

**THE WILLIAM BREMAN JEWISH HERITAGE MUSEUM
ESTHER AND HERBERT TAYLOR
JEWISH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT OF ATLANTA
GEORGIA JEWS**

MEMOIRIST: ALLAN STRULETZ
INTERVIEWER: MIKE WEINROTH
LOCATION: ATLANTA, GEORGIA
DATE: JANUARY 17, 2007

INTERVIEW BEGINS

<Begin Tape>

Mike: Good morning.

Allan: Good morning.

Mike: We have the privilege of interviewing Allan Struletz this morning. Today is January 17, 2007. Allan, we're going to begin by just asking you a few questions. First tell us a little bit about your own background.

Allan: It's Allan Struletz. I was born in LaGrange, Georgia which is maybe 80 miles south of Atlanta. I stayed there until going to school at University of Georgia¹ [Athens, Georgia] in 1972. After graduating with a degree in Landscape Architecture and Environmental Design I came to Atlanta and have been here the rest of my life.

Mike: So where were you born?

Allan: Born in LaGrange, in LaGrange city hospital.

Mike: What were your parent's names?

Allan: Father is Isaac Struletz² and mother is Rosalind Struletz.³ Her maiden name was Olshan. O-L-S-H-A-N. She was from Brooklyn, New York [City]. My father was actually born in LaGrange.

Mike: What drew them to LaGrange? Your family?

Allan: The story that I have from my grandfather [Simon Struletz]⁴ is that he left Europe, left Russia without his wife, my grandmother [Ida Struletz]⁵. They had one child

¹ The University of Georgia, founded in 1785, also referred to as UGA or simply Georgia, is an American public research university in the city of Athens in the U.S. state of Georgia.

² Isaac Struletz (1918-1996) was a lifelong resident of LaGrange, Georgia. He served in the United States Army during World War II. He operated the LaGrange Disposal Corporation in LaGrange.

³ Rosalind Olshan Struletz (1928-1999) was born in Brooklyn, New York and moved to LaGrange, Georgia in 1949.

at the time. It would have been my uncle Izzy, or Isadore.⁶ He came to America into New York. He worked at the docks. When the workers went on strike he didn't have a job but he was trying to raise money to get his family to America. One of the Jewish organizations gave him money in order to go to Miami where he could get work on the docks. The story goes that he got on the train. He made [it] to LaGrange. He ran out of money. And that's where he ended.

Mike: Now your grandparent's names?

Allan: Simon and Ida, I-D-A, Ida Struletz.

Mike: They had just enough money to go to LaGrange?

Allan: She was not with him at the time. He was here by himself. When he got to LaGrange he ran out of money, and that's where he ended. There was a small Jewish community there.

Mike: Do you know about what year that was?

Allan: That would have been in 1909 . . . is when he actually came to America, at the age of 27. In LaGrange he was there by—we think—around 1913.

Mike: When he settled in LaGrange around 1913 what line of work did he do?

Allan: It's funny. I always thought that he was a peddler and eventually went into scrap metal business, old rags, and eventually into parts business. But reading some articles or some letters from old residents from LaGrange it said that he actually started off in the shoe repair business. That I wasn't aware of. It wouldn't surprise me. He eventually sold that business and then started the scrap metal business.

Mike: Who were some of the other Jewish families that were in the community that he would have found when he settled in LaGrange?

Allan: Dating back to that time there would have been the Goldstein family. They were, again, a little bit before my time, so it would have been Goldsteins, the Kaminsky family. The families that I know would have been the next generation. And . . .

Mike: . . . and what kind of businesses were these other people in?

⁴ Simon Struletz (1883-1973) immigrated from Babruysk, Russia (now Belarus) to LaGrange, Georgia through New York City. In LaGrange, he operated several businesses such as a retail shoe store and a scrap metal supply company, Simon's and Sons. He was a member of Congregation Beth El in LaGrange and Congregation Shearith Israel in Atlanta.

⁵ Ida Reif Struletz (1884-1935).

⁶ Isadore Leon Struletz (1909-1997) was an immigrant from Belarus who lived in LaGrange, Georgia. He was a member of Congregation Beth El in LaGrange.

Allan: These people were in . . . there was an attorney, one person was an attorney. They were mostly in the dry good business. They had shops throughout the city.

Mike: So this is the Goldstein family?

Allan: Correct.

Mike: Kaminsky.

Allan: Edelson. Eventually it would have been Moskowitz family. They came from New York. Coolick family, several others.

Mike: The bulk of the Jewish community in LaGrange, about when would you say they settled? Would you know?

Allan: Apparently they started in the . . . around 1910 was really when they were coming to LaGrange. Apparently prior to that there were some families that were settling in other neighboring communities like West Point. In LaGrange, the influx was about the 1910's, 1920's. Then later on, 1930's, it would have been the Moskowitz and that family coming.

Mike: So would you know from your own memory Allan, what the peak time would have been when probably the largest Jewish community existed in LaGrange?

Allan: I would think probably in the 1950's.

Mike: In the 1950's.

Allan: Late 1940's, 1950's, would have been the prominent . . . right when they were . . . when the congregation . . . when the Jews there got together and bought the building for the synagogue. So I would say late 1940's, 1950's.

