

Milton Lurey
August 6, 2003

Down Home Project
Tape Log

Minute Mark	Topics presented in order of discussion on recording
Tape 1	
00:13	Name and info.
00:27	Father from Poland, mother from NY, met in Greenville, SC.
00:45	In Greenville short time – Dad’s brother’s store in Laurens, SC. His dad opened a store there. too.
1:13	It was a “jewish hardware store” = ready to wear clothing.
1:40	Had cousins in Greenville.
1:50	Family did not keep kosher.
1:59	Laurens not a good place to raise a Jewish family so they moved back to Greenville.
2:30	Greenville had 15-20 Jewish families, a schechet and someone who served as a rabbi.
2:52	Dad opened a store on South Main and they lived upstairs--near the Reedy River bridge in Greenville.
3:18	Then father moved to Pendleton Rd. Nicer neighborhood, a better store. Grandfather had a store a few doors away.
3:57	They lived upstairs from the store.
4:06	Milton graduated from school and went to Draughan’s Business College in Greenville. Studied bookkeeping.
4:38	He had a job at the Piedmont Shirt Co. and didn’t like it.
4:54	He became manager of the store called Stewart’s (clothing).
5:25	The Stewart store in Salisbury, Md. needed a manager. He met his wife at a family wedding at the Poinsett Hotel in Greenville. His mother’s friend’s daughter and son in-law had an auto parts store in Asheville (the Wadopians) who had a daughter. They fixed him up with her for the cousin’s wedding.
6:46	Her name was Mildred and she worked for Vogue Furriers in Asheville. He came to Asheville and started dating her.
7:16	He was offered the job of manager at the Stewart’s store in Md. and accepted. He kept in contact with Mildred and she visited Md. at Thanksgiving.
7:51	He moved back to Greenville.
8:04	They decided to get married. He was 28 or 29.
8:40	Her father had a tire retread shop on Biltmore Ave. and an auto parts place on Patton Ave called Dixie Auto Parts.
9:09	Brother-in-law Herbert ran the tire shop.
9:20	Herbert and Juley Lancer (?) moved to Charleston and had a business there.
9:42	Milton ran the retread business, Dixie Tire and Retreading. [It was actually called Biltmore Tire and Retreading.] Right across from the current Fine Arts Theater.

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- 10:24 Next to the shop was a boys shirt manufacturer. He used to go in and snoop around. It was a nice clean business compared to his work.
- 11:00 Brother-in-law Herb came back from being away and they decided they wanted to have a business that was not dependent on Asheville for customers.
- 11:30 If they manufactured something here they could sell all over the US. So they sold the tire business.
- 12:00 First location was at the end of the alley that ran beside Tingles restaurant. Presently Sluder Furniture Company. They were in the buildings at the end of that alley which were the second and third floor of businesses fronting on Lexington Ave.
- 12:45 They didn't know about shirts, but his dad introduced them to Herman Silver from the Dixie Shirt Company in Spartanburg. He joined them and got the sewing machines.
- 13:30 Herb and Milton went to Philadelphia and NY to buy the machines Herman brought in a supervisor from Dixie Shirt Co to teach the women to sew: Evelyn Bookbinder. Her husband was a hanger-on and they had to find a job for him.
- 15:02 Evelyn did a great job.
- 15:20 They moved into the Tyler building and took all 3 stories. It was on the corner of Lexington, Walnut and Rankin.
- 16:06 It was a good time to open. Shirts were hot then. Men were coming back from the war. They made shirts for the shops of the biggest hotels in NY.
- 17:00 It was called Vanderbilt Shirt Company. They were not salesman. Herman Silver ran the pressing dept. A shirt had to look good when it went out.
- 17:42 They had a contract with Levi-Strauss to make all their western shirts, the kind with fancy snap buttons.
- 18:18 Then Levi-Strauss wanted them to make ladies blouses.
- 18:44 A shirt Co in Cincinnati contracted with them to make their shirts.
- 19:03 The idea of being a contractor is good, but there is no money. An uncle visited every Christmas and he said that you need a sales organization.
- 19:40 Finally they decided that they needed a sales organization and put an ad in the Daily Record and they got an answer from a man in NY.
- 20:10 They met him and he told them his real name--he had been using a fictitious name. They presented him with a business proposition.
- 20:51 He was a Madison Avenue type. He had worked on commission.
- 21:30 He had NYC and Philadelphia territory, but they were reducing it.
- 21:46 He had been making lots of money. He knew their product through their contract work
- 22:14 Sid Ross joined and opened their sales office in NYC at 1490 Broadway.

