

Q. I need for you to tell me what your name is, your birth date, and where you live.

A. I am Alan Thorp. I was born in June 24. 1946. I live in Memphis, Tennessee.

Q. And now, where did you grow up?

A. In Johnson City, Tennessee.

Q. And so, can you talk a little bit about your connections to Asheville?

A. Well, my mother grew up in Asheville. And her mother, Dora Rumberg, also was from Asheville, and her family was from Asheville. And so I would come to Asheville all the time and visit, my grandmother, and other relatives, and spend a good deal of my summers in Asheville, growing up. In the summer.

Q. Can you tell me some of the things, just your basic memories, of what you remember about being here.

A. Well, what I would do, is from about age 6, my mother would put me on the Trailways bus in downtown Johnson City. And my grandmother lived at the Edgewood Mobile Park that is on Merrimon Avenue. And the bus driver would drop me off right at her apartment, and I would go up and stay with my grandmother. And then usually, sometimes they would

pick me up at Edgewood Knoll, but usually I would get back on the bus downtown at the Trailways station, where I had some cousins—your parents, the Shochets—Mary and Sidney Shochet, and Gene and Will Shochet had a store right there by the bus station, so they would usually get me to the bus station, and I would go back. So I would go back and forth all the time in the summertime.

Q. But you would stay for a period of time?

A. Yeah, I would stay from weekends to a few weeks at a time.

Q. So they dropped you off before they even got to the bus station? I guess one of your parents would have given the bus driver information?

A. Right. They would tell the bus driver where to drop me off. And of course it didn't take too long, I would just tell the bus driver where to drop me off. So, because the bus would go right down Merrimon Avenue—it was the highway to Asheville and Johnson City.

Q. Now you had two sisters—did you ever come with them?

A. No, I always came by myself.

Q. Why was that?

A. Well, I don't know. I was close to my grandmother. I just liked visiting. Maybe my parents just wanted me to (laughter) get out of the

house and go somewhere and leave them alone. But I always liked coming over here to visit my grandmother, and to visit my relatives over here.

Q. So now, your grandmother, what was your grandmother like?

A. Her name was Dora Blumberg Rapport, and she was—she always told me the story, she was born in Lithuania, I believe-- and she would always tell me the story, she had a hole in her head. You could feel it. It was probably half an inch deep. And she always told me the story, when she was a little girl in Lithuania, she fell off of an ice truck, a horse and cart ice truck. And hit her head on a rock, and it made a pretty good gash, and there was a spot just about right there on her head (?) and you could put your finger in it, and it would go down about a half an inch. I always liked to feel the hole (laughter) in my grandmother's head. She said too, that when it happened, they shaved her head and put spider webs on her head to stop the bleeding. That's how they stopped bleedings.

Q. Did it work?

A. Yeah, she lived. She had a millinery store downtown on Pack Square, called Dorays, which she ran, operated—to my recollection—I don't know exactly when she opened it—but she had that store until she passed away. And I was 13 when she passed away, so that would have been 1959.

Q. Now was her store on Pack Square? I remember her store was on Haywood.

A. Yeah, I'm sorry, Haywood. In front of that little park, right. Pritchard Park.

Q. So do you remember going in there, and what it was like?

A. Oh yeah, all the time. Well, she had—it was a very popular millinery shop. And in fact, I've still got some full length mirrors from her shop. I've got—my mother kept a lot of stuff from the store. Where she would have a —the closest thing I could compare it to would be a partner's desk. A sitting table that had a mirror in the middle of it, so that if you sat on one side, you had a mirror, and if you sat on the other side you had a mirror. And women would come in and they would sit down and try on the hats; and look at themselves in the mirror. But it was a mirror in the middle of the table. So two people could use it at the same time. And I remember the bus stop was right there, and if it rained she would let all the people waiting come in and wait at her store.

Q. Men and women?

A. Well, it was mostly women. And uh, at that time, most of the people that used the bus were blacks. And so they would come in, and if it was raining, wait for the bus.

