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Interviewee: Ellis Irvin Kahn  
(b. January 18, 1936, Charleston, South Carolina)

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**Begin Tape 1, Side A**

DR: Ellis let me just ask you, for the tape, to tell us your full name and when and where you were born.

EK: My name is Ellis Irvin Kahn. I was born January 18<sup>th</sup>, 1936, in Charleston at Baker Hospital. I was a little premature and I stayed in the incubator there, according to my father, for some period of time and it cost fifty cents a day, at that time, to keep me in an incubator. My mother used to come to the hospital to feed me and go back home. That's my introduction.

DR: That's a wonderful way to start. Do you want to just tell us what position you held at the time of the hurricane? We're going to start with this and then go back to more family stuff.

EK: At the time, in September of 1989, when Hurricane Hugo hit Charleston, I was president of the Charleston Jewish Federation. The Charleston Jewish Federation was and is the umbrella organization for all the Jewish organizations in the Charleston community or for the greater Charleston area. I was president then; I was chairman of the campaign beginning in 1987 and became president of the federation in—well, December of '87 I was sworn in, but it began January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1988, and I remained president through the end of 1990. Now that's the situation with respect to my tenure with the Charleston Jewish Federation.

DR: You were there at a critical moment in the history of Charleston.

EK: Well, it's interesting you say that I was here at a critical moment. The hurricane hit during the early morning hours of September 21, 1989, and I happened to be in Hendersonville, North Carolina, at the time. The morning before, we woke up and there was an announcement on the television from Governor Carroll Campbell that the city was to be evacuated and, generally, we weren't planning to evacuate. The only child we had at home at that time was our daughter Cynthia, who was a senior in high school at St. Andrews High School. Our son Justin was in law school at the time and our son David was in school in Pennsylvania.

But my mother who was—let's see she was born in '09, so in 1989, she was seventy-six years old if my math is right, seventy-six, seventy-seven—was in a state of health where we had to keep people with her around the clock and we had a whole setup in an apartment about three or four blocks from where we lived. We were concerned, with the loss of power, that the women who were staying with her would not be able to stay and so on. We left that morning. We left around eleven o'clock in the morning and it took us five hours to get to Columbia on the interstate highway. Fortunately it was a constant stream; there were no cars broken down or anything like that. We stopped and ate lunch about three in the afternoon or four in the afternoon and made it to Hendersonville that night. We watched on television, CNN, this giant eye of a hurricane come and envelope, sort of, the indentation that constitutes the part of South Carolina that Charleston is, and saw it happen.

It was just rainy up in Hendersonville on the other side of the mountains; that was our goal. We had a friend who is a lawyer there who had a condominium, which the closing had not occurred that was supposed to occur, so our whole family moved into this condominium that was ready to go and we were very fortunate. It pays to have friends.

So the next day though—and we read all these terrifying things—the next day we called many people who lived around us. We called my favorite cousin Sandra Lee Rosenblum and everybody was okay. The main word we got with respect to destruction was that trees were down. That was almost the hallmark of the devastation—the trees that were down that were blocking things, that had messed up wires and the like and communications and power, and that had punctured various people's homes. It was the impact of trees, and it appeared that there were just hundreds or thousands of many kinds of tornadoes that spawned from the storm that did all this devastation.

So here I was the day after the hurricane, as president of the Charleston Jewish Federation, in Hendersonville, North Carolina, unable to fulfill any kind of leadership role because I was too far away. And indeed, I spoke a number of times with Michael Wise—who was the federation executive, who is, as we speak now in 1997, in Akron, Ohio—communicating things with him and learning that basically no members of the Jewish community, that we were

aware of, had been injured or killed, fortunately, in the storm. I kept in touch with him on the telephone. We did not leave Hendersonville until the Tuesday after the storm and it hit on a Friday morning. In that connection, we put my mother on a plane to stay with my sister in New Jersey and then Janice and I came back to Charleston with our daughter Cynthia.

But there was one other important thing that happened while we were in North Carolina that has to do with leadership and that is, Janice came up with the idea of getting the State of Israel to do something for the City of Charleston as a sign or token of appreciation for what the Charleston Jewish community had undertaken to do, that we never felt was really adequate for the State of Israel. She came up with the idea of bringing Jaffa oranges to Charleston and, indeed, I spoke with someone from—I was still in North Carolina—in the Israel embassy. In a moment I'll think of his name, because he ultimately did come to Charleston and we were involved—David—I'll think of his last name in a minute. [EK: David Peleg.] Anyway, we planted that idea and we tried to get through to the ambassador. It was impossible, so this fellow was in the PR Department of the Israel embassy in Washington.

We came back to Charleston on that Tuesday after the hurricane and we watched the landscape change as we came through the interstate, because there were more and more trees and more and more situations where trees were removed from the road or sawed in half and taken off the interstate. I remember we stopped and got gas just south of Orangeburg where the price was still at a reasonable level, because we had heard that the prices were two and three dollars a gallon here in Charleston. When people are listening to this in the future, that may be cheap, but at the time, that was very expensive. So that was the story, and the fallen trees kept getting thicker as we got closer and closer to Charleston.

In the interim from the time of the storm till the time we got back, at that time, a swarm of people had descended on our community to do construction work and to do tree clearing work. All of them, apparently, were attempting to make enough to retire for the rest of their lives based on what they were charging to remove trees and do some fairly sloppy repair work.

