Marvin: This Marvin Weintraub interviewing Eleanor Vrono today . . . May 9, 2008. It’s for the Jewish Oral History Project of Atlanta, a project of the William Jewish Heritage Museum, and the American Jewish Committee, with support of the National Council of Jewish Women, Atlanta and the Atlanta Jewish Federation. Thank you for having me, Eleanor.

Eleanor: I’m glad you’re here.

Marvin: It’s a pleasure being back here.

Eleanor: Thank you.

Marvin: You are somewhat familiar with the interview so we’ll get right into it. Let’s start with your background first. [Were you] born in Atlanta?

Eleanor: I was born in Atlanta. My grandmother was Mandel [Goldie] Pfeffer.

Marvin: Spell her name.

Eleanor: Mandel . . . M-A-N-D-E-L  P-F-E-F-E-R. The Pfeffers were a nice family here in Atlanta. But you know what? They’re all gone. There was my uncle Harry Pfeffer . . . my Aunt Pearl and Uncle Harry Pfeffer. My grandmother had six daughters. My mother died early. My mother died when she was 30. She had pneumonia . . . that was before they had penicillin. At 30 years old she died. I was little.

Marvin: How old were you?

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1 Alternatively spelled ‘Mindal.’
Eleanor: I was about six years old, and my brother was really a baby. He was a baby, and my sister was 12 years old.

Marvin: What year were you born?

Eleanor: I was born in 1925.

Marvin: You did not know your mother then essentially.

Eleanor: I have very little . . . I can’t remember very much about her. My sister did, she remembers a lot. I remember a few little things about her. I heard, after she died and even up until I was a big girl, when I would go somewhere, somebody would come up to me and say, “Your mother was so kind to me . . . your mother was . . .” My daddy had a dry goods store.² I think he was like the forerunner of all the discount houses. He would buy up from Sears Roebuck³ all over the country. He would buy their returns for like a nickel over $1 or a dime over $1. He would pack all the merchandise . . . his place on Edgewood Avenue . . . he would have all the merchandise out on tables . . . like they do now, but they didn’t at that time. He would sell everything really cheap . . . blue jeans and underwear and all kinds of . . . anything that Sears had and would send to him. When they had enough returns, they didn’t put it back in the store. They would sell him all their returns.

Marvin: This would have been 1930?

Eleanor: Yes. During the [Great] Depression⁴ he . . . sold them cheap. It was Jack’s on Edgewood Avenue. He was pretty well-known. They could buy cheap and then he opened up another store on Marietta Street, which was called ‘Wells Fargo.’ On Edgewood Avenue was Jack’s. The one on Marietta Street was Wells Fargo. Then he opened up another one across the street that was a children’s store. You know what, I can’t remember the name and that’s where I used to work. I worked there. What else can I tell you? He would be really busy and . . . so many of the young what do you call . . . not the Spanish Jews . . .

Marvin: . . . Sephardic⁵ Jews . . .

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² Eleanor’s father was Jack Rothenberg. Her mother was probably named ‘Rose.’
³ An American chain of department stores founded by Richard Sears and Alvah Roebuck in 1886. It began as a mail order catalog company and opened retail locations in 1925. It was bought by Kmart in 2005. Sears was the largest retailer in the United States until October 1989 when was surpassed by Walmart.
⁴ The Great Depression was a severe worldwide economic depression in the decade preceding World War II. The time of the Great Depression varied across nations, but in most countries it started in about 1929 and lasted until the late 1930’s or early 1940’s. It was the longest, most widespread, and deepest depression of the twentieth century.
⁵ Sephardic Jews are the Jews of Spain, Portugal, North Africa and the Middle East and their descendants. The adjective “Sephardic” and corresponding nouns Sephardi (singular) and Sephardim (plural) are derived from the Hebrew word ‘Sepharad,’ which refers to Spain. Historically, the vernacular language of Sephardic Jews was...
Eleanor: . . . the Sephardic Jews. The girls worked for him on Saturdays. They were paid . . . they used to make the sale, and they would get a receipt of how much it was. At the end of the night, we would add up the receipts and they would get a certain percentage. That’s what they were paid. They would make $5 maybe $4. Forty or 50 years ago, that was a lot of money. It wasn’t a lot of money, but it was good that they worked. You know who worked for him? Dr. Irving Greenberg. He was very prominent in the city. He worked his way through college and medical school working for my daddy like that. There was so many I can’t think of their names, that worked with him on Saturdays.

Marvin: Can you tell me a little bit about Dr. Greenberg? Remember what he did?

Eleanor: He was a surgeon and he was one of the first Jewish surgeons in Atlanta too . . . that I can think of. He was very prominent and he was very . . . with the Jewish people.

Marvin: What type of surgery? Do you remember?

Eleanor: I don’t remember. You never heard of him? You know him . . . but he died. When my daddy passed away, it was a shame because now there are so many people who don’t remember him . . . but he was a big part of the Jewish community.

Marvin: What year did he die? Then we’ll go back to the beginning.

Eleanor: I don’t know, it was maybe 25 years ago. He used to drive a panel truck . . . he was this Jewish man when he went in his truck . . . in those days, it wasn’t like it is now. No Jewish person drove a truck! He would drive that truck all over. He would go over to the [Jewish] Progressive Club and play cards. You don’t want to hear about it? Am I talking too much?

Marvin: No press on.