Q. Wow. That's great.

A. She had—I remember it wasn't air-conditioned. And she had a little black fan which I still have. A little floor fan, and that's what she would turn on, and you would just go curl up by the fan.

Q. How big was it? Bigger than this room?

A. Yeah, it was bigger than this room. You know, it's kind of hard to remember how big it was, because I was little, and what seemed big to me when I was little probably doesn't seem big any more.

Q. Was it just stuffed full of hats?

A. No, they were displayed. It wasn't just boxes of hats. You wouldn't just go in and see boxes of hats stacked up. She would have them displayed on mannequins and head models.

Q. Did she make them?

A. No, she bought them.

Q. Were her customers black? Did she have black customers?

A. No—I'm sure she did, but most of her customers were white. Of course, you know when she had the store, hats were much more in vogue, and all women wore hats. So it was the way she made her living.

Q. So what would you in the daytime when your grandmother worked?

A. Well, I would play with kids in the neighborhood, play with your brother. We would go places, we would go to Rec Park. I remember going to Rec Park and swimming, go horse-back riding on Rec Park; but I mean, just play with the kids who lived in the Edgewood Knoll Apartment area.

Q. Do you remember who else there was?

A. The only ones I can remember by name, I remember next to Edgewood Knoll Apartments was a motel. The Evergreen, that's right, and the Diamonds owned the Evergreen Motel. And I remember there was a girl my age, Denise Diamond, and there was a sister a little younger and a brother even younger.

Q. Meridi was one.

A. Yeah, Meridi.

Q. She still lives here. And they had a pool. Did you use to go and swim there?

A. Nah, I really, I didn't swim there. But the apartments had a playground, swings and see-saws and jungle-gyms. And of course at that time there were no signs that said DANGER, YOU COULD FALL OFF OF THESE THINGS. We just had a good time, just knocking around the neighborhood.

Q. So, when your grandmother passed away, did you keep coming to Asheville?

A. Well, yeah, I would keep coming to Asheville, because I was close to your family—you and your brother, and so I continued to come. And you know, my mother was close to the family. So we kept coming, and still come.

Q. Well, what do you remember about downtown?

A. Well I remember the S & W, which was a great cafeteria. Had good food, had a balcony area that you could sit on, the best strawberry cake I have ever had. We would always go to the S & W. That was my favorite place to go.

Q. With your grandmother? And your parents?

A. With whoever wanted to take me to the S & W (LAUGHTER). Your parents took me a lot. Whenever my parents were in town, we would

always go. My dad in particular loved the S & W. And so we always ate there. And the Kress' store was a great store, I remember.

Q. What do you remember about it?

A. Oh, it was a 5 and dime, but there were 5 and dimes and there were 5 and dimes. And the Kress' was the Bloomingdale's of the 5 and dime stores.

Q. So you thought it was better than Woolworth's?

A. Oh yes.

Q. What was your criteria for that?

A. Well, you know, it's the difference between Saks Fifth Avenue and Belk's. They just had better stuff, more of it, better merchandise. It was just the kind of 5 and dimes.

Q. A kid's dream. Did you have a Kress in Johnson City?

A. Yeah, we had a Kress' store in Johnson City. We had a Woolworth's.

Q. And you just preferred Kress, wherever you were?

A. Yeah, well I mean I liked both of them. They were both good stores. Kress' just was kind of had the reputation and feeling of being a little better store. They had a basement, I remember, so two stories. Woolworth's only had one.

Q. Do you remember any of the other stores?—you use to go in?

A. Ivy's, Bon Marche', department stores. Of course your family store, The Bootery. And of course your Uncle Gene had an Army-Navy store, which I loved. All kinds of knives and just army-navy stuff which a kid would like. And then next door, Cousin Buster Bloomberg, who had the Leader store, which was general merchandise, clothing, that type of thing. Finkelstein's pawn shop.