People were just really desperate in that connection. We brought back with us water, jugs of water that we had bought, and a chain saw, which I had never operated before, and a portable television set. It was almost like we were going to a place that had no civilization, at least in our contemplation.

We had heard that our house was all right—we heard from neighbors—other than the fact that a tree had hit our roof and apparently punctured the roof and then fallen aside, but everything appeared to be intact. Our dog, Fudge, a chocolate lab—we had left a big pile of food for her and plenty of water because we anticipated being back in a day or two. Neighbors, fortunately, fed her and Fudge fended off any potential people who were going to steal from us, so that was the situation when we returned.

Meanwhile, the Jewish community, as it has traditionally done in times of distress, really sprang into action. The organized community, the volunteers and the professionals, did an incredible, incredible job of seeking out people who were in distress and bringing them together. And in that connection, the first organized thing we had in our community was a Friday night, a Shabbos meal at the Jewish Community Center. The Columbia Jewish Community provided food for this and somebody else in Savannah—they had provided the challahs for us.

Meanwhile, in the interim, more clothes and food than we could possibly use were coming in by the truckloads. It was really very touching and I'm almost to tears when I think about it now because we didn't realize our connections, and it was just very, very moving. We had a Shabbos service and a meal at the Jewish Community Center, and an important thing that

we did—and it wasn't by way of design—we announced to the entire community that there was food and clothes available. People came and they weren't pigs about what they were taking. They took in measured amounts, because you could get food and water and stuff and sell it and make a big profit if you wanted because people were desperate to get many things. But there was nothing like that at all.

In general terms, the Jewish community wasn't in need of clothes and things like that, but the food was really very helpful, the fresh food. There was a unifying and solidarity effect from our having this. In that connection, I've looked at the *Charleston Jewish Journal* and I've got a bound of volume of the 1989 edition, the editor of which was Leah Chase, who did an incredible job. She was assistant director of the federation at that time. She was married to my good friend, Philip Chase, who grew up with me. She was editor of the newspaper and assistant director of the federation.

I looked at the September/October '89 journal that came out in early September, just before the storm hit, and we were planning programs—*A Passage to Freedom* program to help Soviet Jews, of which Terry Fisher, Dr. Dennis Fisher's wife, was the chairman, trying to raise some money to bring refugees here to the Charleston Jewish community. Not necessarily just for them, but to help the refugee program of freeing the Soviet Jews and helping to free them. At this time, this was still the Soviet Union, and it was tough getting these people out. This money was going not only to provide transportation but, at this relatively early date, was even used for the equivalent of bribery to get people out and to provide passage. People don't want to admit that the world exists like such as that, but we've later learned, for example, that Romania, for many, many years, had freely allowed Jews to leave and to go to Israel and to parts of the West, to leave Romania. We later learned, after the government was overthrown there, that the Jewish community paid a bribe for every single one of those people to get them out.

Anyway, we had this incredible program and you would never dream—when you looked at the September/October issue of the journal—of what was going to happen to Charleston. Then you look at the November one that came out and everything was money that was being sent to us for a disaster. The headline page said that I had gone to the General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations and gotten a check to pick up sums of money.

We ended up—what happened is the Council of Jewish Federations announced to the entire Jewish community of the United States and Canada that X amount of dollars was needed for the Charleston community to help recover. They came up with a sum of seven or eight hundred thousand dollars that was needed, though we had figured, taking everything into account, that we needed around one point one or one point two million. They announced to various communities that this is your obligation; your percentage of it is so much. I remember, for example, Cleveland sent us twenty-five or thirty thousand dollars; Los Angeles, maybe it was fifty thousand. I later met the president of the Los Angeles Federation at the time—he was here in Charleston—and my wife, Janice, had taken him on a tour. He remembered sending the money to us and we had an opportunity to thank them.

In any event, the entire Jewish community throughout the country responded in a way that was very touching, to say the least. I had the honor, at the Council of Jewish Federation meeting in Cincinnati, to stand up to thank these people and, as I'm wont to do, I have, always, a story to tell about it. One of the things I told them about, in thanking them—there were about thirty-five hundred people there, including the attorney general of the United States, who was on my immediate right, and then the president of the Council of Jewish Federations; I was the only non-dignitary there on the podium—I thanked them and gave them some personal vignettes of

what had happened in the community. I said, "I'm going to tell you a story that happened with us." When we got back to Charleston, we found that a tree had punctured our roof and made a hole in the ceiling of our bedroom and the tree had fallen off, fortunately. The subsequent rain caused a lot of damage in our bedroom. I announced that one of my law partners, at the time, had said that that was the most action that had been in that bedroom in fifteen years. And my wife said, "No that's been the most in *twenty* years!" That brought the house down and I was informed that the entire proceedings there were videotaped, but they edited that out. So I'm going to take the opportunity to make certain it's preserved for posterity. [Laughter.]

