THE WILLIAM BREMAN JEWISH HERITAGE MUSEUM
ESTHER AND HERBERT TAYLOR
JEWISH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT OF ATLANTA
ALABAMA JEWISH HISTORY PROJECT

MEMOIRIST: STUART ROYAL
INTERVIEWER: SANDRA BERMAN
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INTERVIEW BEGINS

<Sbegin Disk 1>

Sandra: Today is January 27, 2009. I am with Stuart Royal who has agreed to be interviewed for the Esther and Herbert Taylor Oral History Project of the William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum. I am Sandra Berman. I’m the archivist at the museum, and I am very thankful that you have agreed to participate in our project. I’d like to begin by just asking you to tell me a little bit about your background and how you and your family ended up Birmingham.

Stuart: My name is Stuart Royal. My family is one of the Jewish families in Birmingham that have been here for a long time. My father and his three brothers, the four of them were born in Birmingham. His father, my grandfather, Joseph Barnett Royal, moved to Birmingham in the early teens . . . nineteen teens, to be a newspaper distributor for the Birmingham News, the major paper in Birmingham even today. There are stories about him and the four young boys getting up early in the morning before school in their sort of cart-drawn, horse-powered vehicle to distribute, to throw papers basically, over the Southside of Birmingham. That was how my family made it. They came from nothing on the Royal side of the family. Three of the brothers eventually moved away when they grew up. My father [Arnold Royal] stayed here in Birmingham. He eventually became a pediatrician. He was one of the Jewish pediatricians in Birmingham for 50 plus years. He lived until he was . . . practiced pediatrics until he was 79. He was born and raised here. All of his family . . . I have four siblings . . . the five of us were born and raised in Birmingham.
On the other side of my family is the Friedman side of the family. There’s Rubenstein . . . Micky Friedman Rubenstein, who lives in Birmingham, is a very important Jewish family in Birmingham, my mother, Elaine Friedman Royal, married to my father, and then the third one was Karl Friedman, [the] so-called ‘Bubba’ Friedman. There were the three Friedmans, my mother, my Aunt Micky Rubenstein, and Karl Friedman, and they came to Birmingham . . . their parents came to Birmingham in the late teens as I remember. Mimi, my grandmother on that side of the family, Mimi Friedman lived on the Southside.¹ She was very involved in the theater on the south side, and her husband, ‘Daddy Max’ Friedman, was in the engraving business. He was born in Russia, but he moved here, and he became instrumental in that sort of engraving business in Birmingham. Both of our families were really in Birmingham way back towards the beginning of Temple Beth-El.² Temple Beth-El here was founded in 1927.

<Stuart turns to the side: “Is that correct, Julia?”>

**Stuart:** Both the families were here before that official synagogue, Temple Beth-El, became what it is today. That’s where we are, and we’ve been here continuously ever since.

**Sandra:** Where were they from originally, both sides?

**Stuart:** The Royal side of the family was from Russia. Both my grandmother and grandfather on that side were from Russia. On the Friedman side of the family, they were from probably Poland . . . Germany were their backgrounds.

**Sandra:** I understand how your grandfather, if he was distributing for the newspaper, came here. How about the Friedmans. How did they end up in Birmingham?

**Stuart:** They originally were in Cincinnati [Ohio]. There was a big Friedman contingent in Cincinnati, and he had a friend who brought him down to Birmingham to find a job in Birmingham. It was strictly a job related sort of thing at that time.

**Sandra:** Did they ever talk about what they found here when they first moved down here . . . their early recollections of Birmingham and living in Alabama?

**Stuart:** Coming to Birmingham, at that time most of the Jews were located on the Northside of Birmingham, which actually happens to be about where the Civic Center area is located today.

¹ The Southside community is situated on the slopes of Red Mountain, just south of the central business district. It is one of the oldest residential neighborhoods and is home to the University of Alabama—Birmingham and its adjacent hospitals.

² Temple Beth-El was founded in 1907 and is a Conservative congregation. The current rabbi (2014) is Randall Konigsburg. On April 28, 1958, during the Civil Rights Era, dynamite was placed outside the synagogue but it failed to explode. The crime was never officially solved.
In fact, just in the last five or ten years my family, who lived there and also owned some property with some rental property around there, just recently sold that property to the city of Birmingham which has a big dome stadium plan that’s in the process of being developed. That was some of the land that was purchased for that new thing in Birmingham, which hopefully will be a big deal to happen, so my family will be somewhere in the background for developing that. That’s where that side of the family came from.

Sandra: Was it your grandfather who was the distributor?

Stuart: Yes.

Sandra: Then your father went to medical school.

Stuart: Yes. In terms of my grandfather on that side, he was in the choir in Temple Beth-El. He was a very religious person. Back at that stage, Birmingham I think for the longest time had Orthodox³ and Conservative⁴ and Reform.⁵ Conservative Judaism at that stage, I think in most places, was more . . . it was high Conservative. It was closer to Orthodox, which is what I remember. My grandfather on that side was very religious. He was sort of a cantor⁶ at times when we didn’t have a cantor. He was one of the cantors, and he was in the choir. He was very attached, and my father was bar mitzvahed.⁷ My father and his twin brother—actually the four brothers—were bar mitzvahed here in Birmingham. This was back in the early thirties . . . 1931. That side of the family was very attached to Jewish life in Birmingham, and they lived on the

³ 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.

⁴ 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).

⁵ A division within Judaism especially in North America and the United Kingdom. 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.

⁶ The chazzan (cantor) is the official in charge of music or chants and leads liturgical prayer and chanting in the synagogue.

⁷ Bar mitzvah is Hebrew for ‘son of commandment.’ A rite of passage for Jewish boys aged 13 years and one day. At that time, a Jewish boy is considered a responsible adult for most religious purposes. He is now duty bound to keep the commandments, he puts on tefillin, and may be counted to the minyan quorum for public worship. He celebrates the bar mitzvah by being called up to the reading of the Torah in the synagogue, usually on the next available Sabbath after his Hebrew birthday.
Northside. Back at that stage they had *shochets*. They had . . . it wasn’t a ghetto, but it was an internal community that really supported the typical almost *shtetl*-type of lifestyle that these people, who were first immigrants coming from Europe, would maintain.