Q. Did you ever get anything in Finkelstein's?

A. I probably did, but not that I remember.

Q. So you aren't one of those guys that got your first shotgun at Finkelstein's?

A. Naw, I don't think my parents let me buy anything there, or they wouldn't pay for anything from there. But I remember going in there, Leo Finkelstein, when I was real little we kind of played together.

Q. Leo Jr.?

A. Right. And then I had another cousin, the Gordon's, who had a jewelry store, and that was on Pack Square, which has been torn down now. The side that has been torn down. So they had that store. And then of course, Chandler's Delicatessen; and I had an Uncle Jack, who I remember sold

blankets on College Street. He had a little hole-in-the-wall place, really, place; and he would sell wool army blankets. Actually, I still have one of those. My mother kept that. She liked to keep everything, so I have still got that.

Q. Now did—was Asheville bigger than Johnson City?

A. It was, although I would argue with your brother about that. And then they had a radio show. Your brother and I would come and visit each other, I guess through our teen years. I would come and stay at your house, and your brother would come and stay at our house. For I guess a couple of weeks at a time. Both Asheville and Johnson City had a man-on-the-corner kind of radio shows, where he just interviewed—just ask you a question. I remember the one in Johnson City, if they asked you a question and you got the question right, you got to pick a key, and maybe one out of 50 keys, and you know you, if the key might open the lock and if the lock might have \$20 in it if you won. If the key opened it. And they had a similar kind of show in Asheville, where they had a radio show and they would ask questions, and they kind of interviewed people on the street; and you could win a prize if you got the question right and that type of thing. So, your brother and I liked to get on those shows.

Q. Big attraction. So did you know—did people from Johnson City—your parents or other people, come to Asheville to go shopping?

A. No. People from Johnson City, if they went somewhere to go shopping, would be Knoxville. But the road to Asheville—of course I just drove the new road for the first time a couple of days ago—but you know, it was not around the corner to get from Johnson City to Asheville, because you would go up Sam's Gap, and it was a winding road, and so it wasn't really conducive to say "I will go to Asheville to go shopping." We went because we had family there. But I don't know, really, of anybody, from Johnson City who went to Asheville to go shopping. If they did that, they would go to Knoxville.

Q. 'Cause at that time it was the same distance. Is Knoxville about 2 hours?

A. Knoxville is, yeah, about 2 hours. And it took about the same time to come to Asheville. But Knoxville was bigger; and people in Johnson City were more oriented to Knoxville than to Asheville, probably because it is in the same state.

Q. And it's the capitol?

A. No, Nashville is the capitol. If people really wanted to go shopping, they would go to Atlanta, probably still do.

Q. Well the university is there. Who are some of the other relatives? You mentioned some. Particularly your mother and father would visit with?

A. Well, there was Harry Bloomberg, you know, of course he had the Cadillac dealership. His sister Freda, who had—and she was one of my favorite relatives to visit, because she had a toy store.

Q. Where was her toy store?

A. On Tunnel Road, you don't remember that?

Q. No, I do not remember that. What was it called?

A. As far as I was concerned it was Freda's Toy Store. That's probably not the name of it. No, she had a big toy store on Tunnel Road. The road may not be like this any more, but as you went out Tunnel Road, it would make a Y, and her store was in the Y.

Q. Oh yeah. Actually, that was really close to where the elementary school was, just beyond that. Think about it, a toy store next to an elementary school?—pretty good idea. Now that you mention it, I am having a vague recollection of that.

