 15, 20 minutes, but then it took 45 minutes. For a nickel, we could ride to Hapeville. Stay on the streetcar and come back. That was our trip. That was the old street car system. From there, we went to trackless trolleys. Automobiles became very

fashionable after the war. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, more and more people started driving. After the war, the trackless trolleys came in. The buses. They were very popular. Then we came to gasoline buses. MARTA,⁴¹ which is our rapid transit system, came during the administration of our first Jewish mayor. He was really responsible for that. He, more or less, led the fight to get the MARTA system here. You can imagine what this city would be without that rapid transit. It's hard for me to understand why counties like Cobb and Gwinnett . . . well, it's not hard to understand. I understand why, but they do not want the MARTA line extended into their counties. They would rather put up with their traffic problems, which are terrible right now. You can imagine what it's going to be like in a few years. But those two counties will not let our rapid transit system in.

COHEN: How do you account for that?

MASLIA: Because they don't want the blacks to go into their county. I can tell you why. They don't want to say that out loud, but I can tell you that is the biggest problem with them up there. They feel as though if they put the rapid transit system in, blacks will move into their neighborhoods. Their attitude is, we are solid up here, we're going to stay that way. We don't want . . . they say rapid transit brings crime. I'm sure it brings some but so does a lot of automobiles and people passing around too. If we could get our rapid transit system extended into those metropolises up there, it would be a benefit to them as well as us.

COHEN: Some of them are going to have referendums now.

MASLIA: In fact, tomorrow is one in Gwinnett County. It will probably fail. They're saying that we don't need more. We don't want to pay that extra sales tax. It's going to bring us crime. We're happy as we are. If you go in Gwinnett County at eight o'clock in the morning, you can't get around.

COHEN: There's no transportation whatsoever?

MASLIA: No.

COHEN: Other than cars.

MASLIA: Cars. That's it. You can believe that if you want to, but as an old city councilman and as one who's lived here all his life and one who knows the thinking of a lot of people up there, it is one issue and one issue only. They do not want the blacks to come to Gwinnett

⁴¹ MARTA is the common term for the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, which was created in 1965. During the 1970s, MARTA began acquiring land in and around the city of Atlanta, Georgia for construction of a rapid rail system. Today, MARTA operates a rail system with feeder bus operation and park-and-ride facilities throughout the metropolitan Atlanta area.

County. It's the same with Cobb County. Cobb County started its own transportation system.

COHEN: Is it more prejudice or one of fear?

MASLIA: I think it's more of fear. Of course, with fear comes prejudice. There's no question about that. I think fear is perhaps in the back of their mind. I don't think the prejudice is the greatest factor. I think fear is more.

COHEN: When you were talking about the trolleys, what were the main lines? It's hard to conceive that now you don't see any tracks or remaining residuals of tracks.

MASLIA: No, they covered them all up. You had them all downtown. You had Peachtree, Pryor Streets, and corner of Grant Park. I'll tell you something else, the blacks sat in the back. I'm sure you've heard that over and over.

COHEN: When I first came to town here they used to sit in . . .

MASLIA: That was the early 1950s.

COHEN: Even in 1960.

MASLIA: That was beginning to change then. We had all the main streets. You could get almost anywhere. Remember, the city was much, much smaller in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. We had street cars going into Vinings. We had them going into Smyrna. We had them going as far as Decatur, Stone Mountain. I mean single tracks. From there, you had to walk to your home.

COHEN: They didn't rip them out? They just covered them up?

MASLIA: They covered them up. They ripped some of them out, but in many cases they covered them up. You can still see some of them. But most of them are just covered over. I can remember as a kid riding along on my bicycle on those tracks and if it was a rainy day like it is today I can't tell you how many times I fell, slipped on those tracks. They were very slippery. Those were good days in some ways, mainly as a kid. You know what I say about children. The reason that children don't have problems is because they don't have children. That's really what it amounts to. As a child, we didn't have any problems. We had little problems, but they were insignificant. Growing up back in those days, as I said before, we didn't look at things other than the way things were. Segregation was a way of life. It's changed. Poverty was a way of life. We didn't even know that. But we were not alone.