After my father eventually came back college, etc., they moved on to what is now the Southside, back in the area where St. Vincent’s Hospital is . . . Highland Avenue. There were a lot of Jews that lived in that area of Birmingham. I was actually born there, on the Southside. There were five of us, five brothers and sisters. In the early Fifties the natural tendency in Birmingham, Jews in Birmingham and other people, was to move so-called ‘over the mountain’ north. There was the Southside of Birmingham . . . first there was the Northside, then there was the Southside. Then most people moved over the mountain into various communities, most prominently Mountain Brook. There was sort of a Jewish-type ghetto in Birmingham in the Fifties that developed in Mountain Brook. I was born on the Southside, but then moved over into Mountain Brook. That’s how things have evolved relative to just living in Birmingham.

**Sandra:** When [Temple] Beth-El was founded, couldn’t have been founded as a Conservative synagogue. It was an Orthodox synagogue originally, correct?

**Stuart:** I think some other people could answer that more definitively than I could, but it was certainly on the Orthodox side. I think there were Orthodox people that came together, of like mind, to form something different. Form in the conservative sense of things.

**Sandra:** Do you have a fondness for any particular rabbi at Beth-El or any insights into any of the earlier rabbis at Beth-El?

**Stuart:** I remember Rabbi [Abraham] Mesch. He was the rabbi in the Thirties on to when I was *bar mitzvahed*, which was 1963, and he was more towards the Orthodox . . . a fairly stern sort of guy. He set a certain tone that people responded to, but he wasn’t a real approachable person, especially for children. I was raised in my formative years, for pre-*bar mitzvah*

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8 An adult male Jew who is trained and accredited by a rabbinic authority in the Jewish dietary laws. Specifically, a *shochet* slaughters animals in a way prescribed by Jewish dietary laws to avoid pain to the animal as much as possible and to safeguard the health of the consumer.

9 A *shtetl* is a small town, usually in Eastern Europe, with a significant Jewish presence in it.

10 Northside is the area north of downtown Birmingham. It was annexed into the City of Birmingham in 1910. Typically, it was an area of industrial and commercial development and the neighborhood into with new immigrants, including the wave of Eastern European Jews, moved.

11 Mountain Brook is a city and suburb of Birmingham, Alabama. It extends along the ridges known as ‘Red Mountain’ and ‘Shades Mountain.’

12 Rabbi Abraham J. Mesch was the rabbi at Temple Beth-El for over 27 years, from 1935 to his death in 1962. He was an ardent supporter and public advocate of Zionism.
especially, in a Conservative synagogue that was like that. The actual . . . within the synagogue itself the whole feel of it was pretty austere, pretty formal in a sense.

Not too long after that, in the Sixties the synagogue was renovated. We just had newer rabbis. Rabbi [Morton A.] Wallach, who was there in the early Sixties, and he put a totally different tone to things. After I became bar mitzvah and eventually went to college, I lost touch with Temple Beth-El until I moved back after medical training, etc. Actually, my favorite rabbi after that is our current rabbi, Rabbi [Brian] Glusman.\(^\text{13}\) He’s a totally different feel. He’s a wonderful person, very appealing individual. [He] totally changed the service on Friday night into something that’s more laid back, more spiritual in a way . . . almost a camp-like singing and guitar atmosphere. That’s for Friday night. On Saturday it’s a pretty traditional, middle of the road, Conservative type of thing. I like the fact that he has appeal to the younger generation, and he’s really rejuvenated the spirit and the attendance in the Friday night services, for instance.

That’s what Conservative Judaism does, at least in this city. There’s only one Conservative synagogue in a city of this size, and it only has one rabbi, and so the tone of that rabbi sets the tone of how the synagogue feels. In a given time, you’ll have a more austere type of thing. You’ll have a more formal sort of thing, you’ll have a less formal, and as a Conservative Jew you have to be flexible to those things. I remember during medical training living in Boston, and there were 30 something Conservative synagogues. You could find anything along the spectrum. Here you have one, so you as the individual have to be flexible. That’s how things go in a city of this size.

**Sandra:** Did you go to school with mainly other Jews or were you in a very mixed kind of public school setting?

**Stuart:** I went to . . . I was in public school virtually the entire childhood education. Because most of the Jews at that time lived in a certain area, in the Mountain Brook school system there was a fairly high concentration of Jews. It was still quite a minority in terms of the total population of the kids who were in the school, but it was still . . . all your Jewish friends . . . everyone who was Jewish virtually went to school there, and it was a public situation. As it’s gotten further along, when I got further into high school, I eventually went to a private high school. That really had to do more with the fact that the Mountain Brook school system actually

\(^{13}\) Rabbi Brian Glusman came to Temple Beth-El in 2001 and left in 2009.
didn’t have a high school until later in high school from my experience. I went to a private school because I wanted to have a more established education at that time.

Sandra: Was it easy to be Jewish in Birmingham during your time growing up?

Stuart: My time growing up in terms of bar mitzvah age and post-bar mitzvah was in the Sixties, so Birmingham was an interesting place, as you know, in the Sixties. I was talking earlier today about my father. My father became eventually president of the synagogue. My uncle, Karl Friedman, became president of the synagogue, so my family’s been very involved in the Jewish community of Birmingham. My uncle was also president of [Levite] JCC [Jewish Community Center]. One of the things about Birmingham and Jewish life, which . . . I don’t think it’s unique . . . a city of this size if you’re really going to have a strong Jewish community, people need to identify with being Jewish and participate. The community if it’s successful I think opens its arms to people who move in just like Barbara Solomon, who was immediate past president of the synagogue. She’s from Canada. People who are interested and they’re talented, they have an opportunity to express themselves and be leaders in the Jewish community. Birmingham I think has that feel for people being involved, and you know most of the people. I think that’s a little bit different than you’ll find in larger cities, where you can become virtually anonymous. In a city perhaps like New York, you can be Jewish without even identifying per se. The whole environment has a Jewish feel. Birmingham, as a general community, doesn’t have a Jewish feel to it, so if you’re going to be Jewish you need to identify with it, belong to synagogues, belong to the JCC, belong to Jewish organizations, and make that part of your life.

Sandra: So most of your friends were Jewish.

Stuart: When I was growing up, all of my social friends were Jewish. I went to school with non-Jewish people. I was athletic. I played on athletic teams, which were predominantly non-Jewish guys on my teams. They were friends. They were not social friends, but they were friends.