Mike: What is your earliest memory of growing up in LaGrange? Just an early memory that you have.

Allan: Jewish? In the Jewish?

Mike: Yes.

Allan: You know it goes back to . . . I remember going to my grandfather's house for holidays, for Passover.⁷ I remember going to the synagogue probably as early as six years

⁷ The anniversary of Israel's liberation from Egyptian bondage. The holiday lasts for eight days. Unleavened bread, matzah, is eaten in memory of the unleavened bread prepared by the Israelite during their hasty flight from Egypt, when they had not time to wait for the dough to rise. On the first two nights of Passover, the seder, the central event of the holiday is celebrated. The seder service is one of the most colorful and joyous occasions in Jewish life. In addition to eating matzah during the seder, Jews are prohibited from eating leavened bread during the entire week of Passover. In addition, Jews are also

old. In my life I've never . . . I've only been away from the synagogue for High Holy Day⁸ services one time. That was the first year when I went to college. Other than that I've been there for every service since being in LaGrange.

Mike: Where did you go to school?

Allan: My first semester I actually went to Georgia Southern [University]⁹ in Statesboro [Georgia] and then transferred to the University of Georgia.

Mike: What about in public schools?

Allan: Public schools started out . . . it was all public. We started out at a private kindergarten and then moved up to Harwell Avenue Elementary School, which in the sixth grade burned to the ground. So that year I had . . . we had split sessions, only had to go to school half a day which was great. I then [went] onto West Side Junior High and then to LaGrange High School.

Mike: Was there just the one high school in LaGrange?

Allan: In the city there was . . . we were just changing from being segregation at that time. So prior to . . . when I went into junior high [school] was when they started desegregating the schools. So they were still operating separate junior highs and high schools. By the time I got into high school it became just one high school in the community. The other, actually two high schools but they were both integrated. And then there was a high school in the county.

Mike: That was a dual school district because of the city and the county.

Allan: Correct.

Mike: So you were in the city school district?

Allan: I was in the city school district.

Mike: How would you describe your interaction with non-Jewish peers?

Allan: Growing up, I never saw, never had a problem of being Jewish. My parents instilled in us that we know about our Jewish heritage and our identity. We were always proud of it. You know we never had a problem of people or defending ourselves. We never really had to defend ourselves. We did more educating than we did defending. We

supposed to avoid foods made with wheat, barley, rye, spelt or oats unless those foods are labeled 'kosher for Passover.' Jews traditionally have separate dishes for Passover.

⁸ The two High Holy Days are Rosh Ha-Shanah (Jewish New Year) and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement).

⁹ Georgia Southern University is part of the University System of Georgia, located in Statesboro, Georgia, that was founded in 1906 as a land grant college.

brought items to school during holidays to teach other children about our holidays. I can only remember one time in high school that one person ever said anything to me about being Jewish.

Mike: You touched on this before about the synagogue in LaGrange. Do you know its history, or how it became established and began, and that sort of thing?

Allan: Apparently, back in the 1940's they would . . . the community was having Friday night services. They were conducting the services at the home of Harry¹⁰ and Marie Behr.¹¹ They had again a ladies ready-to-wear store downtown. Harry Behr actually was from South Africa. They conducted Friday night services at their home. I also found out that during that period they were having morning *minyan*¹² at the back of the store of Harry Behr who had a ladies store in downtown. During the 1940's, Harry Edelson,¹³ also a store owner, started a campaign to raise money to buy an old church, an Episcopalian church. That congregation was building a new facility and their building was going to be available. So with the help of a fundraiser and help from Fuller Callaway,¹⁴ who owned Callaway Mills¹⁵—his foundation¹⁶—they were able to raise money. In 1945 they purchased the building on Church Street. They called it . . . at that

¹⁰ Harry S. Behr (1904-1980) was an immigrant from Russia who operated Behr's Women's Specialty Shop in LaGrange, Georgia. He was a leader in Congregation Beth El in LaGrange.

¹¹ Marie Halbauer Behr (1917-1992) was born in New York City and owned Behr's Ladies Apparel in LaGrange, Georgia. She was a member of the Shearith Israel Synagogue in Columbus, Georgia and the LaGrange branch of *Hadassah*.

¹² A *minyan* refers to the quorum of 10 Jewish adults required for certain religious obligations. According to many non-Orthodox streams of Judaism adult females count in the *minyan*.

¹³ Harry Edelson (1898-1968) was an immigrant from Russia and lived in Atlanta, Georgia as a child. He was a peddler before resettling in LaGrange, Georgia in 1921, where he operated a dry goods store and founded Edelson's Army Store and Sporting Goods with his son Milton Edelson. He was a founding member and a president of Congregation Beth El in LaGrange and chairman of the United Jewish Appeal for LaGrange.

¹⁴ Fuller Earle Callaway Jr. (1907-92) was born in LaGrange, Georgia and in 1935 became president of Callaway Mills which was started by his father Fuller Earle Callaway, Sr. He was a community leader and a benefactor of the town of LaGrange, LaGrange College, and the Georgia Institute of Technology. He established foundations that gave away millions during his lifetime, including the Callaway Community Foundation (later the Callaway Foundation) which received its initial funds from the liquidation of the Textile Benefit Association, a foundation created by his father.