Eleanor: He would go to the Progressive Club. He loved to play cards, and he loved to drink and he loved people and he was very generous. He didn’t believe in the [Jewish] Welfare Fund, but he gave. He told me one time about when he would go to Shearith Israel and give out the

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*Ladino*, a Romance language derived from Old Spanish, incorporating elements from the old Romance languages of the Iberian Peninsula, Hebrew, Aramaic, and in the lands receiving those who were exiled, Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, Greek, Bulgarian and Serbo-Croatian vocabulary.

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

7 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
books . . . he knew people that needed money. It was during the Depression then, and he would put a $20 bill in the book that he would hand to them. They would, “Oh, look I found a $20 bill!” He was very generous. But he didn’t believe in . . . whatever . . . savings . . . stock and bonds . . . that was before all that.

**Marvin:** The only income then was the three stores.
**Eleanor:** The three stores, but he made a good income and that was really during the Depression. He did good.

**Marvin:** He never remarried?
**Eleanor:** Yes, he did. He did . . . when I was maybe 15, he remarried. Her name was Esther. We were never close to her, because my mother’s sisters resented the fact that he got married. We were never close. She had two boys.

**Marvin:** You have two [step-brothers]?
**Eleanor:** No. One was . . . the youngest was killed in an airplane. He was taking airplane lessons and he crashed. The youngest boy. The oldest boy is in New York. We don’t see much of him.

**Marvin:** Really two separate families then?
**Eleanor:** It really was.

**Marvin:** Do you know how your mother and father met initially?
**Eleanor:** Gosh, I don’t know. I got a letter that my daddy wrote to my mother when she was pregnant. He was in New York getting ready to open up his stores here. He had two brothers. I’ve got the letter . . . if they want it.

**Marvin:** Were your parents native Atlantans?
**Eleanor:** No. They were not born in Atlanta.

**Marvin:** [Were they] born in the United States?
**Eleanor:** No, they were born in Poland. I don’t remember how they met. I don’t know, and I never asked where they met.

**Marvin:** But both of them ended up in Atlanta some way?
**Eleanor:** Yes, my grandmother was here. She had a big house on . . . Hunter Street.

**Marvin:** What street?

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.
**Eleanor:** Hunter Street. With her six daughters, she lived in that house. I don’t know how my mother and daddy met, but they did.

**Marvin:** This was your grandmother on your mother’s side?

**Eleanor:** This is my grandmother on my mother’s side. She was Pfeffer . . . Mandel [Goldie] Pfeffer. I never knew my daddy’s parents. They went to Israel. They were killed . . . they were fighting over there. They are buried over in Israel over in . . . they were considered heroes because they were killed during that time when they were fighting over there. I know they are buried in heroes’ graves, because when we went over there, we saw it. I never knew them. My daddy’s sister was Gussie [Rothenberg] Hurwitz. She was here in Atlanta. That’s why my daddy came to Atlanta because his sister was here. They owned Barney’s Department Store, which was a dry goods store on Edgewood Avenue. There’s so many people that would remember . . . old people. I don’t know if they’re living or not. It’s a shame because if they go, they forget. They don’t remember my daddy. He was a character here.

**Marvin:** Tell me what made him a character?

**Eleanor:** What made him a character? He drove that truck. He loved his . . . vodka. It was something he loved to drink. Some kind of alcohol and he loved it. He was always singing, and he was always joking. He was a character, and like I said he was just very . . . he would give just out of his pockets . . . to anybody.

**Marvin:** Three stores?

**Eleanor:** Yes.

**Marvin:** I guess he managed one personally?

**Eleanor:** No, he never stayed in his stores.

**Marvin:** He had three managers? Were they family members?

**Eleanor:** My stepmother, when she married him, she was in one store. He had managers, but he never stayed in the store. He would go from store to store, bring merchandise. He was always collecting bargains, looking for bargain merchandise. He would go from one store to another in his truck. He delivered, but he didn’t stay. He used to have an office, just used to stay back there. He had to pay his bills and he’d go to the Progressive Club. I guess he would go everyday. He would play pinochle⁸ or whatever he played.

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⁸ Pinochle is a trick-taking card game for 2 to 4 players using a 48-card deck. It was very popular with American Jews in the first half of the twentieth century.
Marvin: Do you know where the Progressive Club was at that time?
Eleanor: It was on Spring Street. Where was it? I know it moved to 10th Street.
Marvin: This was well before 10th Street.
Eleanor: But then he was also at 10th Street . . . in the end, he would go there to play. We used to go there a lot . . . that’s where we would go when we were young.
Marvin: Tenth Street?
Eleanor: Yes. Then, when my kids . . . when I got married and I had children, we used to go to the other one, the big one, what was that? The newest one.
Marvin: Standard Club?
Eleanor: No, we didn’t go there.
Marvin: Mayfair?
Eleanor: No. The Progressive Club . . .
Marvin: . . . you mean when it moved further out . . .
Eleanor: . . . further out. I used to take my children there. They used to go there all the time. Papa Jack would be up there playing poker. He loved it. He was very outgoing.
Marvin: You had a good relationship with these clubs, the last one, the continuation of the Progressive Club. That was the last Progressive Club in existence, was it not? It went out. I remember seeing . . . I can’t recall where it is quite frankly either.
Eleanor: Wasn’t it on Spring Street?
Marvin: It started on Spring, the original one it was there. Then it moved north as the Jewish families moved north.
Eleanor: No it didn’t. That’s the Standard Club that did that . . . the Standard Club moved way out north. The Progressive Club was pretty close in. The one who would remember would be Harold. He remembers everything. I just don’t . . . We also were married . . . the Ahavath Achim moved the year that we married . . . built a new synagogue. That was 60 years ago. So