A. Then later she had the store by the Rowe Park Inn, the Arts and Crafts store.

Q. Actually, Harry owned it, and she kind of ran it. The Home Spun Shops.

A. O.K. She ran it then. Yeah, and I think Harry's family still owns that store. So I remember visiting her up there.

Q. So talk about what she was like, because she was a bit of a character.

A. Yeah, she was just a fun person. Just nice, a lot of fun. I felt pretty close to her. And she had another sister, Edna, who lived in Washington. But she had a first cousin too who would come by, Sigmund Bloomberg—

Q. That was her brother.

A. O.K. But Sigmund made his living by going across the country, giving this memory, I guess an entertainment thing, where he would go and teach people how to remember. And he would go through the audience and be able to remember everybody's name, after going through a hundred people. And he would always come over to my grandmother's and he never remembered my name, the entire time I knew him. He would always bring a box of candy, and he would always say "Now who are you again?" LAUGHTER And I don't think he was doing it to be funny.

But he never remembered my name. And then he would always eat the candy. Never remember my name, bring me a box of candy, eat the box of candy, and leave. LAUGHTER And that is what I remember of Sigmund.

Q. He was a bit of a character. Now your grandmother actually had some older lady friends who lived near her, her neighbors and stuff. Do you remember any of them?

A. Not by name. She had a big canasta group, I remember, and taught me how to play canasta, which I no longer know how to do. When I was 6 years old, I could play canasta, but I can't do it now. But she was—everybody always knew my grandmother as Aunt Dora—whether you were related to her or not, everybody called her Aunt Dora. And I think while she was alive, she was pretty much the focal center of the family. She kept everything going and together. She was kind of the, you know, the middle of the wheel that the spokes ran out of. And she had of course Jack, who had the store; and Isaac, I remember going to his house—I remember it was a big house. Yeah, we had a lot of relatives.

Q. It was on Macon Avenue. Well, um, do—can you talk about—did your parents ever get any cars from Harry?

A. No, I don't think they ever did, unless he had a Buick. My dad drove Buicks. So we never had a Cadillac.

Q. Well he does seem to have provided transportation for everyone in the family—what was that about?

A. I don't know. Maybe we were on the outs. No, we weren't on the outs.

Q. Like when Leonard would come to town, he would always get a car to drive from Harry.

A. Well, we just drove over, we didn't need a car. I do remember some of the bus trips in the wintertime. We would get snowstorms. Some of those trips would get pretty—you know, we would get stuck. There were a couple of times that the bus would get stuck going from Johnson City to Asheville in the wintertime. My mother was making a trip one time and the bus ran off the mountain. It didn't literally crash down the mountain, but it ran off the highway in a snowstorm. The Highway Patrolman. She always told the story that the patrolman that came by to rescue them was somebody she went to high school with in Asheville, at Lee Edwards, yeah. I wish I had them. I gave them to my uncle, but my mother kept the Lee Edwards yearbook from 1928, 29, 30 and 31. She had the first year that

Lee Edwards opened. And it was interesting to see those. You could get a sense of how education differed back then. The thing that struck me, truthfully, in reading those yearbooks, was they would, at the beginning, have a picture of all the teachers and the background of all the teachers. And I don't think there was anybody that taught at Lee Edwards that didn't have at least a Masters, if not a PHD. And you know, mostly from your better universities around the countries. Of course a lot went to Chapel Hill; Peabody was of course the top teaching school. But it would be Columbia Ivy League schools, and it showed to me that teaching at that time was considered a profession, and had the respect of a profession, along with doctors, lawyers, engineers, that had that kind of respect. And you know, the people that taught, were among the most educated of any profession. So that is what impressed me as much as anything, in the yearbooks from those years.

Q. Do you remember any other Asheville stories or connections or anything that happened to your family when they were here or when you—some Asheville happenings—like I know your parents use to come over, they would always bring an ice chest so they could take food back.

A. Oh yeah, well, we are Jewish, and there are probably ten Jewish families in all of Johnson City; and so there was no place to get corned beef or pastrami or anything like that. So my parents would always go to Chandler's and fill up the ice chest with bagels and what have you. Asheville and Knoxville were the closest places you could go to get anything like that.

Q. What would you all do at Passover time? Come to Asheville?

A. No, we had our own Passover at the house?

Q. Where did you get Passover goods?

A. Either at Asheville or Knoxville. My father's family was from Knoxville, so we were always going to either Knoxville or Asheville. He grew up in Knoxville.