Now let me tell you what happened with some other things. We developed—with respect to these wonderful funds that came in— Well, I'll tell you sort of the last thing first. My wife, Janice, as I mentioned, is a tour guide and she had taken on a tour a man named Charles Bronfman and his wife, Andy. This is the Bronfman of Seagram's. She had taken them on a tour in 1986, around the time I was becoming chairman of the campaign, and we happened to do a lot of talking. We later had the privilege of taking Bronfman [EK: the Bronfmans] out to dinner and picking up the tab, which was truly our pleasure. We developed a relationship of talking to them on the phone from time to time and exchanging cards and so on; nothing any closer than that. A few days after Hurricane Hugo hit, he called up and said, "Is there anything I can do?" I said, "Yes, send money." He immediately sent a very healthy five-figure number that helped us tremendously with respect to our needs. So that was the payback from taking him to dinner, so to speak.

With respect to Israel, I mentioned that Janice had this idea of Jaffa oranges. Well, it turns out that Jaffa oranges don't come out till December, in terms of ripeness and so on. We made provision, working with this fellow David—whose name will come to me again in a little while [laughs], who is now incidentally working for the State of Israel in the United Nations—he and another man came to Charleston to assess the situation. We had them over for dinner along with some community leaders and he suggested that the State of Israel provide some people who would help us with respect to all these trees, because the theme of disaster was trees and what they had done.

So it ended up that the city of Jerusalem sent two people to Charleston. A man who was Mayor Teddy Kollek's key man with some kind of development in the city of Jerusalem, stayed in our home, and a young woman stayed in the home of Frances and Yonnie Schwartz. They immediately went to work, working with the city of Charleston, to see what could be done

Their focal point was Hampton Park, which is a lovely, lovely place. I used to play there, as did my cousin Sandra Lee, when we were children. It was absolutely devastated. One of the first things this fellow said was, "You need an assessment," and the man said, "How are we going to assess all this?" This fellow came up with the idea, "Well, let's go up in an airplane and take a picture of it." That had not occurred to these people here. The whole bottom line is they came up with some great ideas. The City of Charleston provided a car for each of them and the Jewish community picked up the rest of the expense of these people staying in our community for about a month or six weeks, whatever time it was.

It later ended up that the city of Jerusalem and the State of Israel planted twenty thousand bulbs in Hampton Park and in other places. . . . It was really just beautifully done, and we had a ceremony with Mayor Joe Riley and others, who incidentally had a close personal friendship with Mayor Teddy Kollek of Jerusalem; Mayor Riley had been there a number of times.

In addition to that, the following spring, I believe it was the following spring, provision was made for the Israel symphony to come to the City of Charleston and they played beautifully,

beautifully. It was really wonderful, well received, and it was a—I have to say a suggestion I made was picked up. The ambassador, Zalman Shoval, made a speech at the symphony and he also made a speech—I got him invited to speak at The Citadel. My friend and classmate from the Citadel, General Bud Watts, invited Zalman Shoval to speak to the Corps of Cadets and they had a very, very impressive ceremony and a seventeen-gun salute and the like and really, really made a tremendous impression. Zalman Shoval was wounded as a soldier in the Israel army and he walked with a cane, but he held himself in a very military fashion. But he picked up on the idea that I gave him of the similarity between South Carolina and Israel is that *Hatikva*, the hymn [EK: anthem] of Israel, is, “I hope,” and the motto of South Carolina is Dum Spiro Spero, “While I breathe I hope.” He weaved that in beautifully and I take some background credit for that. What else can I tell you about?

DR: Let me interject a question. You started out, Ellis, by saying that Janice’s idea—I hadn’t realized it was Janice’s idea to approach the Israelis for hurricane relief—was kind of in recognition of the support the Jewish community of Charleston had always shown Israel. Would you talk a little bit about how Charleston has responded really from the beginning—I don’t know how far your memory goes back, but as early as you can remember—to the State of Israel?

EK: Well, Charleston . . . . It wouldn’t be fair to say that Israel was responding to what Charleston had done, first of all. There was a situation where there were Jews in distress and that’s part of the reason for Israel, that’s part of its very roots, in its revitalization and rebirth. The Charleston Jewish community has existed, as far as we can tell, as early as the 1690s and I cannot address what closeness there was with respect to a rebirth of Israel in the community in the first couple of hundred years of our community’s existence.

However, I can tell you that I can remember as a young child—right after the war when the Holocaust became evident to our community—I can remember going to meetings with my father where they raised money. I remember there was a PT boat, a navy surplus PT boat available in New Orleans, where they needed to raise—I want to say, I was just eleven or twelve years old at the time—whether it was fifty thousand dollars or a hundred thousand dollars or something like that. They got together and raised whatever it was so that the State of Israel would have this PT boat.

I remember episodes like that during my childhood where there was a strong feeling in our community. I always felt, and the leadership always felt, that we never really raised enough in relation to the State of Israel as to what we perceived the need to be for the Jews in distress, in relation to what our community could probably afford. We always felt we should do a lot more—maybe a sort of built in guilt, whatever it is, but that is a fact. Nevertheless, our hearts were in the right place and our performance didn’t always match it.

I remember in the 1967 war when Israel was surrounded, we had a meeting at Gaillard Auditorium—it was then called the Municipal Auditorium—where over a million dollars was raised from a relatively small Jewish community one evening. A lot of people were getting up and saying, “Give till it hurts.” People would say, “No, give till it feels good.” So we always had a lot of emo—you can detect the emotion in my voice when I’m saying this now. I have strong feelings for Israel and I sense, with respect to our community, in relation to these strong feelings—

I said I couldn’t address the first couple of hundred years. With the pogroms that hit Eastern Europe in the late 1870s and early 1880s, and the wave of immigrants who came to this

country and to this community, there tended to be a much stronger sense of identification with Israel. In general terms, more religiosity and a stronger sense of identifying with the State of Israel than what I perceive there was before.