9 Poker is a family of card games involving individual play and betting. The winner is determined by the ranks and combinations of players' cards, some of which remain hidden until the end of the game. Poker games vary in the number of cards dealt, the number of shared or community cards, and the number of cards that remain hidden.
10 The Standard Club is a Jewish social club that started as the Concordia Association in 1867 in Downtown Atlanta. In 1905, it was reorganized as the 'Standard Club' and moved into the former mansion of William C. Sanders near where Turner Field is now located. In the late 1920's the club moved to Ponce de Leon Avenue in Midtown Atlanta. Later, the club moved to what is now the Lenox Park business park and was located there until 1983. In the 1980's, the club moved to its present location in Johns Creek in Atlanta's northern suburbs.
11 Ahavath Achim was founded in 1887 in a small room on Gilmer Street. In 1920 they moved to a permanent building at the corner of Piedmont and Gilmer Street. The final service in that building was held in 1958 to make
we had to get married at the temporary one that the AA [Ahavath Achim] built, moved into and it was on 10th Street, I think. That’s where we got married in that . . .

Marvin: What year was that?
Eleanor: That was 1948. They had just built the new AA synagogue, but it wasn’t ready yet and so we had to get married in the little [unintelligible: 15:00] thing that they used while they were building the new AA.

Marvin: You’re talking about the AA which is now on Peachtree Battle. That’s the one that was being built?
Eleanor: Yes, that was the one that was being built. Both families belonged to the AA. When we got married, we were married in that temporary AA building on 10th Street. Sixty years ago.

Marvin: Nineteen forty-eight. How did you meet Harold?
Eleanor: I was off at college. I went to Ohio State [University—Columbus, Ohio]. Who was she? It wasn’t his aunt. His aunt’s best friend worked for my daddy. In fact, she managed the children’s store. What was her name? Evelyn Morris was her name. She was a good friend of Harold’s aunt and Sylvia Peel. You know them? Sylvia told her about her nephew Harold and Evelyn talked about me, that she worked with my daddy. He called Harold. They told him to call. He called and we started dating. He was going to Emory [University—Atlanta, Georgia]. We lived right across the street on North Decatur Road from Emory. He would go to class and park and then come to see me. Would come to our driveway and see me after his class. We were right across the street from Emory. That was where he went after the war.

Marvin: You have . . . obviously 60 years of good life. Tell me about your children.
Eleanor: My children . . . thank G-d they’re nice children. I got a daughter Robin Torch and she’s married to Evan Torch.

Marvin: Spell the last name.
Eleanor: T-O-R-C-H. He is a psychiatrist . . . Dr. Torch. My son Chuck . . . Charles, we call him ‘Chuck’ . . . is married to Marsha Wise. I guess I should have told you earlier . . . when Chuck met Marsha . . . they both were going to get married to other people. They got married really young. They were both 19 years old when they got married. Marsha’s parents are

way for construction of the Downtown Connector (the concurrent section of Interstate 75 and Interstate 85 through Atlanta). The synagogue moved to its current location on Peachtree Battle Avenue in 1958.
Holocaust survivors.\footnote{12} Marsha tells me that my daddy did a lot for all of the survivors. He quietly helped a lot of them. He really was good to them so I think that . . . he was such a philanthropist. Did everything very quietly. Nobody knew it how much he did.

**Marvin:** That’s the Jewish way, isn’t it? Supposedly.

**Eleanor:** He was Jewish . . .

**Marvin:** You had a third child?

**Eleanor:** I have a third child, Don. He is an equine veterinarian . . . a horse doctor.

**Marvin:** Does that mean he watched the Kentucky Derby? \footnote{13} \textit{<said with a smile>}

**Eleanor:** Yes, he did. He sure did. He would say . . . that’s the one who lives from California . . . he got real excited over the Kentucky Derby\footnote{13} when the horse fell.

**Marvin:** I bet.

**Eleanor:** He knew the vet that was there.

\textit{<discussion about the interview content, interview resumes>}

**Marvin:** That’s good background . . . your dad and his store and the Jewish community.

**Eleanor:** My grandmother and my \textit{bubbe}.\footnote{14} We didn’t talk about her.

**Marvin:** We started to.

**Eleanor:** She was some lady. She had those six girls and she came to America with her daughters.

**Marvin:** All six of them?

**Eleanor:** Yes. She opened up a little store. Her husband hadn’t come over yet. He came later and he died here early. He had appendicitis\footnote{15} and he died early. She was left with the six girls and she had a little bitty . . . it wasn’t a store, she had a table and she sold things off the table and whatever. As each girl got older they went to work . . . my Aunt Pearl got a job . . . my Aunt Sarah got a job. Aunt Pearl got married. They just all started helping . . . they grew up without a daddy, without a father.

**Marvin:** Yes. That’s tough.

\footnote{12} The Wise brothers, Sam and Isaac, survived the Holocaust. Sam married Ida Baron and Isaac married Rachel Lager, both of whom were survivors. Marsha is the daughter of Sam and Ida. The Breman Museum holds oral histories for all four.

\footnote{13} A horse race held annually in Louisville, Kentucky. It is held at Churchill Downs. The race is known as “The Most Exciting Two Minutes in Sports.”

\footnote{14} \textit{Bubbe} is a Yiddish nickname for ‘Grandma.’

\footnote{15} Appendicitis is inflammation of the appendix. If the inflamed appendix is not surgically removed, it usually ruptures, causing a fatal infection.

Transcript Id: OHC10732
Eleanor: She had a tough life, she really did.

Marvin: How about your background? You mentioned you were members of AA? Sunday school, religious school?