Q. So talk a little about your Jewish upbringing in Johnson City. Did you have a Synagogue and what was it affiliated with.

A. We had a Synagogue, and when I was real little it was in Bristol; and then it moved to Blountville, which is really kind of out in the country. Closer to Bristol than Johnson City or Kingsport. It served Johnson City, Bristol, Kingsport, Elizabeth and all southwest Virginia. But I think the total membership of the congregation for that whole geographic area was

maybe about 50 families. I wouldn't swap growing up the way I did for anything in the world. You know, I remember my sister was the first Jewish person to ever graduate from my high school, and I was the second. But I always felt respected. Never felt any anti-Semitism. You learn—what I learned, I think, is that if you respect other people's religion, they will respect yours. And I always tried to respect, and did respect those of the Christian faith, and they respected me. And more than anything else, were generally interested in what we believed in and what we didn't.

Q. Was your Synagogue reformed or conservative?

A. Conservative.

Q. Were you Bar Mitzvah'd there?

A. Yeah.

Q. Were you the first to be Bar Mitzvah'd?

A. No. There were, sporadically, from the area—growing up, it might be a Bar Mitzvah every three or four years, you know, that you have a Bar Mitzvah.

Q. Do you know what year it started, this Synagogue?

A. Last year they had the Hundredth Anniversary, of the congregation.

Q. So, it was 1904? Was there always a Rabbi?

A. I think so. I had a Rabbi for the most part, when I was growing up. He would go from city to city.

Q. So it was a circuit Rabbi?

A. Well, no—they lived in Bristol, when I was growing up. But he would come to Johnson City, he'd go to Bristol, he'd go to Kingsport, he'd go visit Bethany, he'd go to southwest Virginia—

Q. —for classes?

A. Yeah, and then conduct the services on Friday night and Saturday morning.

Q. They had a Saturday morning service?

A. Um, if they had a Bar Mitzvah. I don't know that they had a regular Saturday. They probably wouldn't get the minimum members—it requires ten people—

Q. Because the men worked?

A. Yeah.

Q. Did the most of them have retail businesses?

A. I would say most of them were in retail-type businesses. There were some professionals. Some doctors, lawyers. Some worked in industry.

Q. Now people in Oak Ridge wouldn't have gone there?

A. No.

Q. They actually had their own Synagogue. You said there was Friday night service and not Saturday, regularly.

A. Friday night you could get a decent number of people.

Q. How far was it for you to go to that Synagogue?

A. It would take about maybe 30 to 45 minutes.

Q. What year did the medical school come to ETSU?

A. It was after I graduated high school, and I graduated high school in 1964, so I would guess the late '60's or early '70's.

Q. Did that change the Jewish population in Johnson City?

A. From what I could tell, it definitely made an impact, because, as a result of the medical school being there, I think it brought in doctors, not just for the medical school but the whole medical profession grew in Johnson City. And so there were a lot of medical doctors who came in. I think the congregation in Johnson City is probably a fair-size, larger than it was when I was growing up. I think they increased their membership.

Q. Do you think Johnson City, out of that tri-city area, has the most Jews now?

A. I really just don't keep up with it. If I had to guess, I would guess so.

Q. Do you know how many people live in Johnson City? Now?

A. I think about 50,000.

Q. Was it about the same when you were growing up?

A. It was about 27,000.

Q. So it has maybe doubled in size?

A. Yeah. I remember when Shoney's opened up, that was a huge thing.

Q. Now , what did your father do?

A. He had a –well he started off in the scrap-yard business. And then he had an auto parts business. And then he ended up in the plumbing and electrical supply business. So he was in business for about 50 years with his brother. And they were both originally from Knoxville.

Q. How did their family get to Knoxville—do you know?

A. I don't know why they settled in Knoxville, except unless it had to do with just my grandfather thinking that Knoxville was a good location for a scrap business, which was the business he was in.