COHEN: The major transportation system that we have now is made a big impact on the whole business of . . .

MASLIA: Are you referring to MARTA, our rapid transit system?

COHEN: Yes, MARTA.

MASLIA: It's made a big change. We used to have three big rail stations here in Atlanta. We had the old terminal station where all the trains from the south . . .

COHEN: The one downtown?

MASLIA: It's not there any longer.

COHEN: The one they tore down.

MASLIA: They built that government building.

COHEN: It was across from Rich's.

MASLIA: It was about a block away from Rich's. We had the old building there. What was it called? I can't remember what it was called. It shows what happened to my mind. I don't remember, there was another one a few blocks from there.

COHEN: Another train station?

MASLIA: There's a third one that's still in existence. Brookwood Station [Peachtree Station]. It's across the street from the Community Center.

COHEN: The only one remaining.

MASLIA: The only one remaining in Atlanta. We had three stations. I remember coming home from the army, coming back to the train station. That was a nice feeling coming back on train from across country. We didn't fly back then. As far as transportation goes, Atlanta now is the hub of the air transportation. We are the sometimes first, sometimes second, busiest airport next to Chicago's O'Hare.

COHEN: Enormous.

MASLIA: Because of our transportation system, we progress quite a bit. Originally, Atlanta was named Marthasville.⁴² Then Atlanta became Terminus, which was the name of the city prior to the name of Atlanta. Terminus meant that was where the railroads ended and started. All the railroads came through here.

COHEN: The present location is where?

MASLIA: It used to be where the terminal station is. If you remember during the Civil War,⁴³

⁴² Atlanta was established in 1837 at the intersection of two railroad lines. The area developed into a settlement, first known as 'Terminus' and later as 'Thrasherville' after a local merchant who built homes and a general store in the area. By 1842, the town was renamed 'Marthasville' to honor the Governor's daughter. J. Edgar Thomson, Chief Engineer of the Georgia Railroad, suggested the town be renamed 'Atlantica-Pacifica' which was shortened to 'Atlanta.' The town was incorporated as Atlanta on December 29, 1847.

⁴³ The American Civil War, widely known in the United States as the 'Civil War' or the 'War Between the States,' was fought from 1861 to 1865 to determine the survival of the Union or independence for the Confederacy. In January 1861, seven Southern slave states declared their secession from the United States and formed the

in pictures you've seen, that's where all the freight trains were.

COHEN: I thought because they sometimes associated that where the Underground is.

MASLIA: That was only a few blocks away. It was all in the same area. The old original tracks, railroad tracks are still there because the railroad trains still go there. Mostly freight trains.

COHEN: I understand even as large as Atlanta airport is, Hartsfield,⁴⁴ that they're wanting to expand the runways and they've got big opposition.

MASLIA: Yes, they do. They're planning on building one more runway for commuter planes only.

COHEN: Do you think they'll go to a second airport?

MASLIA: Yes. I don't know if it will be in our lifetime, but they'll go to another one. They're going to have to. They're talking about an airport south part of the state and some going north. In fact, there was something in the paper this morning about it.

COHEN: About a second airport?

MASLIA: Six possible locations. One of the locations people are already objecting to having the airport come down there. Atlanta has a right of condemnation on the airport. If we want to build a second airport somewhere, the state has given the right that the city can condemn land to build a second airport. I think that's a few years though.

COHEN: One of the things that you hear a lot about is changes in family life, which I'm sure has affected Jewish family life too. As you look from your own perspective about how Jewish family life was as you were growing up and again looking at it as it evolved to the present day, what changes do you observe and can you recall? Also, any commentary that you could say about your own evaluation of it, how you see it, and where it's going, might be useful.