Sandra: What about the Reform congregation. Did you associate with . . . ?

Stuart: That’s an interesting thing. Of course, I don’t know if that has any uniqueness to Birmingham at all. Back when I was young there were two country clubs in Birmingham. The

14 The Museum holds two oral histories of Karl Friedman: OHC 10222 (2009) and OHC 10821 (2012).

15 The Levite Jewish Community Center began as the Young Men’s Hebrew Association (YMHA) and was founded in 1887. It was a center for the Eastern European Jews of the Northside. Throughout the years, it served as a meeting spot for all sorts of Jewish organizations and was the site of many social events. In the 1950’s, it became the ‘Levite Jewish Community Center,’ and moved to $1,000,000 complex on Montclair Road.
Hillcrest Club\textsuperscript{16} was virtually completely where the Reform Jews spent their time, and the Fairmont Club\textsuperscript{17} was virtually where the Conservative Jews spent their time . . . the families . . . where you spent your time, your social time, and there wasn’t much crossover.

\textbf{Sandra:} Were these Jewish country clubs?

\textbf{Stuart:} These were Jewish country clubs. They were exclusively Jewish country clubs at that time. Eventually it morphed, but back when we were there they were Jewish country clubs. It was unfortunate for me, at that time when I was young, but especially through the years and looking back on it. It was unfortunate that it sort of segregated the Conservative and Reform Jews in Birmingham, socially. I’m talking about the kids. I don’t think there was a lot of one looking down on the other. They were just in different social circles. The Orthodox community in Birmingham has always been fairly small, so that, from a statistical sense, didn’t have much of an impact. I would say I knew of, but I was not very social friendly with . . . being a Conservative . . . with the Reform Jewish kids. Given that Birmingham was a relatively small community from a numbers standpoint, it really cut down on the number of kids that you were exposed to that you could date or get to know. I still think there’s some of that today, that there still are somewhat different social circles. It wasn’t until I came back, became a doctor, and then there were other doctors who were Jewish doctors from the Reform synagogue, that I met them professionally and then eventually became socially friends with them that there was that sort of cross-fertilization. You might delve into that with other people, but I think there has been a separation that probably wasn’t to the benefit of the community or the social experience growing up in Birmingham being Jewish.

\textbf{Sandra:} Did you ever date anybody that wasn’t Jewish when you were living in Birmingham?

\textbf{Stuart:} I never dated anybody who wasn’t Jewish.

\textbf{Sandra:} Would that have been frowned upon in your home?

\textbf{Stuart:} Yes. I would give you this insight. This is probably not unique at all, but certainly at my parents’ level everybody was married Jewish. There was no intermarriage that I knew of at that level. There was no divorce at that level, at my parents’ age. A little bit younger, it was really in the Sixties, that I first remembered anybody, any Jewish couple divorcing. It was very unusual. There were five children in my family. Every one of them married Jewish people.

\textsuperscript{16} Hillcrest Club was established in 1883 for German Jews.

\textsuperscript{17} Fairmont Club was established in 1920 for East European Jews.
There was virtually 100 percent in that Jewish sort of thing, and that extends even out to first cousins level. Since then, at my children’s generation, it’s about 50 percent. About 50 percent of them currently are marrying Jewish, despite the fact that I was head of the Israel Bonds\(^\text{18}\) for our area, been on the board of the Temple, on the board of the JCC, all my kids have been through the Hebrew school, all the Jewish youth groups. They’ve been to Israel. They’ve done all that. With all those experiences, 50 percent of them still are only marrying Jewish in our family.

**Sandra:** What do you attribute that to? Why do you think that’s . . .?

**Stuart:** That’s a good . . . if I had the answer to that I would be the senior rabbi somewhere I guess. One of my major interests is really for Jewish continuity, and that’s what we’re talking about and we’re fighting . . . It’s fighting a losing battle everywhere. I really don’t know. I wish I had the answer to that. I was just talking to a Jewish doctor today who has—my children are already older and married—teenage children. I told him that if I were him at those ages—eventually they get to an age where they won’t listen to you when you try to give them advice—but, as Jewish parents, you should tell them that you want them to marry Jewish. If they don’t, you will be severely disappointed . . . that it will have a big impact on the family, on them and their children’s ability to enjoy the Jewish experiences that we have. Everything we do—obviously we do the usual Jewish religious observances—but wherever we go, if we go down to the beach . . . we have a beach experience every year . . . it’s a Jewish experience. We do *Shabbat* [Hebrew: Sabbath] every Friday at home, but [also] at the beach. The whole extended family does a Jewish thing. Everybody comes to the beach. If your children are coming and participating in your family and they’re not Jewish, they are not going to know what’s going on. They’re not going to feel like it. They’re going to stand out.

I encourage parents to very forcefully talk to their children before they get to be about 16, because later they just . . . they’re not listening to you. The hormones are raging, and they’re . . . that’s the dogma I think that they should get. Then when they start to date I think people should absolutely, categorically say, “You are not allowed to date non-Jewish people.” Other than the fact that they’re not Jewish, there are wonderful people out there that Jewish people could marry and do marry and in other ways have a successful marriage, but you and your

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\(^{18}\) Development Corporation for Israel, commonly known as ‘Israel Bonds,’ is a broker-dealer that underwrites securities issued by the State of Israel in the United States.
children are not going to be Jewish if you don’t marry somebody Jewish. They should categorically, when they are at home, prohibit them from dating non-Jewish people. Then hopefully that will perpetuate when they go off to college. You don’t have control over your children at that stage of the game.

One of my children, after all of this that we’re talking about, who went off to an Ivy League\(^\text{19}\) school that’s very Jewish—most of the Ivy League schools are very Jewish—and we wanted him to go there because of the Jewish experience. It’s a terrific . . . it happens to be Yale [University—New Haven, Connecticut], and the Hillel\(^\text{20}\) there was world class, the best Hillel anywhere . . . and December of his freshman year he brought home a non-Jewish girl. Of course, it didn’t last because we . . . It was a surprise to us, and it just was not something we expected and not something we would tolerate. I think that had a big impact on him for a long time, because eventually—that was when he was 18 and he just got married and he’s 30—he was not finding the right Jewish girl in various experiences. He eventually went on JDate.\(^\text{21}\) Here it was . . . [he was] a medical resident. He’s in medical training. You’d think he’d be able to find somebody, and it was JDate . . . He’s in Birmingham, in residency, found now his wife in Atlanta, working in Atlanta, but this was through JDate. [He] would not have . . .