Q. Do you know what year he came to Knoxville?

A. No, I really don't.

Q. Was it before your father was born?

A. Oh yeah. My father was born 1910. He was a good many years older than my grandmother. And he died when my father was 16, and my father was the oldest of three children. And, but-if I had to guess, I would say he probably came in the 1880's or something. His name was B. J. Thorp. Benjamin J. Thorp.

Q. Where did he come from?

A. That's another good question. I have heard either Lithuania, and or I have heard possibly Germany. The story I heard is that he moved to England before he came to the United States. Whether it is true or not, I don't know. But one story I have heard is that the name used to be Dorf. And when he moved to England, he changed it to Thorp, because Dorf in German means a village or small town; and Thorp in English is like a village or small town, so when he moved to England, he changed it to Thorp.

Q. So was it just him who came? Did he have brothers?

A. He had a brother who settled in Cattlesburg, Kentucky, near the Ohio River, in the general area of Kentucky closest to Pittsburgh.

Q. Was he in scrap?

A. I think he may—I'm not sure. I don't know anything about his family, I never met them.

Q. Was he older or younger?

A. I don't know.

Q. Was his name Thorp too?

A. The only connection I have with him at all is when my father passed away and going through his things, I saw an article from the Cattlesburg paper, he must have had a store, because his store burned down. And there was an article about his store burning down. I don't know anything about his side of the family.

Q. Did your grandfather, B.J. Thorp, come from somewhere in Europe directly, to live in Knoxville? Or did he live in New York or Baltimore or anywhere—

A. So far as I know, once he got to the United States, he came directly to Knoxville.

Q. But does your father have a Baltimore connection somehow?

A. He had some relatives in Baltimore, but to be honest with you, I don't know who or how.

Q. Did he go to college, your father?

A. He went to Law School, but not college.

Q. He went to the University of Baltimore Law School. When his father died, he moved to Baltimore to be with some of the relatives in Baltimore. And at that time you could go to Law School without going to college. He went to Law School and practiced Law for about a year; didn't like it; and moved to Johnson City.

Q. Did he know people in Johnson City? Do you know why he came to Johnson City?

A. His father had a piece of property in Johnson City. When they bought the piece of property, there was an iron—there was iron up in the mountains, and they thought that it was going to be like a Birmingham-type location, where steel would come in, because of the iron. So they bought the piece of property, figuring basically, they were in the scrap-steel business. My grandfather never did anything with it, because shortly after they bought the property, they discovered the big iron deposit in Minnesota. But after my grandfather died, they had that piece of property, and my father and his brother decided to start a scrap yard on that piece of property, and so that is what they did.

Q. So when was that that they came to Johnson City?

A. I am not sure, I have got a card from my grandfather that says B. J. Thorp and it has the year on it, in Johnson City, and the year seems like it is maybe 1912 or 1914. What year my father moved to Johnson City, if I had to guess, would be about 1930 or the '30's. He would have been in his early or mid-20's, if I had to guess.

Q. So he came with his brother?

A. His brother actually started the business a year or two before my father. He was about 6 years younger than my father. He moved to Johnson City first, and started the scrap yard; and then my father moved.

Q. How did your uncle meet his wife? Was she from Johnson City?

A. Yes, she was from Johnson City. Her family name was Switgal. She was Jewish. Her family had a retail store, a lady's shop, called Switgal's.

Q. So Dorothy's family goes back further in Johnson City than you do?

A. Yeah. So far in Johnson City, I can pretty much tell you the ones who go back, which are the Switgal's, the Cannor's—there is a lawyer, Bernie Cannor, who is still—he is probably about 80. And his father Mo, was a lawyer in Johnson City. There was the Goldstein family, Lena and Morris Goldstein. And they had a lady's shop, Goldstein's. And then my parents. And then the Curlins came, he was a physician at Mountain Home, which

was the Veteran's Hospital. He probably came in the '40's. As far as going back before the '40's, you are probably looking at 3 or 4 families.