Eleanor: No, I didn’t go to religious . . . in those days they didn’t believe . . . my daddy didn’t believe . . . in a girl going to Hebrew school. They didn’t believe in . . . he would have been terribly . . . if he saw a woman go up to the bimah\(^{16}\) . . . they didn’t believe in that . . . he didn’t anyway. He didn’t go to the bimah. He never heard of a girl being bat mitzvah\(^{17}\). Never. No. I went to Sunday school at the AA. We lived on Washington Street and across the street from us on the left, were the Cohens. Lillie . . . it was Lillie Cohen that lived there. I can’t remember, but it was a family, a Jewish family. There were a lot of Jewish people on Washington Street.

Marvin: You went to the Washington Street Sunday school?

Eleanor: Yes. To the AA Sunday school. Across the street from where I lived was another Jewish family. Then across on the other side of that was the Hebrew Orphans’ Home\(^{18}\) on Washington Street. Did you know that?

Marvin: Yes.

Eleanor: The Hebrew Orphans’ Home was there. We never saw any of the kids that lived there, never. My grandmother lived like two blocks away. I used to walk to her house all the time. The Princess Apartments was there. That’s where all the Jewish people lived, too. There were a lot of Jewish people and I had a lot of Jewish friends growing up.

Marvin: It wasn’t any trouble to walk to Sunday school?

Eleanor: No. I must have walked . . . yes, I did walk to Sunday school.

Marvin: You got a good education?

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\(^{16}\) Hebrew for ‘platform.’ The bimah is a raised structure in the synagogue from which the Torah is read and from which prayers are led.

\(^{17}\) Hebrew for ‘daughter of commandment.’ A rite of passage for Jewish girls aged 12 years and one day according to her Hebrew birthday. Many girls have their bat mitzvah around age 13, the same as boys who have their bar mitzvah at that age. She is now duty bound to keep the commandments. Synagogue ceremonies are held for bat mitzvah girls in Reform and Conservative communities, but it has not won the universal approval of Orthodox rabbis.

\(^{18}\) The Hebrew Orphans’ Home was located at 478 Washington Street in Atlanta. The residence facility was open from 1876 to 1930. It was originally called the Hebrew Orphans’ Asylum. In 1901, the name was changed to the Hebrew Orphans’ Home. The service began to be used to place foster children in homes. In 1988, the organization’s mission changed and it became the Jewish Educational Loan Fund (JELF) with the goal of providing low-interest post-secondary education loans for Jewish students.
Eleanor: A Jewish education? I never did learn Hebrew. I never learned Jewish. My daddy didn’t believe in girls being bat mitzvahed, or any of that. But I got a good Jewish education. I had my bubbe, my grandmother, who observed every holiday. We were very religious.

Marvin: I assume a kosher household?

Eleanor: Yes. My daddy’s house was kosher and my grandmother was really kosher.19

Marvin: Where did they buy their food?

Eleanor: Up the street was . . . what was the name of that? I see those people all the time. I can’t think of their name . . . on Washington Street near the little shul [Yiddish: synagogue]. I see the children . . . they’ve grown there. They got grandchildren . . . what was the name of that place? It’s right on the corner where . . . the Shearith Israel synagogue was, on the corner . . . not Maryland, it wasn’t the Maryland. It’ll come to me. I’ll call you and tell you.

Marvin: Not at two in the morning. Now again for the tape . . . Washington Street had both the AA and the Shearith Israel synagogues within a block or two?

Eleanor: Two or three blocks, yes. My daddy belonged to both. He belonged to the Shearith Israel and he belonged to the AA, because that’s where we went to Sunday school. That was more social than the Shearith Israel. He also belonged to the other one. What’s the other synagogue—the Spanish synagogue?

Marvin: [Or VeShalom.] He belonged to all three of them?

Eleanor: He did.

Marvin: But he did not belong to the Temple?

Eleanor: No, he didn’t belong to the Temple.

Marvin: Just the three of them.

Eleanor: He went to the Shearith Israel. That was his thing. We . . . the children . . . went to the AA.

Marvin: What was the religious affiliation? Was [there] a difference between Shearith Israel and the AA? Were they Orthodox,20 Conservative,21 Reform?22

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19 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.

20 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.
**Eleanor:** I think they both were [Orthodox]. I think the Shearith Israel may have been a little more Orthodox than the AA at that time. The AA was Orthodox. My grandmother belonged to the AA. She was very Orthodox. She wore a sheitel. She had a sheitel and she belonged to the AA. My daddy belonged. He belonged but he went to the Shearith Israel. He was very active at the Shearith Israel. I tell people he used to get out the books during the Depression, he knew some people were having it tough.

**Marvin:** We never have used the full name. What was the whole name of the A.?  
**Eleanor:** I forgot them. You just been teasing me.  
<discussion about Ahavath Achim, interview resumes>  
**Eleanor:** We always called it AA.  
**Marvin:** I know but it does have a name.  
**Eleanor:** In fact, in the basement over there, they’ve got the pictures of the graduating classes and my . . . confirmation. Down in the basement they’ve got all of the pictures. I don’t know if mine is still up there, but it was up there for years. Harold’s too. Not graduation . . .  
**Marvin:** . . . confirmation . . .  
**Eleanor:** . . . confirmation.  
**Marvin:** That’s interesting. Who was the rabbi at the time?  
**Eleanor:** [Rabbi Harry] Epstein. Yes, he was tough. He didn’t argue with my daddy. He was tough. When my oldest son was bar mitzvahed . . . Rabbi Epstein, he ran a tight ship. My daddy was his own boss, too. When we had the bar mitzvah, my daddy wasn’t going to sit back .  