MASLIA: As a child growing up, we were more family oriented because we had no

Confederate States of America. The Confederacy, often called the 'South,' grew to include 11 states, and although they claimed 13 states and additional western territories, no foreign countries ever diplomatically recognized the Confederacy. The states that did not declare secession were known as the 'Union' or the 'North.' The war had its origin in the issue of slavery. After four years of bloody combat, which left over 600,000 Union and Confederate soldiers dead and destroyed much of the South's infrastructure, the Confederacy collapsed, slavery was abolished, and the difficult Reconstruction process of restoring national unity and granting civil rights to freed slaves began.

⁴⁴ Hartsfield Airport is the predecessor of the current Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. The airport was first developed in 1925 on an abandoned auto racetrack and was named 'Candler Field' after its former owner's family, including Coca-Cola magnate Asa Candler. In the 1940s the airport's name changed to the 'Atlanta Municipal Airport.' Atlanta mayor William B. Hartsfield died on February 22, 1971 and on February 28, what would have been Hartsfield's 81st birthday, its name was changed to 'William B. Hartsfield Atlanta Airport.' In 2003 to honor late Mayor Maynard H. Jackson, the Atlanta City Council legislated a name change to 'Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport' in recognition of the leadership that both had for the airport.

transportation. We were a family unit, and this was our center. The synagogue and the home and the school were the three main attractions growing up. Today, you've got so many, and I'm going to use the word distractions. Perhaps that's not the right word, but that's what I'm going to use. I use distractions and define distractions as wheels, number one. That is the biggest distraction we've got. The availability of automobiles to the kids, teenagers, that has changed family life, I think, more than any one thing. Again, I'm giving you my own opinion. When I see all these kids today at 16 years old, it's almost the law that they have to have a driver's license, which is a little ludicrous to even say that. But they must drive. Almost every family has one or two cars. The kids use them at the age of 16. I, personally, for example, didn't even get a driver's license until I was 19. I was out of the army and already in college before I even learned to drive. I was the exception even then. There are so many other activities today that we didn't have. The baseball, the little leagues, and the dancing schools. Who could afford them back then anyway? I don't even know if they were in existence back then. They may have been. Our biggest entertainment was the home, the synagogue. The Boy's Club was a big one. Today, there's so many other things. Kids, they have these clubs. The extracurricular activities in schools. They have the wheels. I keep coming back to wheels because I believe the automobile has been the biggest detractor for kids and their family home life. Today, I don't know what percentage it is, but it's a tremendous percentage of kids grow up in single parent homes. We don't even have to talk about that.

COHEN: It's a big percentage.

MASLIA: Growing up, you very rarely heard of a Jewish family having a divorce. You just didn't hear of it. It was almost scandalous. Today, I think one-third of the Jewish marriages end in divorce, maybe even higher by now. I don't know.

COHEN: It's at least that.

MASLIA: There's no stigma attached to divorce like it was. I'm not saying it's good or bad. I'm just saying that parents tried a little harder back then to work out their problems.

COHEN: There were more forces to maintain together than there are today.

MASLIA: They go their separate ways. I'm not saying it's right or wrong. I'm just saying that that's the conditions of today.

COHEN: Those are the facts.

MASLIA: Those are the facts, is right. Today, the woman, in many cases, is self-sufficient. She's graduated from college. She can make her own living. In the 1930s and the 1940s when I

was growing up, most women that I know were housewives and glad to be housewives. Divorce was just out of the question.

COHEN: As I think about what you're saying there, you call it distractions. One thing that occurs, there are a lot more choices today about things. As I think about family life and I think about the social instruments, the social clubs, the Progressive, Mayfair, and Standard Club that I think you eluded to earlier, you've seen the disintegration of some of the social clubs. Is there any parallel or connection?