Q. And how did your parents meet?

A. Let me think... My mother had a first cousin, Beesy, who was married to Ernest Marcus, and for a period of time--Ernie was a doctor. For a period of time, for a few years, he lived in Johnson City, he was a doctor at the Veteran's Hospital. And so my mother came to visit Beesy; and Bessy I guess knew my father, both from Johnson City. And so Beesy introduced them. So that's how they met.

Q. So where were they married?

A. I am not really sure. But my father always told the story, that he thought he was marrying a millionaire's daughter. He found out after he got married, that he really married a milliner's daughter. LAUGHTER

Q. That's a good story. He was sort of a joker anyway. So you don't know if they got married in Asheville or not? Do you know what year they got married?

A. Probably about 1942. For some reason, it seems like they got married in South Carolina, but I don't know why or where. I mean I probably have that somewhere.

Q. And he was or not in the war?

A. He was not in the war, because they were in the scrap business, and scrap was an essential business during the war; and so he did not have to go into the military.

Q. Can you think of—

A. I can tell you that the water at Rec Park was very cold. LAUGHTER

Q. O.K. I've heard that from you before. Can you think of any funny, Thorp in Asheville or anything like that, or any other connections...

A. In Asheville, well, of course there is the old strawberry shortcake stories with your brother, but I am not sure we should tell those.

Q. I am not sure that they have impact upon the Jewish businesses in Asheville. Did you date any girls when you were visiting Asheville?

A. Not date, per se. I can't say that I really dated anybody. I remember the JCC, and in retrospect pretty impressive that you had a JCC here. We would go swimming there in the summer.

Q. Did you all have an AZA?

A. We were associated with Young Judea.

Q. Your father was very involved with that. He was on the Board of KM ? Judea, and that was because you had a Young Judean chapter.

A. Right. So we didn't--

Q. M Judea was actually a Hidasas organization. I don't know why your father was on—

A. It was because we were stuck out in upper east Tennessee. I guess most Knoxville was Young Judea, Chattanooga was Young Judea, so the congregations closest to us in Tennessee were associated with Young Judean, that is probably why we associated with Young Judea.

Q. Can you think of any stories, actually, in Johnson City, that would have anything to do with being a Jewish person in a Christian world? Any misunderstandings, whether funny or sad or people misunderstood you or anything like that, you or your family?

A. No, I never really felt like we had any misunderstandings. My best friend, growing up, when he was growing up in high school, wanted to be a Methodist minister; and I would go to MYF with him on Wednesday night. I do have one story. During an MYF meeting, they had some guy talking, and I remember he was one of these guys when he would smile—which he was trying to smile at the end of each of his sentences—one of these guys where his lips would move up above his teeth. And so he would say a sentence and his lips would move up above his teeth. And he

was talking about the Old Testament, and made reference to the Hebrew whatever. And he says, I don't guess anybody here knows Hebrew, do you? And I made the mistake of raising my hand. And so he asked how I knew Hebrew, and I said well, I am Jewish, you know. And he didn't take his eyes off of me the rest of the time. I was just so uncomfortable. He would just look at me and every sentence was straight at me; and then his mouth would go up and his teeth would be shining at me. So I vowed right then, never to volunteer to anybody that I knew Hebrew. Of course I didn't really know Hebrew, except to the extent of being able to read it for a Bar Mitzvah or prayers or that type of thing. And then I remember when I was Bar Mitzvah'd, I spoke to my 7th grade class about what it was; and you know I think it was a genuine interest. And my friend, who wanted to be a Methodist minister, you know, attended some our services with me in our youth group. And so, but, truthfully, I think it was a great way to grow up: the values that you learned, how to get along as a minority. I wouldn't trade it for anything.

Q. So did many of your classmates come to your Bar Mitzvah?

A. Yeah, a fair number came.

Q. I do have a question. I know that your older sister was married in Asheville. Do you know why she was married in Asheville?