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21 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).

22 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.

23 A sheitel is the Yiddish word for a wig worn by some Orthodox Jewish married women in order to conform with the requirement of Jewish Law to cover their hair.

24 In 1928 Rabbi Harry Epstein (1903-2003) served as the rabbi of Ahavath Achim from 1928 to 1982. Under his leadership the congregation began to shift to Conservatism, which they adopted in 1952. Rabbi Epstein retired in 1982, becoming Rabbi Emeritus and Rabbi Arnold Goodman assumed the rabbinic post.

25 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.
he came to the AA for Chuck’s *bar mitzvah* and Rabbi Epstein . . . boy, you had to be quiet, you had to be [unintelligible: 28:17] But my daddy didn’t pay any attention, he just walked up there, stood up at the front and he *davened*\(^\text{26}\) and did his thing. Rabbi Epstein didn’t say a word.

**Marvin:** Your daddy was used to a more Orthodox congregation.

**Eleanor:** Yes, he really was, but this was Orthodox.

**Marvin:** Interesting. What’s your relationship to the Jewish community now . . . through the years?

**Eleanor:** I don’t really like to go . . . but I belong to . . . I belong to everything. When I was younger, I worked at the [William Breman] Jewish Home\(^\text{27}\) a lot. I worked there . . . the different things they had. I was there every week.

**Marvin:** Where was the Jewish Home at his time?

**Eleanor:** The Jewish Home was where it is now. That was 20 years ago. How long has it been there? It’s been there a long time. My children were grown. I would go every week for what they had . . . the birthday [party]. I worked there a lot. I don’t anymore.

**Marvin:** Any other activities? Did you belong to any other Jewish organizations?

**Eleanor:** I belonged, but that’s what I was active in . . . the Jewish Home. I was president of the PTA . . . James L. Key School. That wasn’t Jewish.

**Marvin:** Tell me about your kids growing up and the PTA [Parent Teacher Association]\(^\text{28}\) and you being the president.

**Eleanor:** That was in grammar school, James L. Key. My kids all, they were all . . . my little one wasn’t a really good student . . . but my other two were good students. All three of them have graduate degrees. Don is a veterinarian, Chuck is a lawyer and Robin got a law degree. All three of them went to . . . their grandpa would have been very happy, very proud of them.

Then Marian [sp] had children. What else?

**Marvin:** One you said is in California, two are still in Atlanta?

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\(^{26}\) The act of reciting Jewish liturgical prayers during which the prayer sways or rocks lightly.

\(^{27}\) A nursing home in Atlanta providing short and long-term dementia, Alzheimer’s, and nursing care. Formerly the Jewish Home, it first opened in 1951 at 260 14\(^{th}\) Street, NW, on land that had been donated by real estate developer Ben J. Massell. The Home’s growth called for a larger, updated facility, leading to the construction of a new building at 3150 Howell Mill Road, NW. The second Jewish Home opened on February 16, 1971. In 1991, it was renamed the William Breman Jewish Home to honor and recognize its third president, Bill Breman, as the prime motivator of the modern day facility.

\(^{28}\) A national organization with affiliations in local schools throughout the United States composed of parents, teachers and staff, and devoted to the educational success of children and the promotion of parent involvement in schools.
Eleanor: My middle grandson just got engaged.

Marvin: How about your background in school?

Eleanor: My background? I was always a very good student. I was. I went to Girls’ High and I went to Hoke Smith. Where did I go to elementary school? I can see the school . . .

Marvin: You went to Girls’ High and Hoke Smith?

Eleanor: Wasn’t Hoke Smith the in-between?

Marvin: No, Hoke Smith was also a high school.

Eleanor: No. I’m trying to think. What was the name of the one where we went from grammar school to the three-year thing? I can’t remember . . . then I went to Girls’ High and graduated from Girls’ High.

Marvin: What year? Do you remember?

Eleanor: Let’s subtract.

Marvin: That’s all right. A few years ago.

Eleanor: From there I went to Ohio State.

Marvin: You graduated from Ohio State?

Eleanor: I graduated.

Marvin: Degree . . . what was it in?

Eleanor: I got a degree in . . . I got a business degree, BA . . . BS. My daddy wanted me to do that. My daddy wanted me to get a business degree and my grandmother wanted me to be a teacher. He won out.

Marvin: Did you practice business?

Eleanor: No, I came home. Although I use to work in my daddy’s store, then I came home and I met Harold. We got married that next year and then I became a mother. I used to work in the store on Saturdays or Easter. But no I didn’t [practice business].

Marvin: Did Harold work in the store?

Eleanor: My daddy’s store? No, Harold worked in his daddy’s store. He never worked in my daddy’s store. He worked for his daddy. They had a big . . . didn’t he tell you . . .

Marvin: Yes, but this tape doesn’t tell me.

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29 Girls’ High School was one of seven schools that were part of the original Atlanta public school system. It opened in 1872, and was the only public school in the area exclusively for girls. It was a superb school academically, and had 104 rooms including science halls, laboratories, sewing rooms, a library, and outdoor classrooms. In 1947, Atlanta high schools became co-educational and Girls’ High was renamed ‘Roosevelt High School.’
Eleanor: He worked with his daddy and then they built this big supermarket, Vrono’s Supermarket . . . He never worked for my daddy.

Marvin: Just for this recording, if you want that background. It’s also on Harold Vrono’s tape.

<discussion about the taping process >

Eleanor: Do you know we didn’t talk about my grandmother enough . . . my bubbe? She was a wonderful person and she used to wear a sheitel. I don’t think anybody . . . well they do . . . the real, real . . . she was real, real religious. She raised those six girls and when my mother died she came to live with us. She raised my brother and she had a tough life. She was something, my bubbe.