Though I want to tell you, we have two organizations—and I'm going to get around to answering your question—in our community. One is the Hebrew Benevolent Society and I was the president of that for a couple of years, a couple of years ago. That was formed five years before George Washington was inaugurated. That was a general community organization to help people in distress. Then the Hebrew Orphan Society was founded about 1801 consisting of eighteen people and that was by invitation. You had to have a track record of being charitable and responding appropriately to charitable needs and having a good name in the community before you could be invited to belong. These two sister organizations, or brother organizations, because in those days they only had men— In fact, only recently has the Hebrew Orphan Society admitted women and the Hebrew Benevolent Society still just has men, here in 1997. Anyway, so it's hard for me to look in the lens of going back.

But identifying with Israel, to answer your question— With the people who came in the waves, which included, on my mother's side, my great-grandparents and others, there were stronger—they had been recent immigrants; they had been in distress; they had suffered from the pogroms and so, they weren't established. Thus, there was a stronger identification with Israel and a stronger identification with respect to what had happened to the Jews in Europe during World War II. And so there was, as I was growing up as a child, I can tell you that the emotional identification with Israel is and was very strong and those people of my generation have all made it a point of sending their children to visit Israel. Some of the children have actually lived there and remained there as Israelis. So if that answers your question?

DR: It does. I wonder if you perceive a difference among the, sort of, denominations, Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox? Specifically, I'm thinking about a Reform rabbi, Rabbi Tarshish, who, in line with Reform ideology at that time, was definitely *not* a Zionist in 1948.

EK: Right. Well of course, having been born in 1936, I was only a child at that time. I remember hearing that he refused to allow an Israel flag as being put up on the bimah in the synagogue. As a result of that, around the time the State of Israel was formed, a number of people left KK Beth Elohim and were part of the forming of Emanu-El. There were people who were breaking off from Brith Sholom Synagogue at that time as well, and those two groups sort of coalesced. But with respect to KKBE, as I understand it— You see, in the Reform movement, there's less—it's sort of, in a sense, it's like each Baptist church is sort of individual and each Reform congregation is individual. So they had some more room for saying they make their own rules.

But I understand there were people who left that synagogue because Rabbi Tarshish didn't come around, so to speak, with respect to supporting the State of Israel. Over time, Rabbi Tarshish did come around, indeed. I remember he used to have a radio program on Saturday evenings. I don't know if you know about this. I don't know when he recorded it, but it played on Saturday evenings on the radio and my grandmother, who certainly—Bettie Karesh Kaminski, wasn't that excited about Reform people—used to listen, quote, religiously.

It turns out I got to know Rabbi Tarshish fairly well because I represented him with respect to the estate of his late wife, Rowena Tobias Tarshish. That's sort of another story because I had represented Rowena's husband, Tom Tobias, who was a famous historian in our

community, in a lawsuit. It must have been something I did or didn't do in a trial, that I got a judge to agree with us that we had proved the case without even having to go to the jury, that really impressed them. She indeed made me trustee of funds with respect to her children, and Rabbi Tarshish—I did some legal work with him. I remember going up to Chicago with him to qualify as an executor or personal representative with the estate because that's where he went, to the Chicago area, after he retired and left Charleston. I found out that his father was from Lithuania and we talked about some things because my father was from Lithuania. I remember him saying, with respect to Reform and Orthodox and so on, that there are three kinds of kashruth in Charleston. There is milchik, which of course means dairy, and fleishik, which means meat, and shrimp, and he'd laugh about all that. [Laughter.] Of course, shrimp is shellfish and forbidden food with respect to kashruth, as is well stated in Leviticus. Anyway, he really thought that was funny. Now, if I've answered that question—

DR: What about the Orthodox community? I presume, being, as you put it, descendants of this more recent immigrant group, that they had maybe more of a strong identification.

EK: The thing is the Orthodox community had this strong identification or more stronger—however it be characterized—but, in a sense, it didn't have the same economic means until relatively recent years. It just didn't have the same economic strength. When I was a child during the war and after that, there were a lot of merchants on King Street and other places in the peninsula of Charleston who had grocery stores, or small stores, who still lived upstairs over the store or behind the store.

My father had a small wholesale grocery business and, when I was in high school, I went around and sold to a number of these people. I called on a lot of Greek merchants and that's how I learned how to speak a little bit of Greek. I found I could sell a lot more groceries talking Greek to them and a lot of the Jewish merchants—and the community was very strong.

And, as an additional important thing to mention in light of the way things are now, this same immigrant Jewish community was very close to the Arab, and it was the same merchant community. There are the Shahids here in Charleston and others who were side by side with these other merchants on King Street who, before the founding of the State of Israel, were very close in identification and in friendship and the like. Over time, some of this has changed. I can talk about that later but, until the founding of the State of Israel, they were all co-immigrants struggling together in many respects.