**Sandra:** That’s wonderful.

**Stuart:** Can I tell you how wonderful it feels? I will just tell you, for anybody who has to struggle through their children not marrying Jewish, it’s heartbreaking. It’s just absolutely heartbreaking when they don’t.

**Sandra:** What year were you born?

**Stuart:** I was born in 1950.

**Sandra:** Nineteen fifty . . . so you were a mere baby when schools were desegregated in 1954.

**Stuart:** Right.

**Sandra:** What is your earliest recollection of your families talking about it? Was there discussion here at the Temple? What can you recall about that era?

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\(^{19}\) A group of long-established colleges and universities in the eastern United States having high academic and social prestige. It includes Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Columbia, Dartmouth, Cornell, Brown, and the University of Pennsylvania.

\(^{20}\) Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life is a Jewish campus organization. Its mission is to enrich the lives of Jewish students so they may enrich Jewish people and the world.

\(^{21}\) JDate is an online dating service aimed at Jewish singles.
Stuart: When we eventually moved over into Mountain Brook . . . this was starting on the Southside and moved into Mountain Brook . . . Mountain Brook was a very homogeneous population of white people, Jews and Christians predominantly. When you’re less than ten years of age, it doesn’t make a big impact on you, but I remember [President] John [Fitzgerald] Kennedy in 1960, 1961, getting elected. That was . . . I really don’t remember Brown v. Board of Education. From a personal recollection standpoint, it didn’t have an impact on me. I was just too young, but I remember John Kennedy’s election. I remember opening my mind up to things happening out there in the world. That’s when I really began to pay attention to what was happening in Birmingham relative to the segregation and civil rights things.

I would say . . . I don’t know what your experience is in terms of Jews in the segregated South during that period of time. Jews were . . . my experience in Birmingham was the Jewish people were bigoted towards black people. We had a maid . . . a housekeeper. We had numbers of them. They were all black, African-American. They were wonderful people, and we supported them but they were, in my family and virtually all the other Jewish families who had such housekeepers, they were second-class citizens. They were talked about in my experience in a relatively demeaned way. They were loved, but they were second-class people. As a young kid, you know how you are. You’re seven or eight years old and you’re looking up to your parents, and they’re talking, and they’re using—not my parents specifically, but all that generation—‘nigger,’ that sort of . . . I forget the . . . what is the . . .

<someone off camera inaudibly says the word to him>

Stuart: . . . Schwarz [German: black], yes. It’s been so long since I’ve even used it. That was not daily, but every hourly sort of word, and I couldn’t even remember it. That goes to show you how much things have changed. That was the way that black people were talked about . . . 1960, 1961, 1962. Then it becomes 1963, and, of course, there’s a lot of things happening in Birmingham, but 1963 was the year that the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church.

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22 Commonly known as ‘JFK.’ John Kennedy was the 35th President of the United States, serving from 1961 until November 22, 1963 when he was assassinated in Dallas, Texas. He was a Democrat.
23 Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka was a landmark decision of the United States Supreme Court that declared state laws establishing separate public schools for black and white students unconstitutional. The ruling paved the way for integration and the civil rights movement.
24 A contemptuous term or ethnic slur for a black or dark-skinned person. The word originated as a neutral term referring to people with black skin, as a variation of the noun ‘negro.’ Today it is racist insult.
25 On September 15, 1963 a bomb exploded before Sunday morning services at the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama—a church with a predominantly black congregation that served as a meeting place for civil rights leaders. Four young girls were killed and many other people injured; outrage over the incident and the violent
happened. This was at the time when my father and my uncle, in 1963 and 1964, were president of the synagogue. They were involved in what was happening in the Jewish community’s participation in the civil rights thing, which was behind the scenes. It was muted. It wasn’t publicly recognized, but they were trying to work with Birmingham civic leaders and politicians to try to help solve the racial problems. I remember that happening. I will tell you, in 1963 . . . now I’m 13 years old, post-bar mitzvah. . . I was bar mitzvahed in April of 1963 . . . the bombing was later that year . . . I remember not being able to go downtown at all.

At that time, we were living in Mountain Brook. Temple Beth-El is on the south side of Birmingham, so we could go to Temple, which is sort on the edge of the Southside. We used to . . . before it got more violent in Birmingham . . . after Junior Congregation on Saturday mornings, we would, a group of us, hop on the bus and go downtown and just hang out and go to movies and enjoy ourselves. That was the social experience at that time. When it got to be 1962 and 1963 [it was] not allowed. My parents absolutely did not allow us to go down there. They felt it was dangerous. My father in particular, because of his exposure in the secular community . . . he was a Jewish leader . . . I think he felt particularly vulnerable and sensitive to things that could happen to him or his children, so we were just not . . . It was really for one to two years I didn’t go to downtown Birmingham.

**Sandra:** Did you discuss what was happening in your home? Was it dinner table conversation?

**Stuart:** I don’t remember major serious conversation. I remember things happening . . . we saw . . . this was a worldwide event in Birmingham, Alabama. The hosing, and the dogs, and the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing. These were sentinel events in the Civil Rights Movement\(^{26}\) happening in Birmingham, literally a few miles from where I was living, and I saw nothing of it. I saw it on television. I had no first-hand experience with it. I remember it disturbing my father, the kind of person who would pace and worry, but he wasn’t the best communicator. To sit down and talk to me about it in a real . . . to have a dialogue . . . here I’m a teenager . . . 13, 14 at the

\(^{26}\) The American Civil Rights Movement encompasses social movements in the United States whose goal was to end racial segregation and discrimination against black Americans and enforce constitutional voting rights to them. The movement was characterized by major campaigns of civil resistance. Between 1955 and 1968, acts of nonviolent protest and civil disobedience produced crisis situations between activists and government authorities. Noted legislative achievements during this phase of the Civil Rights Movement were passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Immigration and Nationality Services Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968.
time . . . That’s a time when you could really start to have more adult concepts and conversations, but I don’t remember having such a conversation with him.