Marvin: Did she work outside the home?

Eleanor: No, she couldn’t. She had all those girls.

Marvin: I thought you said she came here and opened a grocery store.

Eleanor: No, she didn’t open a grocery store. She had like a table until her daughters were old enough, they all went to work and they got married, and they helped her. They bought her the house on Washington Street. They were good to her.

Marvin: Good. That’s a pretty interesting background.


Marvin: You say you went to Israel. Was that on a vacation or was it because of some organization?

Eleanor: No, we went to Israel for my grandson’s bar mitzvah. Twice we went to Israel. We went—my granddaughter and my grandson, my daughter’s daughter and my son’s son. They’re not even a year apart. They were both in Israel. We all went, and that’s where they were bar and bat mitzvahed. The whole family went. Everybody went.

Marvin: What did you think of Israel?

Eleanor: I liked it. They we went back . . . the first one was my oldest grandson . . . he was bar mitzvahed there. Then we went back for the other two. We’ve been there quite a few times. I’m sure Harold told you that he can’t go back, can’t use the name Warner [sp] because of his relatives and the war.

Marvin: You want to repeat it for this tape or you want it to go to the other recorder.
Eleanor: I don’t know. He really knows about it. Donny, my youngest . . . when we went with my oldest grandchild to his bar mitzvah and my youngest son, Donny, was in college . . . he was scared to come to Israel. He really was but he came. He came back and he had to meet us there because he was in school, and he was scared. He really was. That was when there was so much fighting going on and everything was top security.

Marvin: What year was that?

Eleanor: It was Jeremy . . . Jeremy’s 27 and he was 13 then . . . what year would that be? What year was that? You have to subtract.

Marvin: I don’t know what year they were born in. That’s all right.

Eleanor: I don’t remember. Jeremy’s 27 now . . . that was 14 years ago when he was bar mitzvahed and we went over. Don was still in school and he met us there and he was petrified. He really was. I guess people had told, “You’re crazy to go over there. That’s where they’re fighting.” Just his luck, he was at the ‘Wailing Wall’ and the explosive went off. We laughed. It scared him to death. Nothing happened but I remember how scared he was to come over there. I don’t know if he came a second time or not when we had our [grand]kids’ bar mitzvah there.

Marvin: Once was enough for him . . .

Eleanor: I think so. No, he is going to take his son for his bar mitzvah. That he has promised us. He’s got a six year old . . . he said that at his bar mitzvah he is going to Israel with him.

Marvin: Remind me which son is this?

Eleanor: This is my youngest son . . . this is Don. He married and divorced and then he married again, so he was late. He’s 50 and his little boy is five. He was 45 when he had his little boy. Robin is 58. Chuck is 55. They’re getting there. I don’t feel like . . . I’m not 50.

Marvin: You don’t look or sound it.

Eleanor: Yes, but I feel it. It’s there.

Marvin: You have really not participated in the Jewish organizations as you say.

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30 The Western Wall, or Kotel, is located in the Old City of Jerusalem at the foot of the western side of the Temple Mount. It is the remnant of the ancient wall that surrounded the Jewish Temple’s courtyard, and is arguably the most sacred site recognized by the Jewish faith outside of the Temple Mount itself. It has been a site for Jewish prayer and pilgrimage for centuries, the earliest mention being in the fourth century. The term ‘Wailing Wall’ by which it is sometimes referred as is not correct.
**Eleanor:** I belong to the DARTS [Dial-A-Ride Transportation Service]\(^{31}\) and I belong to the sisterhood. I belong to . . . what’s that organization through the sisterhood? I get these bills all the time. I belong to the Jewish Home.

**Marvin:** But never really active except for the Home.

**Eleanor:** The Home I was active. I was never active in the Hadassah. The sisterhood, I wasn’t active in the sisterhood. I don’t really care for meetings and things.

**Marvin:** Other than PTA, were there any other social or organizational activities?

**Eleanor:** Social . . . I had a lot of friends. I still . . . we had a canasta\(^{32}\) game that we have had for 55 years. The same girls. You want their names?

**Marvin:** Yes.

**Eleanor:** Fifty-five years we have been playing canasta together. One is Virginia [Diamond] Saul.

**Marvin:** S-A-U-L?

**Eleanor:** S-A-U-L. Milton Saul. The other one is Sherry Halpern . . . H-A-L-P-E-R-N . . . her husband is Harold. Charlotte Begner . . . B-E-G-N-E-R . . . her husband is Phil. And me. We had more. We used to have more. But one died. One doesn’t go anymore and one is a vegetable. But the four of us still play.

**Marvin:** For 55 years?

**Eleanor:** Five-five years. We are playing Wednesday . . .

**Marvin:** . . . every Wednesday . . .

**Eleanor:** . . . every Wednesday.

**Marvin:** That explains why you couldn’t see me Wednesday.

**Eleanor:** That’s right. Wednesday is canasta day . . . we meet every Wednesday. It’s probably more than 55 years now because we’re going to be married 60 [years] . . . it may be closer to 58. We started when our children were . . . before we even had children.

**Marvin:** Do you meet in each other’s homes?

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\(^{31}\) Now known as ‘Dial-a-Ride Transportation Services’ (DARTS). This program is available to Fulton County, Georgia residents age 55 or older who are able to perform basic tasks independently and have limited access to transportation.