¹⁵ Callaway Mills was a textile business in LaGrange, Georgia, that was formed by Fuller Earle Callaway Sr. from plants he controlled as well as those organized and built since his death under the management of his sons Cason J. Callaway and Fuller E. Callaway, Jr. It was purchased by Milliken and Company in 1968.

¹⁶ Callaway Foundation, Inc. is a charitable foundation in LaGrange, Georgia, that was created by Fuller E. Callaway, Jr. in 1943 as Callaway Community Foundation. It received its initial funds from the liquidation of the assets of Textile Benefit Association, a foundation created by Fuller E. Callaway, Sr. The Callaway Foundation has contributed to a wide variety of programs and institutions, primarily in LaGrange and Troup County, Georgia

point it was LaGrange Jewish Community Center and later became Congregation Beth El.¹⁷

Mike: Were there any incidents regarding the development of this synagogue among people, non-Jews there? Were there any issues that came up?

Allan: Not that I'm aware of. There never has been.

Mike: So there was actually Fuller Callaway money that went toward . . .

Allan: Yes.

Mike: . . . purchase?

Allan: Fuller Callaway gives money—or his foundation continues to give money—to all the congregations in LaGrange, of all denominations.

Mike: As you grew older in LaGrange, how would you describe your life there?

Allan: Growing up in a small town was great. We did whatever we wanted. We went wherever we wanted to. I had one really good Jewish friend who was my age, Joey Moskowitz.¹⁸ He actually lived down around the corner and we did a lot together growing up. We would ride our bikes wherever we wanted. We would leave them. We didn't chain them. Later on when we were in junior high we'd actually take our bikes, ride them to the bus station. We would get on a Greyhound bus that would take us . . . it was the bus going to Columbus [Georgia] but we'd stop on the way at Callaway Gardens.¹⁹ We would spend the day at Callaway Gardens with our friends. Then four or five in the afternoon we'd go back up on the highway and catch the bus from Columbus coming back to LaGrange. Then we'd get on our bicycles and go home. Growing up in a small town really had a lot of advantages. To me the disadvantages as a young person—although I do appreciate it now—was that we were far from a large Jewish congregation.

¹⁷ Congregation Beth El in LaGrange, Georgia, was organized in 1942. The congregation's synagogue on the corner of Battle and Church Streets was originally an Episcopal church built in the 1890's and was dedicated in 1945.

¹⁸ Joseph Lee "Joey" Moskowitz (b. 1953) grew up in LaGrange, Georgia and Columbus, Georgia. He was a graduate of Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, Georgia and an actuary with Primerica for 33 years before retirement. Subsequent to his retirement, he served on the Board of Directors for AFLAC in Columbus, Georgia.

¹⁹ Callaway Gardens is a 6,500-acre resort complex located in Pine Mountain, Georgia, just outside Columbus, Georgia. Callaway Gardens was founded in 1952 by Cason J. and Virginia Hand Callaway to promote and protect native azalea species. It is owned and operated by the non-profit Ida Carson Callaway Foundation.

For our education, my parents took us to Atlanta. We also belonged to Shearith Israel.²⁰ Even my grandfather had belonged to Shearith Israel. He brought my father and aunts and uncles to Atlanta back then for services and for education. We used to go every Sunday morning to Atlanta for Sunday school. That meant we were up at the crack of dawn to drive two hours to Atlanta to get to Sunday school.

Mike: The roads were probably not. . .

Allan: They were two-lane roads. It was a two-hour trip and my parents did that every single Sunday.

Mike: As we talk about growing up in LaGrange and the social dynamics, in high school, dating, that sort of thing. . . .

Allan: That's interesting because my mother had a rule. You only dated one time. [You dated] the same girl only one time so that you could not create any kind of relationship that might turn into intermarriage. That was a very strong point. Sometime we would do it and she may not have known, but that was the rule.

Mike: How did you meet girls?

Allan: It was typical. They were in our class. LaGrange was interesting. The Callaway Foundation provided all kind of things for the town. In Atlanta you would have the Jewish Community Center²¹ that the kids would meet. We had the Callaway Educational Association.²² It was a place that you went for sports or just for socializing. The school had activities. We belonged to clubs even though they may have started every meeting

²⁰ 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.

²¹ 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.'

²² Funded by the Callaway Foundation, the Callaway Educational Association (CEA) was established in 1944 to encompass the work of the old Southwest LaGrange YMCA and other Callaway Mills sponsored programs. Originally intended only for the families of Callaway Mills employees, CEA membership was soon opened to the community at large. It's facilities, though, were racially segregated and excluded black membership. In addition to recreational opportunities the CEA supplemented the regular school curriculum with art, music, drama, physical education, and significantly, a kindergarten program. Adults were offered instruction in art, ceramics, sewing, canning and other domestic skills. The Callaway Educational Association ceased operation in 1992, and many of its assets were donated to LaGrange College.

with a prayer and everything else. We still belonged. We just did what we had to but we always had our identity that we were Jewish.

Mike: You probably gravitated to Columbus as far as social things?