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- 22:43 Sid Ross visited Asheville and while he and Herb and Milton were eating at the Grove Park Inn, they heard over the radio about a fire at the Vanderbilt Shirt Factory. They rushed downtown to see what was happening.
- 23:30 The girls were at the plant getting covers from Morrisons Hardware next door to protect their machines.
- 24:04 He was surprised at how many of the workers helped. They decided to put up their own building
- 24:53 A homeless black man suffocated in the building because there were all these cellophane clothing bags which caught fire when he used a cigarette lighter to see where he was. He had come in to get out of the cold.
- 26:36 Karl Straus (atty) said they were the only two brothers-in-law in business he knew of who had no arguments.
- 26:54 When he first moved here he lived at the YMCA.
When he got married he lived with his in-laws on Norwood Ave,
27:15 He and his wife moved to Lynnwood Road.
- 27:22 Norwood Ave had Jewish neighbors; the Rubins lived across the Street and another Jewish family lived nearby.
- 27:46 Most Jewish families were beginning to move into the Beaver Lake section. It became Little Jerusalem.
- 28:05 I brought religion into the family, but had no religious background, just instinct.
- 28:26 Joined Beth Israel, the conservative shul, when he first moved here. Mr. Goldstein was the secretary/treasurer; Mr. Schandler and Mr. Rosen were there, too.
- 29:07 Shul was on Liberty Street and Woodfin.
- 29:48 The city came to the synagogue and said that they were going to condemn the property to build a highway.
- 30:22 They got a good deal; they got money for the down payment for the present property. They wanted to stay close to town.
- 30:50 A Jewish horse trader, had something to do with the property they bought.
- 31:14 Definitely considers himself a Southerner.
- 31:25 Southern Jews are not different from other Southerners.
- 31:37 Southern Jews are different from Northern Jews because they are more tolerant, sympathetic and not pushy.
- 32:18 They are more considerate.
- 32:31 The northern Jews especially in Florida think nothing of pushing in front of you in line.
- 32:54 He asked one of them why are you like that and she said that in NY you have to be pushy. He said that you are not in NY.
- 34:04 One of the first things that Jews think of when they move somewhere is burial.
- 34:30 Newcomers depended on Jews already here.
- 35:25 No problems with banks or insurance companies.

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- 35:41 The educational level--parents didn't graduate, some of family already here. Uncle Hyman was working as a spreader in a clothing factory (in NY).
- 37:07 In those days the merchants in the South had to go to Baltimore or NY for their merchandise.
- 37:40 Mr. Jansky from Greenville was in NY for buying trip. Said he had a daughter and asked for a greenhorn and the guy in the factory said pick Schmuel or Chiam. Mr. Jansky gave Chiam a proposition and he went to meet Aunt Dora in Greenville and married her. Mr. Jansky sent him to Laurens.
- 39:20 Chiam got Milton's dad to move from NY to Greenville and he met Milton's mother.
- 39:49 Uncle Hyman opened a store for Milton's dad in Laurens.
- 40:17 Milton's children were in the shirt business. They opened a lot of retail stores.
- 40:50 Michael managed the factory stores and Steven stayed in the NY showroom, but came back after a while.
- 41:27 Then the stores lost business.
- 41:44 Michael left and business got bad. They auctioned off whatever they could sell.
- 42:30 They couldn't compete with overseas products.
- 42:48 When they build the Emma Rd. factory they decided that they needed a nursery (Daycare). They were one of the first companies to have a nursery for employees. They got a lot of media coverage and Russians visited.
- 45:12 His wife was a housewife. She didn't work in the business.
- 45:25 They did not close on the Jewish holidays.
- 45:37 He knew some about the Asheville Jewish community before he moved here because the Jewish kids in Greenville all hung out together. There were several kosher boarding houses in Hendersonville. In the summer Jews from Jacksonville, Savannah and Charleston stayed there.
- 46:40 One of the girls in his group had a mother who ran a boarding house. After work they would go to Mrs. Horowitz's in Hendersonville and she would take care of them.
- 47:24 There were dances at the lake in Hendersonville—Osceola. Jewish kids at Rubens which started kosher and then wasn't kosher. Horowitz's was on 5th Ave in town. They would meet the Jewish kids from Jacksonville, Savannah and Charleston.
- 48:19 They had name bands on Saturday night at the dances.
- 48:33 In Greenville his friends would rent the ballroom of the Poinsett Hotel and people would come from Spartanburg, Augusta, Columbia and Asheville. The Asheville kids would sponsor dances at the Osceola and they would come from Greenville
- 49:26 He didn't belong to civic organizations, but he did belong to B'nai B'rith.