In fact—this is not in response to your question—when we were in high school, the Jewish kids and the Greek kids were very, very close together. We even—I can give you an almost irreverent example. All of us learned to speak a little Greek and they learned to speak some Yiddish, and I can remember a teacher, a Mrs. [EK: Miss] Welch in an English class, where someone would ask a question and the response would be “He-yes ma'am” and everybody in the class would laugh. The teacher didn't know what we were laughing at. Well, in Greek, a “Chestie” is someone who has a bowel movement in their pants. [Laughter.] So we had those kinds of friendships that evolved in an immigrant context. If that answers *any* kind of question. [Laughing.]

DR: Yes, very interesting, very, very interesting. Were there any immigrant groups that were *not* part of that—this is kind of out in left field, but I know there are a few Chinese—

EK: There was no particular identification with the Chinese community. There were very few Chinese here. The only thing I learned from a Chinese immigrant was how to say the number twenty-five, which is gimma oo and I don't know why I remember that [laughs], but there was a very small Chinese community here; I don't think more than just four or five families when we were growing up.

When we were growing up, we had a kosher restaurant called Laufer's, which was in the middle of all of this, which was across the street from where Morris Sokol Furniture Company is now and where Dixie Furniture Company is located. I ate a lot of meals there. A lot of times when I was—I don't know how this is relevant to the st— [Laughs.]

But I will tell you this. A lot of times, my typical Saturday would be I would go to synagogue on Saturday morning and then go to my father's store where we would eat lunch at Laufer's Restaurant. Meanwhile—this is when I was seven, eight, or nine years old. Then we'd go to the Palace Theater to watch a cowboy movie, and I would play around in the store for a little while and I would say I was working in Daddy's store. In those days, it cost nine cents to go to the Palace Theater. [Laughs.]

DR: Which synagogue were you a member of?

EK: I was a member of Beth Israel. Do you know the genesis of Beth Israel in relation to Brith Sholom?

DR: Go ahead and tell us.

EK: Okay, the Orthodox Jewish synagogue from the 1850s or so was Brith Sholom, and this was the immigrants who were starting to come from Eastern Europe. The KK Beth Elohim, the Reform temple—the Orthodox community called them the Deutsch Jews, the German Jews, who were then controlling and generally populated the Reform temple on Hasell Street.

The Sephardic community that had formed, it had virtually disappeared with the exception perhaps—the one that comes to my mind is Tom Tobias, whose great-great-great, going back, grandfather was the first president of KK Beth Elohim. Mr. Tobias died around 1972 or '73, something like that.

Now what was your question? Oh, the synagogue. Brith Sholom was the synagogue and I found out—I went to the Charleston County library last night—that my great-grandfather, Josiah Kaminitsky, came to this country in the late 1870s from a place called Bialystok. He was a merchant and he was a peddler and so on but, in the 1853 [EK: 1883] directory of the City of Charleston, it said that he was the sexton there, or what was then known as the shammes, for apparently that one year. Other times, he worked in different employment.

But anyway, to answer your question, around 1911 or '12, there was some heavy political struggle in Brith Sholom Synagogue, which was on St. Philip Street about a hundred feet south of Calhoun on the east side of the street. There was this sort of rump group that broke away and formed Beth Israel, which moved about three or four blocks down St. Philip Street. It basically serviced more of the new immigrants as opposed to the older immigrants, or those who already were born in this country. It existed as such and that's where I was bar mitzvahed, though I was the second bar mitzvah in the new building on Rutledge Avenue in February of 1949. It broke away around 1912 and existed—it was in an old house on St. Philip Street until they built the new building on Rutledge Avenue around 19—they would have built it in '48. I remember that

both my father and Sandra Lee's father each gave a hundred dollars to the building campaign, which was hard to come by in those days.

**End Side A, Tape 1**  
**Begin Side B, Tape 1**

EK: They re-merged in about 1957, and it's now called Brith Sholom Beth Israel. If you go to the area of Magnolia Cemetery, you'll see a Beth Israel Cemetery plot and a Brith Sholom Cemetery plot area that's fenced off, and I've got ancestors buried in both of those cemeteries. I don't know whether you also know, that's sort of relevant to know, that there was a cemetery on the East Side of Charleston on, I want to say, Nassau Street—

DR: And Hanover?

EK: —and Hanover—that was lost. The community didn't have any money and the cemetery couldn't pay the taxes or something and it was lost, just like we lost the Jewish Community Center that was on St. Philip Street in the '30s. It was a facility where the children played basketball in a dry swimming pool, did you know that? [Laughs.]

DR: I've heard that they never had water in the swimming pool.

EK: There was no water in the swimming pool and they played basketball in there; that was their basketball court. That building was lost too. The community didn't have it. One of the things, just before Hurricane Hugo hit, we were going to have this great building campaign because we were running out of money to pay the mortgage, and then the hurricane hit. We had this very big dispute, with respect to this money that ultimately came in, as to whether or not that could be properly applied to making payments on the Jewish Community Center, when they had sent it for our community in distress, and whether it could be properly used for a capital thing as opposed to individually helping people in distress. Before I forget, I want to go back and talk about some of the things with the hurricane.

DR: Yeah, how was that resolved?

EK: With a compromise. [Laughs.] They wanted certain money back and we had flown up there and negotiation . . . it just was a *sad* ending to a beautiful thing with respect to some rough feelings that developed. Part of the deal was, ultimately, that we would—we ended up giving back about a hundred and thirty or forty thousand dollars, I believe, whatever the records show, but that was my recollection. Part of the understanding was that in future losses, we would certainly—to other Jewish communities, that we would respond appropriately, which we would have done anyway.