Allan: Sometimes we went to Columbus. We belonged to AZA²³ in Columbus. Later on my friend Joey, who I talked about earlier, moved to Columbus when he was a sophomore in high school. So there was a place I could go to stay in Columbus. There were dances, and all kind of things with the Jewish children. In fact, I'm still friends with several of them that live in Atlanta now.

Mike: Did you have a social life in Atlanta too, to a certain extent, because of the synagogue?

Allan: It's funny . . . Atlanta . . . my brother [Howard Struletz]²⁴ had more of an active life with his peers in Atlanta. He was really into sports. He used to be active in programs at the Jewish Community Center here playing sports. I, on the other hand, was not a sports person so I never got into that. He's older and so when it came my time I was into more things in Columbus. When we came to Atlanta, a typical day in Atlanta would have been getting up early coming to Atlanta. My parents would drop us off at Shearith Israel. I remember going into the original buildings on University [Drive]. Upstairs were the classrooms . . . I mean, downstairs [were the] classrooms and sanctuary was upstairs. So I remember even that building. They would then drop us off. Their first stop would be going up the street to Fred's Deli²⁵ and they would place their order for what they're taking home. [They would] not only have their order but they'd have everybody in town. Then they would meet up with some friends and do things in the morning. After school, Sunday school, then we would have lunch with either another family or somewhere in

²³ 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).

²⁴ Howard Steven Struletz was born in 1951 in LaGrange, Georgia and lives in New York City where he is a commercial real estate salesman and property manager.

²⁵ Quality Kosher, a kosher delicatessen and meat store located on Briarcliff Road in Atlanta, Georgia that is now known as Kosher Gourmet, was formerly Fred's Kosher Delicatessen and Kosher Meats. The store was relocated from the Virginia-Highland area of Atlanta in 1983 and was renamed Quality Kosher Emporium at that time. The store has been owned and operated by the Gilmer family since 1970.

Atlanta. We would go to Mammy's Shanty²⁶ and all these places that used to be here. After that then we'd either go visit somebody—it was mostly friends of my parents—or at that point I had an **aunt and uncle** living here. We may go visit them, and then we would go back to LaGrange.

Mike: As far as food is concerned did you all observe *kashrut*?²⁷

Allan: My family did. Well actually my family, all the Struletz's did. Yes.

Mike: In LaGrange you kept a kosher home?

Allan: In LaGrange. That's why we would bring the deli home on the weekends if we needed meats, chickens, or whatever. Either we came up to get them or they were shipped down by the bus. Being from New York—my mother being from New York—we used to go up every year for six weeks. My brother, I, and my mother would go into Brooklyn [New York]. My father would come up later with his car. He would drive up. Driving back we would have boxes of meat on dry ice coming back to LaGrange.

Mike: So you created a way of maintaining kosher?

Allan: Absolutely.

Mike: During the summer Allan, did you ever go to Jewish camps? What did you do in the summer?

Allan: Summer was different for us. Being in the South we got out of school early. Immediately, we were . . . I don't remember it, being young, being on the train. I remember going on the airplane going to New York. We would go to Brooklyn. My mother's parents lived in Borough Park²⁸ [Brooklyn, New York]. All her siblings lived close by and we spent six weeks out of the year in Brooklyn. My brother and I got to know all the kids in the neighborhood because they were still in school. We would play with them. Then two weeks before we'd come back, they would be out of school and they would go off to camp. Then we would come back to LaGrange. That was our camp.

²⁶ Mammy's Shanty was a southern-style restaurant located in Atlanta, Georgia. It also housed the Pickaninny Lounge. Its menu and promotional materials contained racially offensive stereotypes of black people. It opened in 1944 and closed in 1971.

²⁷ *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.'

²⁸ Borough Park (also spelled Boro Park) is a neighborhood in the southwestern part of the borough of Brooklyn, New York. Borough Park is home to one of the largest Orthodox Jewish communities outside Israel, with one of the largest concentrations of Jews in the United States.

Mike: Now was this a ritual that you did on successive summers?

Allan: Every year.

Mike: What was your relationship with . . . you touched on this . . . your interaction and your relationship with neighbors as you were getting older? Neighbors?

Allan: We really never had a problem except for we . . . It was funny. We had a house behind us that had become a rental house. It was a large house. A family moved in that was a little unusual, and really not fitting with the neighborhood. They had a few children. Again my brother being active in sports . . . in school he was on . . . He tried out for basketball and he was on track. [With] the school starting to be integrated, he became friends with several of the black students because of sports.

I'll never forget one time they would come to our house and we'd play basketball. It was nothing for the neighbors. They would be coming by, and we'd be playing basketball. That's just the way we were. Then my mother got a call from the neighbors who told her not to have them come back.

Mike: They didn't like that.

Allan: They didn't like it. That's the only incident that I can ever remember like that.

Mike: What is your brother's name?

Allan: Howard. He now lives in New York.

Mike: How much older is he than you?

Allan: He's two years older.

Mike: You've just really sort of touched on this too. What was it like for you in a small Jewish community during the Civil Rights Era²⁹ of the 1950's and 1960's? Are you old enough to even remember that transition of time?