MASLIA: I think you'll find a lot of the social clubs, as I say there were three. Now there is one. One burned and the other one closed. The distraction there, there is no need to be a member of a club today to have a good restaurant. There was in the 1930s and 1940s. From an athletic standpoint, you don't have to belong to a club to go swimming. My God, everybody has a swimming pool practically today. To play baseball, you don't have to belong to a club. You've got the tee-ball, little league, junior leagues, and all these things. You don't need that particular club life to get to things that you can get in apartment complexes today. They've got tennis courts and swimming pools.

COHEN: You've got all the amenities right there.

MASLIA: You didn't have that 40 years ago. As I said before, the restaurants in Atlanta, there were very few. Very few people could even afford to go to them. You don't have that any more. In other words, the club is not the only form of entertainment today. Night club, for example. The Progressive Club used to have the best night club entertainment. Today, you've got plenty. You've got theaters. You've got shows here. You've got everything here that you really want. When I hear people say, "We're going to New York to go to the shows, and we're going to New York to go shopping." I think if they took a minute to look around, they're going to find that they can do the same shopping here in Atlanta. Maybe the shows are not here this week, but they'll be here in a few weeks.

COHEN: As you were talking about the poverty of earlier years but you didn't know it, and then you look at today where it's comparative affluence where material things and the choices, you wonder did that have an impact? You talked about divorce. You talked about all things. What impact does the availability of more material resources and choice, has that affected the life?

MASLIA: No question about it. The material things are easier to come by. My children received things that I never even thought were ever going to be possible like a swimming pool.

Of course, material things are there. Part of the problem today is that we, as parents, don't emphasize enough that material things are not the only things that are important.

COHEN: I was just thinking about the dependency in the earlier days. The woman was dependent on the man, so she couldn't get up and say, "So long, it's been nice to know you. You're not meeting my needs."

MASLIA: That's correct.

COHEN: Today, with women employed and so forth, they have the where with all.

MASLIA: That's edited the disintegration of family life, as far as I'm concerned. I'm not saying that women should not be qualified. I'm glad that all three of my daughters graduated from college to be a little bit independent if they needed to be.

COHEN: You mean, in terms of a man's illness or death?

MASLIA: That's exactly right. Back then, I remember my mother, she was a housewife. Came over from Turkey and Cuba and had no skills. She didn't even know the language. God knows what would have happened had my father not been able to provide for her and for three sons growing up. It was hard, but I didn't know it was hard. Today, material things are very important. In fact, even the poorest of kids today want these material things. They see others have it. I don't blame them.

COHEN: Television, I guess, enables them to be aware of it.

MASLIA: Television. How many homes in this country today do not have television? Probably not even five percent anymore.

COHEN: The poorest homes have them.

MASLIA: Even the poorest homes have them. They buy them \$2 down, \$2 a week, or whatever they pay. I don't blame them because that is a great thing for them, and I hope it keeps their kids in the house. By the way, today, November 5, the city council of Atlanta is going to vote on an ordinance to prohibit kids over 16 from being outside at 11 o'clock.

COHEN: A curfew?

MASLIA: A curfew. They voted today. Whether it's constitutional or not, I don't know. I hope it passes. I feel very strongly that it will pass. Whether or not the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] and a few others going in and saying that it's infringing on the rights of the kids, I don't know. Perhaps they will. I'm sure you may have read in the paper a few weeks ago where a young kid, 13,14 years old was shot standing in front of his apartment at 4:30 in the morning. The logical question, obviously, is what is he doing outside, 11 or 12 years old at 4:30

in the morning. That's no reason to get shot, of course. There's just too many distractions for young kids, just too many. If my children heard that, they would probably disagree with me. I was reading in the paper where they took comments. Every teenager that was interviewed said, "No, that's crazy. We're good kids." The vast majority are. If the vast majority are good, they ought to be in bed by 11 o'clock or be home by 11 o'clock at night, teenagers, 16 and under. I'm sure it will be challenged in court.

COHEN: In the past, they've talked about the permissive society too. The question is, did it do good or did it do bad by being permissive in the past without some kind of limits and so forth?