I remember there was a big fire in Santa Barbara and we sent five or six thousand dollars, and there was a disaster with the Los Angeles earthquake about three or four years ago, and we have done that over the years. Of course, we even raised money in the middle of coming from the ashes from the hurricane for an operation where we participated in raising money that was used for bribes to get Jews out of Ethiopia. Our assessment for that was thirty-five thousand dollars, I think, paid to the government of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, around five or six million

dollars to—I think it was called operation Moses. I just can't remember off-hand, but we had to pay for that.

Let me focus on what we were doing. We formed a committee to deal with these funds where we had one representative from each synagogue. It was considered very important politically to get the community to accept it and have a representative from each synagogue. We had a representative from the Hebrew Orphan Society, and a representative from the Hebrew Benevolent Society, and people from the Jewish Community Center, and then I was president of the federation. We met every Tuesday or Wednesday in my office and we'd bring in corned beef sandwiches, or whatever it was, and we would go over applications people had made for funds. The thing that I am *so* very proud of is that there were a lot of people who might have had an eight or ten year old automobile and a tree would fall on the thing and no insurance to repair it and so on. We would make arrangements to give them the money to replace it or to fix the roof or whatever else that people needed. Or a child needed money for tuition and the parents, their store got flooded, or whatever. We put—and these were grants to people that were on a marginal level.

DR: These were all Jewish people?

EK: Yes, and I'll address that in a moment. We put it all on the basis of a loan, on a no-interest loan, knowing full well that these people could never pay it back. We did it on the basis that it was a loan so that these people would have the dignity that it wasn't a handout to them. We were very careful to have documents and all of this stuff, knowing we weren't going to collect anything. There were some people who did pay us back, some—but just to put it on the basis they would have the dignity, that they weren't getting a handout, which is the highest kind of tzedaka that you can do. I was very, very proud of that. We hired Beth Keyserling, who—and Beth was a psychologist. I don't know if you know Beth.

DR: I do.

EK: We brought her in to head our disaster services, to counsel these people. She had been—a nice, nice, brilliant woman—not as involved. Her mother, Harriet Keyserling from Beaufort, was the first Jewish female legislator ever in the South Carolina House of Representatives—but she wasn't that involved. This got Beth so involved and inoculated her; it was beautiful to watch her transformation in the middle of all this. She wasn't aware of it, but we were watching it, and it was almost like watching somebody grow up. It's almost demeaning to say that we were watching her and she wasn't aware of it, but that's a fact—beautiful, beautiful person. Her true colors really came up to the surface. She really performed a beautiful service for our people.

The counseling that was done, there were so—we sent out a thing that talked about being farmisht. Farmisht, in Yiddish, would be people who just couldn't function, couldn't accomplish anything even though they recognized the problems. . . . There were people who just, emotionally, couldn't acknowledge the distress they were in so we really—I don't want to say we had spies, but we asked people to look for people who needed help. We brought them in and helped them.

But another thing that occurred was that people who were Jews came out of the woodwork, we had never heard of before. One of the senses was that a lot of the people had not identified themselves before. This is a negative thing about some of these people that they had

not identified themselves because they may have figured it was going to cost them something. because the Jewish community goes out and asks for funds all the time on the theory that we take care of our own people, but it takes resources to do it. A lot of people, knowing this, unfortunately, would not identify themselves fully. We didn't have any halakhic or religious litanies that we applied. If they said they were Jewish, we accepted that and went on from there.

And indeed, it must be said that we involved ourselves with respect to other aspects of the community. I know that we helped out a number of church organizations from the surrounding islands, both with respect to food that came in to us and clothes—very, very freely, with no-strings-attached kind of thing, because that's part of our roots, so to speak.

We had one very interesting thing with respect to all this money that was coming in, and I've got to take some time to explain it; and it's important to know historically. It involves a man named Lee Atwater, who ended up being an advisor to President Reagan. . . . Lee Atwater was assisting the man who was governor of South Carolina—when the hurricane hit—in his campaign against Max Heller, who was a Holocaust survivor, who lived in Greenville, and who was mayor of Greenville. Max Heller was running for congress against Carroll Campbell, who later became governor. Lee Atwater was in a campaign and, at a crucial time in the campaign, spread out a questionnaire, a document in the form of a questionnaire, asking people if they could accept someone to be their congressman who did not believe in, quote, our Lord Jesus Christ, end quote. That was done to highlight the fact that Max Heller was a Jew, and it is believed strongly, on behalf of Carroll Campbell the governor, it is believed very strongly that was the thing that made the difference—that Carroll Campbell was able to beat Max Heller. Max Heller had a sterling reputation, incredibly [EK: very] well respected, public service—I'm not negatively saying anything about Carroll Campbell in this context, but it was perceived that Max Heller was going to win by the pundits. Anyway, Lee Atwater was the mastermind on Carroll Campbell's campaign.