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- 49:53 Was one college perceived as better to go to for Jewish kids to meet other Jewish kids? Kids only want to go someplace else.
- 50:25 He and his family experienced no anti-semitism.
- 50:49 They had black employees in their home. When they lived with their in-laws on Norwood there was a woodstove. Bubbie was a baker in Europe and she taught Willie how to do all their cooking on the woodstove.
- 51:24 When they moved away from Norwood they got a gas stove and Willie cried and said that she was only used to a wood stove.
- 51:50 They had black workers in their factory. They integrated nicely bringing 2-3 black workers at a time so that they could be companions to each other. They were sewers and some were pressers. They had quite a few black employees. They were one of the first to integrate in Asheville
- 52:40 Herb was forward minded. He was always thinking about doing the right thing.
- 53:09 Jews were more tolerant than other whites to blacks. They were worried about the reaction of the other workers to the blacks that they brought in.
- 54:19 Herb had the Red Cross give nutrition lessons. We were good to our employees.
- 54:44 A nurse came in to lecture on nutrition because all the girls ate was peanut butter sandwiches.
- 55:04 Years ago Northern Jews felt that they were more tolerant than Southern Jews.
- 55:36 The community was in favor of end of segregation.
- 56:30 The northern Jews looked at blacks here as being taken advantage of.
- 56:50 The rabbi did not talk about civil rights.
- 57:57 Why did the rabbis come and go? Some were not happy here-- there was not enough Jewish life here.
- 1:00:00 There was one single rabbi who stayed at the YMCA and he probably felt like he was in a glass cage.
- 1:00:51 He would like to have a Talmud torah for the two synagogues together.

TAPE 2

- 00:19 Religious life of family: went to shul on Friday night. There were not many Saturday am services like there are now. Now there are Monday and Thursday minions and torah service also.
- 1:35 They get a minion for services during the week.
- 2:08 Synagogue changes: since Milton has belonged men and women always sat together. In the old synagogue there was a balcony and he thought the women used to sit there, but when he came in 1938 there was no separation.

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- 2:49 His had little Jewish education and his kids had Hebrew school. I think Steven feel more religious than Eddie. Michael's wife came from Egypt.
- 3:45 She and her brother were brought to DC by HIAS. They went to school in Washington and she got a scholarship to Warren Wilson College. Her brother got one somewhere in New England.
- 4:24 Her name was Celine. She went to school for 1 week and was lonesome. She wanted to meet Jewish people in Asheville. The advisor called the rabbi and the rabbi called Sandy Slosman who was president of Sisterhood. Sandy picked up Celine for Friday night services and had her over for dinner before. Earlier Sandy had called Mildred, Milton's wife and mentioned that maybe Michael would like to come to services.
- 5:54 Michael was coerced to come and at the oneg Sandy told Michael to take her back to school and he did.
- 6:25 That started a romance. After the summer they decided to get married.
- 7:26 There was no music in the synagogue.
- 7:44 He couldn't remember the prayer book and there was no mikvah in Asheville.
- 8:02 He has always been involved with the JCC and now the Council on Aging at the JCC. He always was a member and contributor to the Asheville JCC.
- 9:05 The synagogue is full of converts.
- 9:56 When he first came there were no converts.
- 10:10 The Klan--doesn't like the idea of the Klan; the depression--he was too young to know; Hitler--just memories, he had no relatives in the holocaust.
- 11:42 The founding of Israel was a gala occasion. It made every Jewish person feel good.
- 12:03 Jewish quotas: not directly affected, but he knew people who signed up for hotels and were told that there was no room; the Grove Park Inn at one time did not allow Jews and some places in Florida he had heard about.
- 13:25 The goyim have become more tolerant of Jewish people. They don't consider them different, but there still are some that hate Jews and they don't even know why.
- 14:40 The Jewish community seems closer. All the different kids at camp at the JCC give him a thrill. He thinks the integrated camp and pool are great.--25 years ago you would not see that.

WWII _ CIVILLIAN

- 16:41 He was married during the war time.
- 16:50 He had 2 sons born during the war.
- 17:27 He lived on Lynnwood Road and had a tire shop on Biltmore Ave.

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- 17:45 Rubber was difficult to get. People were taking old tires and cutting them up. Rubber was allocated.
- 19:30 Doesn't remember food rationing.
- 19:40 He had a helmet and stood on a corner somewhere—the home guard.
- 20:57 He didn't worry about winning the war. He thought that we were the stronger side.
- 21:11 Brother-in-law Herbert was wounded in the war. His father-in-law sent him salamis from Schandlers. He made wooden boxes the shape of salamis.
- 22:38 The community took it in good stride.
- 23:09 Sugar and meat were all rationed. He remembers in Greenville during WWI. His mother was friendly with the butcher's wife so they had no trouble getting meat. They did not eat a lot of meat, mostly chicken. They were friendly with a grocery store and got extra sugar.
- 24:30 Gas was a problem, but people just didn't go anywhere. He did not have a victory garden.
- 25:11 One man cut up tires to make door mats.
- 25:40 Doesn't remember hoarding or a black market.
- 25:50 Newsreel: when there was victory people were happy and you would hear applause during the newsreels at the movies.
- 26:13 He felt happy when the war ended.
- 26:26 During the war there were a lot of boys in Camp Croft in Spartanburg. The USO sent buses to Asheville bringing soldiers up on Sat morning. They stayed at the JCC where there were dances on Sat night. A lot of Jewish families would take in the boys as guests.
- 27:00 Two boys stayed with them. They liked his wife's cooking and would always request to stay with them.
- 28:18 His wife heard later that one moved to Cincinnati and died young and the other stayed in NYC. His father had the North Dakota Parking Garage. Once he and his wife went to visit and took him to see the tourist sights in NYC he had never seen.
- 29:58 He said "Halleluiah" when the war ended.
- 30:41 The war did not change his life.
- 31:37 Right after the war he went into shirts.