Allan: I remember. LaGrange again was a very interesting place. It truly was a segregated city for many years even after the Civil Rights Movement³⁰. The Foundation

²⁹ The American Civil Rights Era generally encompasses events beginning with the Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court decision in 1954 and ending with the Fair Housing Act of 1968, which was a follow up to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

³⁰ 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.

of LaGrange would do what they would call equal development. If the white community had an old age home, then the black community would have one. If the Foundation built a library they would build a library for the blacks. So everything was really segregated. In fact there was really no marching. I don't ever remember anybody coming down from the Civil Rights Movement. It was one of these things where I believe the leadership in the town, in the city, was pretty much saying: we will provide for everybody equally, maybe not together, but we'll provide equally if you leave us alone. That's the way they wanted it. Slowly it all changed in time, but it did take a long time.

Mike: What about shopkeepers and merchants? Were any lines drawn in terms of who their customers would be?

Allan: I don't recall any of that. I do remember reading some books that talk about this and their stories, *The Jew Store*,³¹ and those books. They talk about that. I never remember that. In my father's business it was not one that we had that situation. I don't remember anything really of that type.

Mike: I think you told me too, Allan, that early on your dad had African-Americans working for him.

Allan: Absolutely.

Mike: So they were a part of the fabric of his business?

Allan: Right.

Mike: The circumstance?

Allan: Correct.

Mike: Did you ever regret not living in a larger city?

Allan: If I ever regretted it, it would have been maybe in my high school years. Prior to that, no.

Mike: What do you think you might have missed?

Allan: I think the social life. What would happen—and part of the reason that I just didn't become very active in the Atlanta area—is every community has their cliques. Children that know each other, that have their own way of doing things. We were always an outsider and always felt that way. In Columbus it was a little different. I felt a little bit

³¹ *The Jew Store* is a family memoir written by Stella Suberman about growing up in Concordia, Tennessee and about her father's dry goods store.

more accepted in Columbus, maybe because it was a smaller community. I knew my friend was there and I got to be with his friends. That was probably the drawback.

Mike: Going back to the Civil Rights Era, do you remember any particular incidents that remain with you today? Any kind of marches or any kind of violent things that might have happened?

Allan: No. There's no violent . . . when it comes to that time I just remember going into the Five and Dime Stores,³² or whatever, and they had separate bathrooms. There were separate water fountains. I do remember seeing all that. I just don't ever remember the town ever having marches or anything that was in the public. I'm sure all this was going on behind the scenes. As far as a public demonstration, we never saw this.

Mike: I know a little bit about LaGrange. Tell us just quickly a little bit about Charlie Joseph's.

Allan: Charlie Joseph's is a hamburger and hot dog stand that I believe has just celebrated its eighty-sixth anniversary. It is on Bull Street. It was started by a Lebanese family and it's just a landmark. It would be like the Varsity³³ in Atlanta, except you don't drive in. It's two counters. I do remember seeing signs, they would only serve . . . blacks were only welcomed from the outside windows. You had to order from the outside windows. Whites would go in on both sides and sit. As it started changing . . . it changed to one side was white, one side was black, and then it was mixed later on. Old institution, old institution.

Mike: I know a little bit about that. I was also curious that there seems to be a presence of Middle Easterners in LaGrange of Middle Eastern descent that is not Jews.

Allan: Correct.

Mike: How? Do you know anything about how that evolved?

³² The concept of the variety store originated with the 'five and ten,' 'five and dime,' 'nickel and ten-cent store' or 'dime store,' a store offering a wide assortment of inexpensive items for personal and household use. The originators of the concept were the Woolworth Bros. in the late 1800's.

³³ The Varsity is an iconic chain restaurant serving burgers, hot dogs, fries, shakes, and other American classics. The original location was opened in 1928 but soon grew so popular it was relocated to its present location on North Avenue in Downtown Atlanta. Billed as America's largest drive-in, the present structure covers two city blocks and has the capacity to accommodate 600 patrons and 800 cars. The catchphrase, "What'll ya have?" once used by frazzled employees has become part of modern Atlanta culture.

Allan: I don't know how they came to LaGrange but it's the Mansour family, the Solomon family, and the Joseph family. I don't know. They were all Lebanese. We got along with them great.

Mike: I was just going to ask.

Allan: We had a great relationship. And still do.

Mike: When you drive through downtown LaGrange you still see these stores.

Allan: Oh absolutely. You have Mansour's,³⁴ which is the main department store as you come down. Then you would have Kaplan's which is still open. It's a men's store. The family, it's two brothers and a sister. They must be in their eighties, maybe nineties and they still operate this store. Next to them is Solomon's³⁵ and then Charlie Joseph's. That's it, there's no other. And then, Edelson's.³⁶ You have Stephen Edelson, who is third generation running the Army-Navy Store and I believe they just celebrated their fiftieth anniversary.

Mike: Are there any memories that you have that are just really positive? Something that you really think about and it's really a positive thought about growing up in LaGrange other than what you've already touched on?