So a friend of mine, Sam Tenenbaum, of Columbia, was very much attuned to this and Sam was and is still very active politically. It came to pass that the Republican Party, during the time of Reagan, wanted to make some additional inroads into the South. It was certainly thought that if Lee Atwater, who had then—after Carroll Campbell had been in the congress, then became governor—Lee Atwater then became an assistant to President Reagan. I can't remember, special aide or deputy or whatever it was, but very close to Reagan. And, as basically a representative of the president, he made a number of phone calls to prominent Jews around the country and said, "I want a check for X dollars because I want to present it to the Charleston Jewish community, which is in distress," with the whole goal being, Lee Atwater would come and present this check on behalf of all of these people and deflect all of the charges of anti-Semitism, which had been piled on top of him. The focal point of doing that was one Sam Tenenbaum in Columbia. That's the way it was perceived he was going to do. It was announced to us and to me as president, that Lee Atwater wanted to come to some community presentation in the Jewish Community Center to present a check to me, he, Lee Atwater, the assistant to the President of the United States.

What were we to do? Were we to forgive and forget? Were we to ignore what he had done to Max Heller? It was a *difficult, divisive* problem to honor somebody by accepting, who had done what he had done was a horrible thing. On the other hand, we had people in distress! It wasn't to say like you were throwing a life preserver to somebody who was drowning, you don't ask what their nationality is, you grab the life preserver. We weren't in *that* kind of distress, but we needed money. I mean, it was just—we needed funds. We were getting ready to lose our

building and all this kind of business, which was the focal point of the Jewish community. [EK: We] didn't know what to do and there were debates and acrimony that lasted over a number of years, in fact, there may be still ripples of it. So what we ended up doing [laughs] is Bernard Miller, who was one of my vice-presidents of the federation, I sent him, I dispatched him—he was a dear man and he just died very recently, just well respected—he went to Columbia and accepted it, and we never did invite Lee Atwater to come to the Jewish Community Center.

A postscript to all of this is that Lee Atwater, when it was determined that he had a brain tumor, really sort of saw the light, so to speak, and felt very, very apologetic and remorseful and contrite and all of these kinds of things. I actually saw a copy of the letter—which was not for publication—that he wrote to Sam Tenenbaum, apologizing. He came as close as somebody could to admitting it, without actually saying “I did it.” He became, in this time of his illness, a very, very strong supporter of the State of Israel and had an influence on—he was sort of saved and saw the light or whatever it is—strong influence on President Reagan in a way that helped the State of Israel. So you talk about being in an ambivalent position; it was just very, very tough. We had a situation that developed while I was president when the State of Israel wanted to present some kind of award to Carroll Campbell for something, and I can't remember what it was that he had done. They didn't consult us and know of all the background, so there was a—I think an historical society meeting at the Omni Hotel. It must have been about 1990. They were going to present this award to Carroll Campbell, the State of Israel, and a consul from Miami came up to do it, and that generated another whole political firestorm in the community. I'm not certain all the ripples have dissipated [laughs] with respect to that. Let me see what else I wanted to mention.

DR: You had said that you were going to talk about the—I asked you whether all the aid went to Jewish families or were there other—

EK: Yeah, it primarily went to Jewish families, but it also went to the general community. . . . Also, for example, I know that at KK Beth Elohim, the janitor there is a man named Reverend Reed, who I have known since I was a child when he was a delivery boy for a place called Taylor's Bakery that made—there was a black man who made the best challahs in Charleston. His bakery was almost right across the street where Sandra Lee later lived. Anyway, his church in McClellanville, which was the focal point of the fury of the storm, was just destroyed, and that synagogue, KK Beth Elohim, raised a tremendous amount of money and food and so on, and really sort of put that church back together lock, stock and barrel. Our community, at the same time it was receiving aid, was giving in the highest traditions of what we have always done and claimed we've done. That is a fact. Now, what else? I'm trying—

DR: Yeah, I don't want to cut you short on the Hugo thing. We have probably about thirty minutes left. We could, at any point you say, start—I was going to ask you questions about the family.

EK: All right let me just say one other thing that's important to point out. In the midst of recovering from Hurricane Hugo, we developed, as part of the Charleston Jewish Federation, a program a lot of other communities had done, and we talked about and not done, and that was young leadership, where we developed a program of finding fifteen or twenty couples every year

or every other year, depending on what the situation was, to immerse them in responsibility, to educate them, almost like the Ulpan in Israel—just throw them in and let them get involved.

We were finding that people, the immigrant generation and the first generation after that, were continuing to be responsive to Jewish charitable needs, whereas the next generation after that, there was less identification with being in distress. They had been raised in air-conditioned homes and had new cars and all of that, or where getting a new car or something was no big deal. Whereas we were from the generation where it *was* a big deal and it was struggle. In that connection, we immersed these people in this program of educating them and making them serve on the boards of various organizations. It has really—of all the things I did when I was president of the federation, I am really the proudest of that, because it has taken on a life of its own with respect to continuing to infuse the community with knowledgeable and enthusiastic people, who can afford to help and who have been doing it in a way that just makes us very proud. Now.

DR: Sandra Lee is there anything you want to ask at this point?

SR: There's nothing more that I want to ask. I have to say that I have been mesmerized.

EK: Let me mention this before I forget it. We had two executive directors during this period of time. One was this fellow Michael Wise, who is now in Akron, Ohio, and the other fellow was Mike Abador. Mike was, at the time, working for the city school system and working part-time at the Jewish Community Center at the time the hurricane hit. And Mike Wise, whose wife was from Ohio, had family pressure, if you want to call it that, to go back to Ohio with his family. Mike—we searched all over the country to find an executive director to replace Mike Wise, who had done such a wonderful job during the storm. What we didn't realize, Mike Abador was right in our backyard; and we hired him and he did a beautiful, beautiful job. He right now—and I feel that I was sort of part of his getting moving in that direction—he now works for the Council of Jewish Federations in New York. So we launched him on his career, all from these fallen trees. [Laughter.]