\(^{32}\) A card game of the rummy family. There are many variations, but the most common is played by four people in two partnerships, with two standard decks of cards. Players attempt to make melds of seven cards of the same rank and go out by playing all cards in their hand.
Eleanor: In each other’s homes, right. We used to serve lunch. We used to have fancy lunches. We had more. One died, and one . . . [Patsy’s] just a vegetable. It’s just the four of us, we are still at it.

Marvin: That’s a long relationship! Amazing, four ladies that have stayed together for so long. Still friends.

Eleanor: Still friends, except one of them gets on my nerves . . .

Marvin: Only one? You’re lucky.

Eleanor: But we’re meeting this Wednesday. One, Sherry, has a place in Florida now, so she’s not here during the summer, but she’s back, and we’re playing Wednesday.

Marvin: Any ideas what should go on in this country or Israel?

Eleanor: Any ideas. I hate to think of what this country is coming to. Don’t you?

Marvin: I’m not supposed to make comments.

Eleanor: I’m not a politician. I don’t talk politics with anybody. That’s a good way to lose friends.

Marvin: That’s what they say. What do you think you need to record for posterity? You’ve given us a very good background of your family and your background.

Eleanor: I just always told my children to be menschen [Yiddish: humans]. I’d like for my grandchildren to be menschen. Whatever they . . . all I could say to them is be menschen and to teach their children to be menschen.

Marvin: They’re all doing well . . . the grandchildren?

Eleanor: The grandchildren. I’ve got two girls and one is working in New York. She got a graduate degree. She’s working. The other granddaughter is in law school. I have my oldest grandson and he is a . . . I don’t know the name of it . . . he shoes horses [farrier]. I guess Harold told you they’re all into horses. My youngest, the next grandson, he’s going to be a veterinarian. He’s going to vet school in September. The youngest grandson is in his last year in [University of] Georgia [Athens, Georgia]. He wants to do something. So, I’m proud of them. I’m very proud of them. G-d has been very, very good to us. He has.

Marvin: Let me go back to something. Tell me about when you were living across the street from Emory University. Many Jewish families in that area?

Eleanor: No. There were no Jewish families there. We didn’t live there too long. I didn’t anyway. I got married from there.
Marvin: Young.

Eleanor: Not young, I was through with college. Not really young. I had finished college when I got married so I didn’t live there too long. We lived at 801 Washington Street. We lived in a four-apartment place that my daddy owned. You want to know who lived there with us?

Marvin: Yes.

Eleanor: All Jewish people. Miss Tillye Bach [Rosenfeld] . . . B-A-C-H. They’re so old. Arthur Marks is still living, but he doesn’t live in Atlanta. The Marks lived in one. The [Henry] Banks lived in the other, and we lived in the other. There were four Jewish families in the apartment house, and we had a good time. I was young then, but on North Decatur Road . . . I didn’t live there too long because I went to college and then I got married. It was kind of late when we moved there.

Marvin: What do you think about the changes in Atlanta?


Marvin: The Jewish and the non-Jewish.

Eleanor: The Jewish . . . I cannot . . . I know nobody. There was a time when I would go to any gathering and I would know everybody there. If I didn’t know them, I knew of them. I’m sure you have the same thing. Now I go to a party I don’t know anybody. I go to the synagogue, I don’t know anybody. Not that many friends of mine that are left now that I recognize . . . people that I know. I look at the things for the Jewish Welfare Fund and the names. I don’t know any of them. It’s changed. Very much.

Marvin: Do you think for the better?

Eleanor: No.

Marvin: Why?

Eleanor: I liked it when it was small and everybody knew each other, we [unintelligible: 46:00] each other. It’s so big. There’s so many synagogues now. We had two and then three the whole time I was growing up.

Marvin: The other one that you mention was Shearith Israel.

Eleanor: Shearith Israel was . . .

Marvin: No, the Spanish synagogue . . . or something.

Eleanor: The Spanish synagogue, it wasn’t here, I don’t think.

Marvin: You know that the Jewish people were divided into three pieces.
Eleanor: You know that. Somebody told you all that?
Marvin: How are they divided here?
Eleanor: When I grew up, the Temple people had nothing to do with us. We were [ostracized]. The Temple people had nothing to do with us. Then we would have nothing to do with the Spanish people [Sephardim]. When I grew up, you just didn’t. I remember the first person that married a Spanish boy . . . her parents had a fit.
Marvin: Did they disown her?
Eleanor: I don’t know if they disowned her or not, but it was definitely . . . it was a real, real difference.
Marvin: You knew of four synagogues when you were growing up?
Eleanor: I knew two synagogues . . .
Marvin: There were four.
Eleanor: I never knew of the other two.
Marvin: The Temple.
Eleanor: I never had to go to the Temple. I wasn’t Reform.
Marvin: All right. Interesting.
Eleanor: We never went to the Temple. They wouldn’t let us in the Temple. It was very, very divided. The Spanish shul, I never went there either.
Marvin: It’s interesting that you think of it having only had two synagogues here.
Eleanor: That’s right. There were only two. I don’t think the Spanish one was here that early.
Marvin: It was here at the time.
Eleanor: I don’t remember it at all. I remember the Temple because they used to have different things, but I never would go. I wasn’t invited to the Temple. The Spanish people weren’t invited to us . . . it was definitely three very strong . . . isn’t that amazing?
Marvin: Yes.
Eleanor: Now it’s all together . . . now it’s all like one . . . but it was very strong when I was growing up.
Marvin: The fact that we’re now together is for the better.