**Sandra:** Do you remember, and looking back, what was the stand of the Temple here and Rabbi [Abraham] Mesch?

**Stuart:** Of course, this was now after Rabbi Mesch.

**Sandra:** Right. That was after Rabbi Mesch.

**Stuart:** Our rabbi here did not take a stand. The Reform rabbi I think was more vocal and more out there in terms of a stand. As I remember—you’ll get this better from other people because people were a bit older and remembered it better—I think there was an attempt to . . . try to not rock the boat, not to get the Jewish people out there visible in supporting the Civil Rights Movement. I don’t think the community, the general community out there, knew what the Jewish people were doing behind the scenes. There was a fair amount going on behind the scenes relative to the Civil Rights Movement, but not overtly, anyway.

**Sandra:** What do you think the reason . . . I have a couple of different questions. Do you recall any kind of vocalization regarding northern Jews coming down here and then getting to go back up north, and was there discussion of that or have you discussed it in years since?

**Stuart:** It’s an interesting question that you ask, because the answer in terms of during that period of time that I remember, we didn’t discuss it. My son . . . he did go to Yale [University—New Haven, Connecticut] . . . took a course in religious studies at Yale, and they had to write a paper. He decided to write a paper on this experience of the 19 rabbis from the Jewish Theological Seminary [of America—New York City, New York] coming down to Birmingham to try to, I think, intercede in what was going on. He went to the JTS [Jewish Theological Seminary] archives in New York. He was in New Haven as a college student. He

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27 The Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City, New York was founded in 1886 by Dr. Sabato Morais and Dr. H. Pereira Mendes, along with a group of prominent lay leaders from Sephardic congregations in Philadelphia and New York. Its mission was to preserve the knowledge and practice of historical Judaism by educating intellectual and spiritual leaders for Conservative Judaism.

28 In 1963 as Birmingham struggled in the throes of the Civil Rights era, Martin Luther King Jr. made pleas to the Birmingham clergy, including rabbis, to support his marches. When the Jewish rabbis counseled patience and moderation and asked him to wait for desegregation laws to take effect, King called them out on their perceived passivity in a “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.” The letter gained national attention and a few weeks later a group of 19 Conservative rabbis from the North, outraged by the images they saw on the TV of black protestors being beaten, arrived in Birmingham. They didn’t tell anyone in the Jewish community they were coming, which angered the rabbis and many Jews in Birmingham. After talking with King in the Birmingham jail, they toured black churches making speeches of support. Then they left. The whole episode appeared high-handed to the Birmingham Jewish community, and they feared an antisemitic backlash from the Ku Klux Klan.
went to New York, dusted off the archives, read through the minutes, as you would do in a professional sense, and wrote a paper on it. What shocked him . . . what was unbelievable to him at the time was that, as he’s reading through these archives in New York City, they’re talking about my father, Arnold Royal. They’re talking about my uncle, Karl Friedman, and what it was going to be like when they came down and confronted these people. That was the first time he really realized that my family had a role that was recognized back in a very important time in Birmingham’s history, the Birmingham general community history. It was something that he was able to bring [to] the fore . . . In fact, I think they’re going to put his paper in the archives here at Temple Beth-El and maybe part of the archives of what your organization is doing.

Sandra: I know you were young, but in your family discussions or recalling, was the community afraid?

Stuart: The community was very afraid. The Jewish community was afraid of what was going on. There were in the middle of that . . . the early Sixties were a pretty important time relative to the Civil Rights Movement and related to African-Americans . . . but, interspersed in there, there was a fair amount of antisemitic things going on. I don’t remember . . . these were the little things when you were a grade school kid. There were, in my elementary school in Mountain Brook, wonderful Mountain Brook, Alabama, in the Fifties, there were fights. We had fights. The Jewish kids had fights on the playground related to being Jewish, and antisemitic slogans, and things written. There was this undercurrent of that at that time, but it surfaced in the early Sixties. You didn’t hear a lot about it, but there was antisemitic acts going on in Birmingham during the early Sixties, also. The two things together, the antisemitic sort of thing plus the whole violent tone of what was going on, made Jewish people pretty frightened during that period of time.

Sandra: Did you have discussions with your parents in later years about the involvement of the Jewish community . . . what they did or didn’t do?

Stuart: We talked about it, but I think, in my own estimation, that they were somewhat embarrassed that the Jewish leaders didn’t take a more overt role, a more visible role in the community related to the civil rights issues that were going on. I’m not comparing this to the Holocaust per se, but when people have very bad experiences, and they didn’t defend themselves or come out in the way they wanted to, it’s sort of an embarrassing thing. People don’t like to talk about it, and it’s hard to draw that out. I think that’s probably what we were experiencing.
It was something they didn’t like to admit, talk about, and I’ll tell you, at that stage of the game, you’d have to have lived then. Of course, I was young and I’m not sure I can really comment, but I can understand people in a different environment where they may be very physically and emotionally threatened to not have the courage to stand up, especially if it wasn’t directly involving you. It may just be a difficult expression or stand to take. Some people do, and of course those are our heroes. We like that to happen, and we need to learn about that. There weren’t a lot of overt Jewish heroes in Birmingham during the Civil Rights Movement.

Sandra: Where were you and what can you tell me about the almost bombing at this Temple?

Stuart: This was in the late Fifties, and of course I really remember just from what I read and from the photographs that were in the newspapers, archives that I’ve looked at, and . . . my parents . . . I remember them just being emotional when it happened, because it really didn’t happen. It really didn’t get bombed, but it was supposed to and it was close to happening. That was an important time in Birmingham’s Jewish history. We’ll never forget it again. It’s something that’ll make an impact for the future.

Sandra: Why was Temple Beth-El selected if they were not vocally speaking out against . . . or in favor of integration? Was there any . . .?

Stuart: I think . . . again, others may have more information on this . . . but I think this was more of an antisemitic, more strictly antisemitic act or attempt as opposed to something that was a spillover from the African-American civil rights issues that we were dealing with in Birmingham. It was frequently similar people. I think there was an overlap of people who did this, but I’m not . . . I don’t think they were targeting Jews because the Jews were supporting the African-Americans in the civil rights issues. I think it was just strictly Jewish antisemitic sort of events.

Sandra: Are you glad you grew up in a southern city, in Birmingham?