MASLIA: I don't think we have any limits. That is our problem. It seems like the kids today, and I don't mean to be critical. I've got grandchildren growing up. My children are going to have problems with their children as my parents probably had with me. They don't seem to honor their father and mother anymore. That's a terrible thing to say, isn't it? But that's the way I feel. To me, most kids are interested in what their peers think of them rather than what their parents. We didn't grow up that way. We were interested what our parents and what our relatives thought about us. We molded our lives, not to satisfy them, but to be sure they were satisfied with the work we did. Today, it's peer pressure. It's what does my friend down the street think about what I'm doing. Hell with what my mother and father think. Am I a pessimist? I don't know.

COHEN: No. I think you're not the first that's talked about the frustrations of today and the value system.

MASLIA: So many parents, the two of them are both working. They have to maintain some sort of life style. I don't mean a great lifestyle, but they have to maintain some semblance of lifestyle. The kids, they take all kinds of advantage of that. I've seen it in too many cases where they're interested in what the other kids think. You know what I think about drugs. I think we already covered that.

COHEN: Right. It's one of the biggest problems in this country today.

MASLIA: It is the biggest problem as far as kids are concerned. I don't care what people say. Crime is big, but let me tell you this, drugs today lead to more crime than you could possibly imagine. I don't know how we're going to end it. This business about running down to Colombia and burning the coke fields, that's fine, but that doesn't help us here because if they don't grow it in Colombia, they're going to grow it somewhere else. The problem is here in this country.

COHEN: The problem is there's so much money in it and these kids who are poor, it's a source . . .

MASLIA: Can you blame them?

COHEN: There's no other opportunities.

MASLIA: These kids. The Atlanta Housing Authority offered \$200 to be a look out. They don't have a pair of shoes on. What do you think they're going to say? I don't blame them. They say, "We can educate them about how wrong it is." You can tell them how wrong it is but when someone is offering you a couple hundred bucks and you have nothing but stand on a corner and watch out, you're going to do it.

<Interview pauses, then resumes>

MASLIA: You asked me about the relationship between the northern and the southern Jews. I remember this one story, which was a true story. For some reason or another, northern Jews, not all of them, but many of them looked upon the southern Jews as just a little bit better than the rednecks. Just a little better, not much better. I remember in 1967 or 1968, our Rabbi Cohen who had been with us many years and was going to retire. We were looking for a replacement. Somehow or another we hired, this rabbi from Pennsylvania. He and his wife came down here. I happened to be one who went to the airport to pick them up. This was a college graduate rabbi from this country, and his wife was a college graduate. Driving from the airport to the synagogue, she turned to me and she said to me, "Where are all the plantations?" This was a girl, a rabbi's wife from Pennsylvania, college graduate, and this was her impression of the south. Where are all the plantations? I thought she was joking.

COHEN: She was serious?

MASLIA: She was dead serious. She wanted to know where all the plantations were. They lasted one year. Their attitude was . . . I think they believed that we didn't even wear shoes except to pick them up maybe. As far as today with transportation and business and everything else, northern Jews, southern Jews. I'll tell you this much, I will say about northern Jews, many of them moved to Atlanta as you well know, I think you're probably one. How many do you know ever went back?

COHEN: Not too many.

MASLIA: I think that speaks well of the south.

COHEN: I always heard a great number of people in service who were stationed near here, stayed here and married and never went back.

MASLIA: I don't know of any person who has moved from the north to the south, Atlanta. I'm talking about Atlanta, in particular, whether it be a company or whatever it was, if they got transferred back up north, they quit their jobs. I think that speaks well of us. I think I can use you as my prime example.

COHEN: It's one of the nicest places I've ever lived.

MASLIA: Where were you born?

COHEN: In Brooklyn, New York.

MASLIA: Well, you can't win them all.

<End Tape 2, Side 1>

INTERVIEW ENDS

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