A. She was married at the Grove Park Inn, and for a couple of reasons: Number 1, she wanted a big wedding, and there was no place in Johnson City where you could give a big wedding such as you could give at the Grove Park Inn. And Number 2, my mother had a big family, and they were all in Asheville. So for the combination of those reasons, she had her wedding at the Grove Park Inn.

Q. And where was your Bar Mitzvah, and your Bar Mitzvah party?

A. The Bar Mitzvah was at our Synagogue in Blountville, and the party was just a reception after the Bar Mitzvah at the Synagogue in Blountville. We didn't have parties or a dance like they do now. We didn't have a dance. We had, you know, cakes, and—

Q. Kind of like a traditional southern wedding?

A. Well, no, I would call it more like an upscale onig chalot??? after the Bar Mitzvah.

Q. O.K. What is the name of your Synagogue there?

A. It's Shalom.

Q. So, did you have Sunday school?

A. Yes.

Q. Was that mostly the mothers who taught?

A. Mothers and fathers. Both. Members of the congregation.

Q. Can you think of the names of any of the people you use to go to religious school with, who, like from southwest Virginia, say, that you still remember who they were; or do you keep up with any of those people?

A. Well, I remember who they were. I can't tell you where they are now. I think one's a lawyer maybe in Charlottesville. Your brother ran into a girl from Bristol who is living in Washington now, so I know where she is. I think one guy from Kingsport I knew is an optometrist in Roanoke. Robbie Curlin, from Johnson City, of the three—there were 4 of my general contemporaries in Johnson City—which was my sister, mostly lived in Dayton, and then Boston, but is now living in Florida. But then the other two, is Robbie Curlin, who is two years older than me. He became a doctor and moved to Memphis. A girl a year older than me, Joan Millen, moved to Memphis, and I moved to Memphis. So three out of the four of my general contemporaries live in Memphis. So I still see them from time to time.

Q. Well, we are about ready to wrap it up. Can you think of anything else you want to say? That you want your kids to know or anything?

A. I guess, you know, it was a good area—Asheville, Johnson City was just a good area to live in; it was a good area to grow up in.

Q. Now you raised your kids in Memphis. How do you feel that that is different, and do you kind of wish that they really had not grown up there?

A. Oh, I don't not wish that they hadn't grown up there. I think Memphis is a great place to grow up. In Memphis, they are truly—there is a big enough Jewish community where they truly grow up—once they hit high school—they really are with mostly Jewish kids. And I never had that. And so, um, you know, the one thing I have noticed as a result of that, is that I don't think that they are as sensitive to the feelings of Christian people, about comments that they make, because they have much more a sense of security of numbers than I have. You know, they will make comments about things that they don't like about—not necessarily Christian religion—but just little negative comments from time to time that I would not ever think of making, because I can see that they have grown up feeling that they have security of numbers, which I have never had a security of numbers.

Q. Do they have very many friends who are not Jewish?

A. Yeah, oh yeah.

Q. We have like 4 more minutes. So they do have really good non-Jewish friends?

A. Oh yes. But most of their friends are Jewish, whereas I grew up with no friends who were Jewish, because there was nobody my age in Johnson City when I grew up, in my year.

Q. So the thing that you were talking about, about the kind of comments your kids make, do you feel like they don't have as much of an understanding of Christianity, and how people who aren't Jewish live, as you might have had?

A. I think that they—not a common thing, just from time to time I notice it—they will make a comment that I will know a Christian person might be sensitive about that type of a comment, that they don't even think, they don't mean to be offensive. They don't have the sensitivity to know that that is something that a Christian person would be sensitive about. It's not that they are trying or mean to be insensitive.

Q. How many people live in Memphis?

A. It varies about a million three.

Q. So it's about a million times bigger than Johnson City? LAUGHTER

A. Yeah, more than that.

Q. Well, I think we are through.