Stuart: Yes. I loved growing up in Birmingham. There’s so many aspects to that. I love the size of the Jewish community, and I will tell you . . . I’m not sure I can comment how far back this is true, but the Birmingham Jewish population has not changed for a long time. There’s been 5,000 to 6,000 Jews in Birmingham for decades that I know of, back from when I was growing up until today. I’m sure there have been fluctuations, but when you have . . . and it’s a size enough community, like I was mentioning, that you can have Conservative, Reform and
Orthodox. There’s always been that since 1950, when I was born. Later on, there’s even a Hasidic group here.

Sandra: A Chabad.

Stuart: A Chabad, and there’s been a Humanistic Jewish group here, so a few smaller groups have developed, enough to where people can find a niche in terms of being Jewish. That has been wonderful, and I think in Birmingham . . . this doesn’t have to do with the Jewish thing, but I would just say Birmingham is an attractive community culturally. Jews like to be . . . I think Jewish people love culture, so in terms of the theater, the cultural arts, it’s got it here. It’s accessible. It’s logistically easy to get to. You can afford it. You have the time to do it. It has most of the advantages and the quality. I would just say the quality of these cultural things are very good. It’s not quite the Metropolitan Opera, but I will tell you that Birmingham gets high marks for that. To have a small city, big town sort of feel to it where you can easily get back and forth and you can appreciate the cultural non-Jewish parts of the community. Then you have this really identified, very cohesive strong Jewish community, it’s a wonderful thing. I’ve encouraged my children to consider doing . . . this is now . . . again we’re talking about . . . in terms of the Royal-Friedman side of the family, we’re working on 100 years being in Birmingham. I think Birmingham is better than . . . to grow up now as a Jewish person it’s better than it’s ever been. I thought it was great when I was growing up.

Sandra: What changed? Is there a better relationship with the general community than there was?

Stuart: I think people are coming together. I think the Jewish community is tighter. What eventually happened with the two country clubs, they eventually merged. That brought some of the Jewish people socially together, from Conservative and Reform together more, and I think

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29 Hasidic Judaism is a Jewish mystical movement that was founded in eighteenth century Eastern Europe by Rabbi Israël Baal Shem Tov. It promotes spirituality through the popularization and internalization of Jewish mysticism as the fundamental aspect of the faith.

30 Chabad is a Hasidic movement in Orthodox Judaism.

31 Humanistic Judaism embraces a human-centered philosophy that combines the celebration of Jewish culture and identity with an adherence to humanistic values and ideas. It offers a nontheistic alternative. Humanistic Jews value their Jewish identity and the aspects of Jewish culture that offer a genuine expression of their contemporary way of life.

32 Founded in 1880, the Metropolitan Opera, commonly referred to as the ‘Met’ is a company based in New York City, at the Metropolitan Opera House at the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. It presents about 27 different operas each year in a season which lasts from late September through May. Outside of New York the Met has been known to audiences in large measure through its many years of live radio broadcasts dating back to 1910. Currently, the annual Met broadcast season typically begins the first week of December and offers 20 live Saturday matinée performances through May. (2015)
that was a positive step. I think that Birmingham has just become a stronger . . . The medical community is world class in Birmingham, and you can virtually professionally find your niche in virtually any profession. There’s a few . . . I mean if you want to be on Broadway, you’re not going to do that in Birmingham, Alabama. You’re going to grow out of that and move on, but in most of them you can be extremely professionally successful and then have your Jewish life. I don’t know where else I would choose to live.

**Sandra:** How active do Jewish community members get in general civic affairs in the city?

**Stuart:** I would say moderately. The Jewish people who are here get very involved in the Jewish organizations. Of course, everybody only has so much time. There are some people . . . like my wife, for instance, is very involved in the non-Jewish arts community and leadership community. Jewish people are typically successful in what they try to do, and, if they have interest, they’re accepted.

**Sandra:** That’s what I . . .

**Stuart:** It’s not an issue of the secular non-Jewish community not being open-armed to it. We ended up . . . when we finished medical training and came back to Birmingham . . . we lived . . . came back to the city of Birmingham. Like I said, most people, most Jews, lived in Mountain Brook. That’s not the city of Birmingham. We lived in the city, and our kids went to city schools and eventually went to a private school in the city. At this private school, there’s the usual WASP-y [White Anglo-Saxon Protestant] wealthy . . . Birmingham has a very wealthy non-Jewish community. It has a pretty wealthy Jewish community, but non-Jewish community. Very wealthy. Surprisingly so. So we were with a lot of the blue blood . . . my kids were with the blue blood non-Jewish kids and their families. Today, even within the last week we went to a high school basketball game at that private school that our kids attended, and we’re with all these non-Jewish . . . That’s the non-Jewish side of our social circle, kind of through that, and then the rest of our social experience is with our Jewish friends. Whether you want to do it in general socially, you’re accepted.

There still is this whole . . . Birmingham has historically had a pretty strong country club environment for social activities. I’m talking about the Birmingham Country Club, which didn’t have any Jews for the longest time, and has some token Jews. Mountain Brook Country

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33 White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) is often a disparaging term, which originated in the 1950’s to describe persons who are perceived as belonging to an American Protestant upper class and who enjoy financial and social privilege.
Club never had any Jews. They may have one now. Really, it’s essentially a non- . . . it’s an exclusive sort of country club. A lot of non-Jewish wealthy people’s social experiences are through their country club. I think that’s one of the reasons why there were those Jewish country clubs, the two that eventually merged into one, because Jews didn’t have an opportunity, in those days for sure, and virtually not today, to have country club social experiences unless you had a Jewish one yourself. We’re not part of the non-Jewish country club scene, but out there in the rest of the world, in a civic sort of sense . . . This past week, we went down to the civil rights museum [Birmingham Civil Rights Institute]—Birmingham has a civil rights museum—and they had a big gala, and we were invited. We were a part of it. It was a predominantly non-Jewish social experience, and it was . . . we were welcome. If you want to be on [a] board of non-Jewish agencies or non-Jewish things, by and large Jews are welcome. Of course, Jews do a lot. They’ve historically done a lot in the United Way. The United Way is not a Jewish agency, but there’s been many Jews who have been heads of the United Way here, which is a very prominent and very successful community environment. I would say, in general, Jews have all the opportunity they need to be involved in civic affairs in Birmingham.

Sandra: How did you meet your wife?

Stuart: The network. I was in college, and my sister went to a different college. She met my wife-to-be, who’s . . .

Sandra: Her name?