Allan: LaGrange had the . . . *Hadassah*³⁷ in LaGrange was very active. My mother was very active in that organization. I remember she would be going to conventions. It was a time that she would go away to conventions and my brother and I loved it because we would go out for breakfast in the morning. My dad would take us for breakfast before school, get us to school. We did other things together, the three of us, while she was gone. They were active in the community. They did clothing drives. They were very active in the community. They raised . . . I remember they raised money by selling flower bulbs, Holland Bulbs. That was one of their big fundraisers every year. They sold to everybody. Mrs. Callaway would come down to the synagogue to pick up her bulbs.

³⁴ Mansour's was established in 1917 by Nasor Mansour I in downtown LaGrange. It started with just one small retail store, but later expanded to a department store that occupied almost an entire block. The store closed in 2009 and the building was demolished in 2016.

³⁵ Solomon's Department Store is located on Bull Street in Lagrange, Georgia. It was established in 1942.

³⁶ Edelson's Army Store and Sporting Goods in LaGrange, Georgia was started by Harry Edelson and his son Milton in 1956.

³⁷ *Hadassah*, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, is a volunteer organization founded in 1912 by Henrietta Szold, with more than 300,000 members and supporters worldwide. It supports health care and medical research, education and youth programs in Israel, and advocacy, education, and leadership development in the United States.

She'd carry them herself. She didn't send anybody. She came there and everybody did. I remember them always having dinners and socials at the synagogue for *Hadassah*, for Israel Bonds,³⁸ or just the rabbi from Columbus used to come to LaGrange. He would have a study session or whatever. It was very active and I do remember that, playing bingo, they played Bingo³⁹ down there and cards. The ladies all played Mahjong⁴⁰. The guys played cards.

Mike: Jewish Community Center?

Allan: Absolutely. During the summer when we'd get back from New York the thing to do on Sunday mornings was Callaway Gardens. Everybody packed up and went to Callaway Gardens. They had the lake which was really their beach. In the afternoon we all got together in the same spot where all the tables were. It was maybe seven to eight families from LaGrange, Jewish, that would have a picnic there. It was a really nice community and everybody really got along very well.

Mike: Allan, did you ever work along in your dad's business?

Allan: I used to help him very seldom in the business. It was not something he wanted me to be. I don't . . . I think he knew LaGrange was not where we were going to settle, my brother and I.

Mike: He did not encourage you in that direction?

Allan: No. He encouraged us to do what we wanted to do. Later on, after he and my mother passed away, I did have to go down and basically close the business. I ran it for about two years.

Mike: How did you meet your wife?

Allan: More importantly, I think what you'd be interested in is how my father met my mother. That'd probably be more interesting.

Mike: Why don't you tell me about that?

³⁸ 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.

³⁹ Bingo is a game of chance played with different randomly drawn numbers which players match against numbers that have been pre-printed on 5 x 5 cards. Someone calls the numbers from 1 to 75, picked randomly, and the players match them against their cards. A player wins if they get an entire row first, either vertically, horizontally or diagonally by claiming, "Bingo!"

⁴⁰ Mahjong is a popular game that originated in China, played by four players using tiles with Chinese characters and symbols.

Allan: As a young male in LaGrange always wanting to meet somebody, he had an opportunity to go to New York. It's funny. One of his best friends in LaGrange, Jack Moskowitz, his family was distantly related to my mother. They were invited to a wedding in New York. So Jack and Mildred Moskowitz, and Lou Moskowitz— because he wasn't married at the time I don't believe—were going to New York to . . . it would've been my aunt's⁴¹ wedding on my mother's side. My father said, "Well, if you're going to New York I'll go with you." He drove with them to New York. When they got to New York my grandparents on that side said, "If you're here, you've got to come to the wedding." They were also very giving people. [They] said, "You're not coming." He went to the wedding which was my aunt's wedding, met my mother, and brought her to LaGrange.

Mike: That's a great story. I wonder if that was a difficult transition for her. To move from New York to LaGrange?

Allan: I believe she was around 18 and it was really a shock for her. When she came down, it was almost hard to even find an apartment to live in. They did find an apartment. One of my mother's good friends—who I visited with just about a year ago—when I found a picture of her, the friend . . . There was a picture of her sitting in front of the apartment and I gave it to her. She said, "You know I remember coming to LaGrange and that you father said, "As many times that you can come I will pay your way to come down to be a companion to my mother because she was having such a hard time making the adjustment." That was one reason why every summer we went back to New York. That was part of it. She wanted to continue her education in LaGrange but she was not able to go to the college [LaGrange College].⁴² They wouldn't allow her to go because she was Jewish. It was a Methodist school at the time. They did not allow, so she couldn't continue her education which she wanted to do. She just got involved with the Jewish community, with the women. That's why she was so active in *Hadassah* and all these organizations.

Mike: But she ultimately became fond of LaGrange.

⁴¹ Ruth Olshan Zimmerman (1924-2015).

⁴² LaGrange College was founded in 1831 as a women's academy affiliated with the United Methodist Church. It is the oldest private college in Georgia. In 1851, the college moved its present location in the city of LaGrange. The name changed to 'LaGrange Female College' in 1851, then to 'LaGrange College' in 1934. The school officially became co-ed in 1953.