End of War Questions

- 31:59 On Biltmore Ave. there were other Jewish stores. Mr. Bain had a department store. On Pack Square: Argintar had a pawn shop and there was also Finkelstein's and Morris Chizik's clothing store.
- 33:20 Didn't socialize with neighboring Jewish business men. He would go to Gross Brothers Restaurant and people next to him would move because he smelled like rubber.

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- 34:05 People came to AVL for health. Had a friend from Greenville who went to the tb sanitarium where St. Joseph's Hospital is now and he would go on Sunday to visit him. It was a wooden building and the patients slept outside on sleeping porches.
- 35:36 Jewish merchants, he didn't eat with them. He did eat with his brother-in-law. Egon Friedlander was the cutting room foreman; was brought to Greenville by his friend from Vienna, Max Heller. Max Heller had a boys shirt factory and he brought Egon here to work as a cutter. Herman Silver knew about Egon and brought him to Asheville. He was [like] a part of the family.
- 37:12 While he was working his friend called and told him that his old girlfriend from Vienna was in NY. Egon went to NY. She was divorced with 2 children, had lived in Israel and was here on a visa. He came back and said that he was going to marry her. She had been married to a Lebanese official. Ilse went back to Israel and Egon went to Israel to get married. The kids grew up here. Ricky spoke 7 languages, worked in international banking in NY. The bank moved him to Miami 5-6 years ago.
- 39:56 Story of Max Heller. He had gone to Vienna on a trip and he met missionaries from Asheville. They asked if he would come to America and they brought him to Greenville. He was the mayor of Greenville for 4 terms and ran for governor. The ballroom of a hotel in Greenville is named for Max Heller. When he ran for governor his opponent kept saying "do you want a Jew governor?"
- 41:50 He remembers businesses on Patton: Schochets on one side, the Blombergs on the other: The Man Store down the street. Coleman Zageir used to brag that he was the only Jew that could get into the Breakers in West Palm Beach.
- 43:27 Gus Kostas worked for the Man Store as a tailor.
- 44:11 Kostas a success story.
- 44:30 Jewish businesses: Buster Blomberg, Dora Rapport. Dave Lowenberg opened a men's shop where Dora Rapport's hat store had been. On the corner was a drug store, Factor's. She was married to a non-Jew. It was a cigar shop. Selma Factor was his wife's best friend. Another Jewish family had deaf children and had an electric store. He was an electrical engineer.
- 48:12 The Chiziks had a children's shoe store next to the electric shop.
- 48:52 The early Jewish families came for health like his in-laws' family. His in-laws's sister had a son with tb who lived on Maney Ave. and opened a shoe store.
- 50:13 His father-in-law was going to move either to the Rocky Mountains or to Asheville for his health. Because they had relatives here they moved here from Chicago. Milton's wife was born in Chicago.
- 51:29 Dr. Book was a dentist with an office in the Flat Iron Building Milton went to Gene Shapiro for his dental needs.

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- 52:24 Other Jewish businesses were grocery stores, often in the black section. His father-in-law had a store on Livingston Street. It was a stable business to be in. Other grocers were Schandler, Mr. Rosen, the chicken man, and Mr. Feldman on Valley Street.
- 53:40 Rosen was a chicken man and [either was or had] a schechet and he had them pulled dry which made them kosher. Mr. Rosen and Mr. Schandler always sat on the bimah on either side of the rabbi.
- 54:30 Mr. Rosen was learned. He had an accent. The Goldstein family, Nemi and Bernie, had Blue Ridge Trucking Co.
- 56:01 History of Blue Ridge trucking Co. Bernie married Sarah Sheptowich.
- 56:42 Sarah told him that she had met his cousin years ago, Minnie Lurey, in Rhode Island.
- 58:14 His dad talked about Providence RI.
- 59:09 For his factory, he got material--which was difficult to get--through Herman's influence. He had done the buying and knew the mill big shots. He got a little bit of material from here and some there. Their biggest supplier was a mill in Ware Shoals, SC.
- 1:00:49 All these places are now closed up. He talked about the Jewish boarding school in Greensboro.