Stuart: Barbara Butnick Royal. Barbara went to the University of Georgia [Athens, Georgia], and my sister, who . . . Actually, this sister went to [H.] Sophie Newcomb [Memorial College—New Orleans, Louisiana]. She transferred to Georgia and met Barbara there. When she met her, she said, “I’ve got a brother for you that you’ve got to meet.” I actually have a twin. This is sort of a funny story that she likes to tell. She said, “You’ve got to come home with me on the weekend to meet my brother, and you’re going to just love him. He’s just right for you.” She brought [Barbara] home from Georgia to Birmingham, from Athens, one weekend. [Barbara]

34 The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute opened in November 1992. Its mission is to enlighten each generation about civil and human rights by exploring our common past and working together in the present to build a better future. (2016)
35 United Way is a national system of volunteers, contributors and local charities helping people in their own communities.
36 H. Sophie Newcomb Memorial College, or Newcomb College, was the coordinate women’s college of Tulane University in New Orleans. It was founded in 1886 by Josephine Louise Newcomb in memory of her daughter, Sophie, who died in 1870 at the age of 15. In 2006 it was merged into other Tulane undergraduate colleges.
walked in the door and met my twin brother. She said, “I don’t think so.” [My sister] said, “Wait, wait, wait. There’s another one,” and she walked into the other room, and there I was. The chemistry was right, and it was I guess the JDate of the 1960’s, because that’s . . . one of the best ways to meet Jewish people is to have somebody vetted, [to have] somebody pick somebody out for you. It’s the sort of non-professional matchmaker situation. That’s how I met my wife.

Sandra: Where was she from originally?

Stuart: She was originally from Richmond, Virginia, and an interesting part of that story is that my sister introduced me to Barbara, who were at Georgia. Barbara had, growing up in Richmond, a guy that lived on her street that was at the University of Georgia [veterinarian] school . . . a Jewish guy on her street in Richmond . . . and she introduced my sister to him. They got married . . .

Sandra: That’s great.

Stuart: . . . and we both ended up moving to Birmingham, so both of our families and the kids were born and raised in Birmingham.

Sandra: Has your wife enjoyed life in Birmingham?

Stuart: Yes. Richmond [Virginia]—I don’t know if you know much about Richmond—I think Richmond from a Jewish standpoint—I mean it’s a bit bigger Jewish community, but it’s demographically pretty similar. The cities are pretty similar in a lot of ways. Richmond is much more historic. Birmingham is physically much more beautiful. I think somebody born and raised in Richmond, if you like Richmond, would enjoy the Jewish experience in Birmingham. She came here, fell in love with it . . . She’s a big macher [Yiddish: an important or influential person] in Birmingham, my wife, and she runs a women’s leadership program. It’s a non-Jewish women’s executive leadership thing, so she trains these women who are at the . . . vice presidents of corporations and the banking system and Southern Progress [Corporation] and BellSouth [Corporation]. Different prominent corporations in Birmingham. She trains them, so she knows all these non-Jewish women leaders in Birmingham.

I think, in a city the size of Birmingham, with the amount of Jews that we have, it’s good that Jews become involved in non-Jewish affairs, business and civic things in the city. I think it exposes the community to Jews and what we’re all about. We wear being Jewish on our sleeve. People know that we’re Jewish. I happen to work at Children’s Hospital. I’ve been there for a long time, and everybody knows that I’m Jewish. Everybody knows that come Rosh
Ha-Shanah\textsuperscript{37} and Yom Kippur,\textsuperscript{38} I’m not there. That’s part of what being Jewish is, and I think that’s a good education for people. There aren’t horns coming out.\textsuperscript{39} <Stuart points to his head and makes a motion to signify horns coming out of his head> . . . I don’t know if in Atlanta whether you guys have horns there, but here in Birmingham we don’t have horns. It’s great to be involved and for people to see who we are.

\textit{Sandra:} That’s great. If you could look back on your growing up in Birmingham, [are] there some memorable incidents that you want to recount about being Jewish and being in the South, being in Birmingham?

\textit{Stuart:} Well . . .

\textit{Sandra:} That’s kind of a big question.

\textit{Stuart:} Yes, it is. There’s so many things. Socially the Jewish kids stayed together. We didn’t date non-Jewish kids. Now, what happened was we had a big group of guys who loved to go out and, when you were 15, 16, and 17, we went out and we actually found non-Jewish girls. There was sort of like the pack. The pack would go to, at that time, Shoney’s [Restaurant].\textsuperscript{40} That was a hangout in Birmingham, and that was where we created the little black books. ‘This is this girl who lives here’ and . . . I don’t know if you’d considering that dating. They were dates, but this was a total . . . this had no long-term significance to it. It was just sort of a teenage experience, but out of that I will relate this to you. We would meet these girls. They would be from different areas, and the classic area in Birmingham was Gardendale. It happened to be sort of north of Birmingham.

I went out on a date, one of these kind of dates, with this girl, and we went back over to her house, after we went to a movie or something, and she was sort of enamored by me. She

\textsuperscript{37} Hebrew for “head of the year”, i.e. New Year festival. The cycle of High Holy Days begins with \textit{Rosh Ha-Shanah}. It introduces the Ten Days of Penitence, when Jews examine their souls and take stock of their actions. On the tenth day is \textit{Yom Kippur}, the Day of Atonement. The tradition is that on \textit{Rosh Ha-Shanah}, G-d sits in judgment on humanity. Then the fate of every living creature is inscribed in the Book of Life or Death. These decisions may be revoked by prayer and repentance before the sealing of the books on \textit{Yom Kippur}.

\textsuperscript{38} Hebrew for “Day of Atonement.” The most sacred day of the Jewish year. \textit{Yom Kippur} is a 25-hour fast day. Most of the day is spent in prayer, reciting \textit{yizkor} for deceased relatives, confessing sins, requesting divine forgiveness, and listening to \textit{Torah} readings and sermons. People greet each other with the wish that they may be sealed in the heavenly book for a good year ahead. The day ends with the blowing of the \textit{shofar} (a ram’s horn).

\textsuperscript{39} The idea that Jews have horns apparently began with a mistranslation of Exodus 34:29—“…and Moses didn’t know that his face shone when He [G-d] spoke with him.” The Hebrew word for the verb “shone” is “karan” and is phonetically close to the word ‘karen,’ which can mean ‘horn.’ The error was compounded by Michelangelo, in his sculpture of Moses, which portrays Moses with two horns.