Allan: Oh, absolutely. She made great friends, Jewish and non-Jewish. I remember growing up. My brother and I played golf. We would play at the American Legion⁴³ Golf Course with our friends. All of a sudden, each friend . . . We were losing them to the golf because their parents were all joining the country club. We went to our father and said, “We don’t have anybody to play with. We need to belong to the country club.” He said, “Well, we can try but I’m not gonna guarantee that we can get in.” He said, “So don’t be disappointed if we don’t make it.” But we did.

Mike: What year was that?

Allan: That would have been in the 1960’s.

Mike: Now let me go back to asking how did you meet your spouse?

Allan: It’s funny [how] my wife and I met. Lori⁴⁴—it’s Lori—she and I met at the University of Georgia. And . . .

Mike: And she was from Atlanta?

Allan: . . . she’s from, originally from Atlanta. She was a member of Shearith Israel and [I] found out that actually her father [Maurice Draluck]⁴⁵ taught Sunday school to my brother.

Mike: There’s a connection.

Allan: There was a connection there too. Draluck.

Mike: You’ve mentioned this before. Your family sort of steered you in the direction of dating Jewish girls.

Allan: Absolutely.

Mike: That was important to them?

Allan: Absolutely.

Mike: Did you challenge that?

Allan: No.

Mike: You were very compliant.

⁴³ The American Legion, sometimes referred to as simply ‘The Legion,’ is a veterans’ organization providing financial, social, and emotional support to members of the United States Armed Forces, veterans, and their dependents.

⁴⁴ Lori Ann Draluck Struletz was born in Atlanta in 1955 and married Allan Draluck in 1979.

⁴⁵ Maurice Draluck (1929-2015) was born in Toronto, Canada and immigrated to the United States in 1949, settling in Atlanta, Georgia where he was a partner in a meat processing business. He served in the United States Army during the Korean War. He was a vice president at Congregation Shearith Israel in Atlanta and chaired its Israel Bonds Dinner Committee.

Allan: I did exactly as I was told.

Mike: Do you remember where you and Lori went on your first date?

Allan: Actually, we . . . there was a party at the apartments which I lived in at Athens. There was just a social thing. Everybody was there, and she was there. That's really the first time we talked and got along. The reason that I . . . to go back, she invited me to a party that her sorority was having. So when we got—this was over the break . . . When we got back she had to be at that party and that's when we started talking.

Mike: But when you left University of Georgia, you went back to LaGrange and she went back to Atlanta.

Allan: We went . . . She went to Atlanta and started teaching. My program was a five-year program. I was at Athens a little bit longer. I went back to LaGrange only as I was looking for a job.

Mike: How did you and Lori ensure that your children were going to receive a Jewish education?

Allan: Our children started out early at Jewish Day School. They both started at the Epstein School⁴⁶ and went through the program until the eighth grade. At that point then they went on to private . . . I mean, I'm sorry, to public school. But their instilment of Judaism and all really has a lot to do with the community in LaGrange. We go back . . . even before they were born; [we] have gone back to LaGrange for the Jewish holidays, for the High Holy Days.⁴⁷ They were active in the actual services at a young age whether it was just blowing the *shofar*⁴⁸ that my father would get them, or he would carry them to the front of the synagogue, or whatever. They felt right at home with the congregation in LaGrange. In fact, now Ephraim ["Effie"] Spielman⁴⁹ from Atlanta, he's an attorney here. He'll be coming to LaGrange for the eighteenth year leading services for the High Holy

⁴⁶ The Epstein School (also known as the Solomon Shechter School of Atlanta) is a private Jewish day school in the Atlanta area located in of Sandy Springs. In 1973, Rabbi Harry H. Epstein and the leaders of Ahavath Achim synagogue wanted to create a Conservative Jewish day school. The first campus was housed at the synagogue. In 1987 the school moved to Sandy Springs.

⁴⁷ The two High Holy Days are *Rosh Ha-Shanah* (Jewish New Year) and *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement).

⁴⁸ A *shofar* is an ancient musical horn made of ram's horn, used for Jewish religious purposes.

⁴⁹ Ephraim "Effie" Spielman (b. 1958) is a commercial real estate attorney in Atlanta, Georgia, who grew up in Amityville, New York as the son of a congregational rabbi. He has law degrees from Princeton University and Emory University. He was a president of the Epstein School in Atlanta.

Days. Adam, my oldest son who is in law school now, and Scott, who is a senior at University of Georgia, for the last five to ten years helped Effie lead the services.

Mike: I knew he was a big part of conducting the services. We'll just have to put in a plug. After they were out of the Jewish Day School, where did they get the rest of their Jewish education from?

Allan: It came from us. It came from Lori. It came from me. It came from my parents. It came from family really.

Mike: Just a side bar, when Effie Spielman comes to LaGrange where does he stay? That's a great story.