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33 The Temple, or ‘Hebrew Benevolent Congregation,’ is Atlanta’s oldest Jewish congregation. The cornerstone was laid on the Temple on Garnett Street in 1875. The dedication was held in 1877 and the Temple was located there until 1902. The Temple’s next location on Pryor Street was dedicated in 1902. The Temple’s current location in Midtown on Peachtree Street was dedicated in 1931. The main sanctuary is on the National Register of Historic Places. The Reform congregation now totals approximately 1,500 families (2015).
Eleanor: Absolutely. Absolutely. There such a strong dividing. This is for the better.

Marvin: Let me go back for a moment. You went to Girls’ High. I’m assuming that was segregated . . . not only boys and girls, but black and white.

Eleanor: It was girls.

Marvin: But also black and white?

Eleanor: No, I don’t think there were any blacks.

Marvin: That’s right.

Eleanor: There were not blacks to Girls’ High. I don’t know if there were blacks at Boys’ High either. I don’t know. I don’t think so.

Marvin: It was a segregated system at the time.

Eleanor: Absolutely.

Marvin: Not only girls and boys . . . but black and white.

Eleanor: Absolutely. It was very segregated. I had a maid named ‘Mamie’ when my first child was born. She was really like a member of the family. When we would go out of town she would stay with the three children. One time she was going to take them downtown, and she got on the bus. They made her go to the back of the bus. She had three white children with her, and they made that girl go to the back. That’s what it was like then. It was pretty bad.

Marvin: Much better now?

Eleanor: I like it better. Yes. I like it better because Mamie was like a member of our family. She worked with me for 40 years. She came when Robin was an infant and she stayed. She was like a member of the family. That was terrible. That was one incident that my kids remember.

Marvin: Any other exciting things?

Eleanor: I can’t think of anything. You know what . . . it’s been a good, good time. We’ve had a good time. We’ve have a good . . . what do you call it . . . a trip, or whatever it is, we’ve had a good . . . The only thing was that I lost my mother when I was little. That was hard. Everything else has been good. We’ve had a good 60 years . . . we’re going to be married.

Marvin: Nice for you . . . that’s a long time.

Eleanor: Almost unbelievable.

Marvin: With that, on a happy note, a good note, I’m delighted . . . let me thank you for your time.

<general discussion, interview resumes>
Eleanor: We had a very good life. Got a lot to be thankful for. I think all of us do. We have a lot to be happy [for].

Marvin: With that, we’ll say thank you again. We’ve talked 52 minutes.

Eleanor: I was afraid I wasn’t going to remember anything. I don’t remember street names.

Marvin: I’m trying to think of the name of that Spanish synagogue and I can’t think of it!

[ NB: Or VeShalom]

Eleanor: I can’t think of it.

Marvin: You and I are truly the only people who know where that orphanage was because I mention it sometimes and then total blank. My aunt lived right across the street from it.

Eleanor: Who was your aunt? What was her name?

Marvin: May Karlosh [sp]. She ran a grocery store.

Eleanor: I know right across there was all Jewish people that lived across.

Marvin: There was housing . . . there were homes there. This grocery store was on Capitol [Avenue].

Eleanor: It’s sad today that nobody remembers my daddy, because everybody knew him. It was just . . . but now they’re all dead.

Marvin: You can refresh their memory.

Eleanor: He was a real character.

Marvin: They remember Jack’s store though.

Eleanor: Jack’s on Edgewood. Wells Fargo was even bigger than Jack’s . . . it was on Marietta Street. There was oodles of Jewish girls that worked there. On Saturdays they used to come to work. Maybe there would be 10 or 12 of them working and they worked on commission. Everything they sold they got a ticket for it and we would add it up.

Marvin: That’s the first time I’ve heard of them working on commission.

Eleanor: The worked on commission. We added it up at night. I forgot how much they would get. It was 5 percent or 10 percent . . . a certain percentage of what they sold. They would go away with $4 or $5. It was a lot of money then.

Marvin: Sure was . . . $20, $40, $60, $80 . . . that was about $1,000 a year if they worked five days a week.

Eleanor: They didn’t work five days a week.

Marvin: I know. One thousand dollars was a hell of a lot of money in those days.
Eleanor: They worked on Saturdays. That’s all. People used to come and sometimes we would have to shut the door because it was so crowded on the inside. We would have to shut the door until some people went out. That is the kind of business he did. Things were hard and he had cheap stuff. He got it cheap.

Marvin: It’s been fun.

Eleanor: Yes. Maybe I’ll listen to that sometime. I talk so much.

Marvin: I should have asked how did you like Ohio State?

Eleanor: Loved it.

Marvin: Did you like Columbus?

Eleanor: Loved it. I was in AEPhi [Alpha Epsilon Phi]34 . . . I was very active AEPhi. I should have told you when you asked if I was active in the Jewish organization. I could have talked about that . . . about the AEPhi house.

Eleanor: I was in AEPhi. How many years? They look at me . . . my daughter wore my AEPhi pin. My niece wore my AEPhi pin, and my niece is saving it for her daughter. They’re all going to be AEPhi’s. I could have talked about that. We’ll do it the next time.

Eleanor: Once I had my children, I didn’t work. I had gotten a degree in business, in accounting, but I didn’t work. They didn’t believe in those days, that you should go to work. They didn’t believe that women should go to work.

<End Disk 1>

INTERVIEW ENDS

34 Alpha Epsilon Phi (ΔΕΦ) is a sorority and member of the National Panhellenic Conference. It was founded on October 24, 1909 at Barnard College in New York City by seven Jewish women. It is a national sorority with multiple chapters across the United States. Although it is a historically Jewish sorority, it is not a religious organization and welcomes women of all religions and race who honor, respect and appreciate the Jewish faith and identity.