\textsuperscript{40} Shoney’s is a chain of restaurants that began as a drive-in restaurant in Charleston, West Virginia. It is a casual family-oriented dining destination now in 16 states. (2016)
was having a good time, and because of that she said, “I’ve got to show you something. It’s only because you’re so special I’m going to show you this, so ssshhh. Be quiet.” She went into her parents’ bedroom, and she came out with this big white box container, and she took it off and opened it up, and it had the Ku Klux Klan\textsuperscript{41} robe in it.

\textbf{Sandra:} Did she know you were Jewish?

\textbf{Stuart:} She did not. No. This was like a one-night stand sort of thing almost. I mean it was just what the guys were doing. I cannot tell you how much I broke out into a cold sweat, because here I was being Jewish and just trying to sow your wild oats, just trying to go out and have social experiences as a young teenage boy, and all of a sudden the fact that I am Jewish . . . I mean I had not been thinking anything about Jewish that entire evening or those experiences that we were having, and that was one of the last times I went out for that type of thing. It’s out there, but most of the time in Birmingham, if you ask me about being Jewish in Birmingham, most of the time you don’t feel antisemitism. There are these little things that happen, but most of the time it’s way in the background. Today I personally don’t feel it virtually at all. I don’t hear . . . Nobody says anything antisemtic, and you have the opportunity to go out and do things. You don’t belong to the non-Jewish country clubs, but many of our kids’ friends have gotten married, and we get invited to their weddings, and we go to the country clubs. It’s not like we’re excluded physically from going there, but it’s not . . . if you intellectualize it, there certainly is that out there, but it’s not more overt.

\textbf{Sandra:} Just two final questions. Do you keep kosher in the home?

\textbf{Stuart:} In the Fifties, when I was young, my family kept kosher.\textsuperscript{42} Then as . . . I cannot tell you exactly why . . . I think it probably had to do with my grandparents passing away. They were all kosher, my grandparents, and then my parents were keeping kosher, and one of my grandmothers actually lived with us for a while, so we kept kosher. I think it was after they

\textsuperscript{41}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 1860’s and the died out and come back several times, most notably in the 1920’s when membership soared again, and then again in the 1960’s 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.

\textsuperscript{42}Kosher/Kashrut is the set of Jewish dietary laws. Food that may be consumed according to halakhah (Jewish law) is termed ‘kosher’ in English. Kosher refers to Jewish laws that dictate how food is prepared or served and which kinds of foods or animals can be eaten. Food that is not in accordance with Jewish law is called ‘treif.’ The word ‘kosher’ has become English vernacular, a colloquialism meaning ‘proper,’ ‘legitimate,’ ‘genuine,’ ‘fair,’ or ‘acceptable.’ Kosher can also be used to describe ritual objects that are made in accordance with Jewish law and are fit for ritual use.
passed away that we were not strictly kosher. It was not easy to be . . . it still isn’t. I mean it’s easier, but historically it hasn’t been easy to be kosher, to maintain a kosher home, in Birmingham. It just didn’t have the products available.

Sandra: Was there a butcher shop?

Stuart: There intermittently has been, but eventually now Publix [Supermarket] . . . There are places that you can get good quality kosher foods in Birmingham, but historically the Orthodox people who through the last 50 years have maintained kosher experiences have had to ship things in from Atlanta or other places to be able to do it. It’s just been difficult, so we were not strictly kosher, but it’s a kosher style living. Nobody ate any ham. Never had ham. Never ever saw ham in my house. No shellfish. The most egregious violations of the kosher rules you wouldn’t see in my house, but we eventually didn’t have separate plates. It wasn’t the milchig [Yiddish: dairy foods], fleishig [Yiddish: meat or fowl products] . . . mixing things. It was a kosher style, but not a true kosher experience.

Sandra: Did you go to summer camp?

Stuart: We did.

Sandra: Where did you go?

Stuart: I went to a non-Jewish summer camp early on, but then I went to Camp Blue Star.

Sandy: So you knew the Popkins?

Stuart: I knew the Popkins. I knew Harry Popkin and . . .

Sandra: Herman Popkin.

Stuart: Herman Popkin, and Michael Popkin, who was Herman’s son . . . no . . .

Sandra: Roger Popkin.

Stuart: Roger Popkin, who was Herman’s son, and Michael who was the other son. Anyway, yes, and I played basketball with them. They were my age, those two. Michael and Roger were my age. I will tell you that was some of the most important Jewish experiences I had growing up was going to Jewish camp. Again, I went to a non-Jewish athletic secular camp, and then post-bar mitzvah went to this thing, and it was just like . . . It was an emotional experience. It wasn’t just fun. Being with Jewish people all the time, every day, and singing Jewish prayers, and caring about other people’s Jewish experiences. It was the best. I went there three years [as] a camper, and then went back as a waiter, and went back after I met my wife, my wife-to-be Barbara, which I told you about. The summer after we met, after we got introduced, I took her to
camp Blue Star.\textsuperscript{43} We were counselors at Camp Blue Star. I was actually in Houston in college, and she was back at Georgia in college. We had this long distance—real long distance at that time—relationship. Then we went to camp in North Carolina, and that was it. We had this budding relationship, and it became totally cemented at Camp Blue Star. I just cannot tell you how important that was to me.

\textbf{Sandra:} Did you send your kids to Blue Star, your children?

\textbf{Stuart:} My kids, one of them went, and one of them didn’t. One of them was not an overnight camper, so he didn’t do that. He went to JCC camp. The other one went to Camp Blue Star and loved it. It’s just . . . I don’t know the answer to assimilation. I don’t know the answer to Jewish continuity. I wish I did. I would have to say that has an important part. I think going to Israel . . . Both my kids went to Israel, had summer experiences in Israel. We offered it, and one of them went to Jewish camp. I think it’s a big, big part of maintaining Jewish identity.

\textbf{Sandra:} With that, I thank you. This was wonderful. We’ll send you a copy, and we really appreciate it.

\textbf{Stuart:} Please do. Thank you.

\textit{<End Disk 1>}

\textbf{INTERVIEW ENDS}

\textsuperscript{43} Blue Star Camps is a Jewish summer camp located in the Blue Ridge Mountains of western North Carolina.