Allan: That's a good story. When Effie first started coming, he and his wife Gail, it was just the two of them. Like every other rabbi or person who would lead the services, they would stay in a hotel but they would have all their meals at my home because we were kosher. Then the next year Gail was pregnant with her first child. She refused to stay at the hotel that was closest to the synagogue because Effie would walk. She stayed at the newer hotel and Effie stayed at this old crappy hotel until he had a horrible case of bed fleas or something. It was awful. At that point Effie decided that he, out of necessity, that he would not be able to walk to the synagogue anymore. He would walk from the synagogue to the house or whatever. Now what we do is Effie's family, [her] entire extended family or Gail's family, come with them to the High Holy Days. They bring friends from Ramah⁵⁰ or whatever. We have a large amount of people from the Atlanta area who come down for services. What we do now is there's a bed and breakfast in LaGrange and as many of us that can [stay] will stay there. Gail and Lori and some of the others get together with all the kosher food and prepare that in Atlanta. They bring it down for the holidays. They have this large parlor so we all meet there for meals and stay there. It's very nice.

Mike: We talked to the proprietor at the bed and breakfast and she said it's the most wonderful time of her life during that year.

⁵⁰ During the 1940's, the Jewish Theological Seminary established several programs to reconnect Jewish youth with the synagogue and cultivate leadership. One of these programs was Camp Ramah, a network of Jewish summer camps affiliated with the Conservative movement. The mission is to create and sustain summer camps and Israel programs that inspire commitment to and engagement in Jewish life. The camps operate in the United States, Canada, and Israel. Ramah camps serve kosher food and are Shabbat-observant. Ramah Darom (Ramah of the South) is a Ramah camp and retreat center in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains in North Georgia that opened in 1997.

Allan: They're part of our family now.

Mike: She said, "They come in and *kasher*⁵¹ the kitchen and they take over the whole bed and breakfast." They don't have to worry about any of the rooms being empty because they're all filled up.

Allan: That's right. We're already booked for the next year.

Mike: She loves it. She says she can sit back sort of as a guest.

Allan: She does. She sits with us and has. . .

Mike: I think it's a wonderful story.

Allan: It is. It's great. As long as Effie can do this and as long as we can keep the synagogue going, that's what we'll continue to do.

Mike: Is there anything you want to add or touch on before we close that you may have missed?

Allan: There is so much. I just can't think of too many things. Again, the Jewish community in LaGrange was one of just togetherness. I'm sure they always argued. There were always arguments about things. But basically they all got along and they all supported each other. They knew it was important to all be together, at least to the public eye. The synagogue . . . I can't imagine what it would have been like without the synagogue prior to that for the children that would have been in LaGrange, you know, older children. To me it was just a sense of knowing who we were.

Even though many years the building was only used three times a year, we knew it was there and what it stood for, and the fact that the community knew that there was a Jewish population. I had the privilege of really . . . the times that I had in New York my eyes were opened to a whole another world that a lot of people didn't get that opportunity. I saw family or religion from two different sides and both of them were priceless. It was all about family. My kids [are] the same way. When Adam went to law school, he started at the [University of] New Orleans⁵² the week before Hurricane

⁵¹ To make fit for use; render kosher.

⁵² The University of New Orleans, often referred to locally as UNO, is a medium-sized, metropolitan, public research university located on the New Orleans lakefront within New Orleans, Louisiana. It is a member of the University of Louisiana System. Originally called Louisiana State University in New Orleans it was the first racially integrated public university in the southern United States.

Katrina.⁵³ So he came back home and was able to go for *Rosh Ha-Shanna*.⁵⁴ When *Yom Kippur*⁵⁵ came he was . . . he had to go into Houston. The school moved to Houston and it was just impossible for him to stay for that High Holy Day. It was really heart-breaking that he couldn't be there, and [he] made a point this year to get back. It was just something that I just can't explain, the relationship that my children have with my parents. Again it was all about LaGrange. It was all about community, Jewish [and] non-Jewish. It just meant a lot.

Mike: They would be fourth generation, were they not?

Allan: They would've been, that's right, fourth generation. In LaGrange. That's right.

Mike: We thank you very much for sharing your memory with us of LaGrange.

Allan: Sure.

Mike: That's great. Thank you.

Allan: Thank you.

<End Tape>

INTERVIEW ENDS

⁵³ Hurricane Katrina was an extremely destructive and deadly Category 5 hurricane that struck the Gulf Coast of the United States in August 2005, causing catastrophic damage from central Florida to eastern Texas. Subsequent flooding, caused largely as a result of fatal engineering flaws in the flood protection system around the city of New Orleans, precipitated most of the loss of lives.

⁵⁴ *Rosh Ha-Shanah* [Hebrew: head of the year; i.e. New Year festival] begins the cycle of High Holy Days. It introduces the Ten Days of Penitence, when Jews examine their souls and take stock of their actions. On the tenth day is *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement. The tradition is that on *Rosh Ha-Shanah*, God sits in judgment on humanity. Then the fate of every living creature is inscribed in the Book of Life or Death. Prayer and repentance before the sealing of the books on *Yom Kippur* may revoke these decisions.

⁵⁵ Hebrew for 'Day of Atonement.' The most sacred day of the Jewish year. *Yom Kippur* is a 25 hour fast day. Most of the day is spent in prayer, reciting *yizkor* for deceased relatives, confessing sins, requesting divine forgiveness, and listening to *Torah* readings and sermons. People greet each other with the wish that they may be sealed in the heavenly book for a good year ahead. The day ends with the blowing of the *shofar* (a ram's horn).