DR: That's a nice way to put it.

EK: Okay.

DR: I was fascinated when you started talking about Josiah Kaminitzky, your great-great-grandfather, is that right? Which side of the family is that?

EK: All right let me tell you about some of my people who came over. Josiah Kaminitzky was my mother's grandfather. He came from a place near Bialystok, Poland. Sometimes it was Poland; sometimes it was Russia. He actually didn't come from Bialystok. He came from a little shtetl, a village nearby called Trefne.

DR: Could you spell that?

EK: T-R-E-F-N-E. It is on his gravestone—I believe it is, anyway—at Brith Sholom cemetery. Anyway, he came here, apparently, in the late 1870s. I know because my grandfather,

Sam—later the Kaminitzky was changed to Kaminski—was born in 1880 and I know he was born in this country. His wife was named Hannah and he peddled; he started off peddling.

Last evening with my daughter, Cynthia, we went to the county library and, looking in the city directories, which I recommend very highly from those days, you can see all of those people in the Jewish community who lived and worked in the area of Morris Street, King Street, Mary Street, Spring Street, and around those general areas of the non-established merchants. The established merchants were further downtown, but I'll mention something like that when I get to my father. When he first came to this country, he lived at number 66 King Street which, right now, is very high class and high falutin'.

So he came over and he was married, when he came, to my great grandmother, Hannah, after whom my daughter Cynthia is named. Her maiden name was Olansky.

DR: Now this is not Josiah's wife is it?

EK: That's right. This is—well, I'm talking about Josiah, or Joseph, was married to Hannah.

DR: Okay, so she would be your great-great-grandmother, is that right?

EK: She was my great-grandmother.

DR: Okay.

EK: She and Josiah were my grandfather's parents so that makes them my great grandparents.

DR: Josiah was your great-grandfather.

EK: Correct.

DR: Okay I had it great-great.

EK: And Josiah started off as a peddler and he worked, apparently he worked as a clerk for a number of merchants selling in the dry goods business. As I may have mentioned, he worked—in the 1883 city directory, it showed that he was the sexton or shammes at Beth Israel [EK: no, it was Brith Sholom] Synagogue. The rumor was that he was one of the founders of that synagogue, which was formed in 1856, I believe. So there's no way he could have been a, quote, founder, but he was nevertheless pretty close to the ground floor with respect to that.

It's interesting how these people moved around. According to the 1881 city directory, he lived at 474 King Street. In 1882, he lived at 671 King Street, so these were people struggling, peddling, moving around. He later went into the junk business, selling scrap metal. One of his daughters married a man named Samuel Steinberg, who was also in the junk business and they were competitors. [Laughs.] They finally got together—but apparently there was even some acrimony, and I don't know the details of that; you'll have to ask my cousin Samuel to fill you in—but they later had this business which was right on the corner of Mount Pleasant Street and Meeting.

Now I have to tell you something else about my great-grandfather, Josiah Kaminitzky. He was a litigator. Here are the South Carolina reports from the Supreme Court of South Carolina,

and in volume twenty-five of the South Carolina reports, page fifty-three, there's a case called Kaminitzky versus the North Eastern Railroad Company. According to this report, which was from the November term of [EK: the] Supreme Court of 1885—my grandfather, Sam, was born in 1880—he was in a wagon with a man named Rubin, whose last name was Rubin. The report does not reflect what Rubin's first name was. I'll read to you— And he was the plaintiff who brought this lawsuit.

“On the evening the plaintiff received the injuries of which he complains”—which is this railroad crossing, which is known as Magnolia Crossing, near Magnolia Cemetery where he's buried, and Meeting Street, where his business was—“On the evening the plaintiff received the injuries of which he complains, he and another gentleman (Rubin) in a one-horse wagon driven by a colored lad about sundown or possibly a little later, were coming down the plank road towards the city.” So that lets us know that the road was planked; that was paved in those days. “Just as they reached the point of the angle made by the planked road and the railroad track, opposite the entrance of Magnolia Avenue, a long freight train passed rapidly down towards the city and, needless to say, there was a collision. Josiah Kaminitzky, as a result of that, had both of his legs amputated.” They were injured in this collision and he sued the railroad company and he sued for the sum of thirty thousand dollars. The jury gave him six thousand. The railroad said that was too much money for losing both of his legs and they appealed and the Supreme Court agreed with my great-grandfather and said he could keep the money.

The interesting thing is my father knew my great-grandfather—my father came to this country in 1914—and said that he had heard one of the reasons why the jury didn't give him more than they did is because he sort of was proud and wouldn't admit that he was hurt. He walked around on two stumps or wooden pegs in some kind of fashion, where he could function pretty well, and he really sort of wouldn't give into the thing. So he didn't look like he was as injured as bad as perhaps he was. That's called pride over prudence, I guess. Anyway that's the story.

Josiah died on February 21, 1916, according to the records and, again in the library, at age seventy-five of, quote, acute dilatation of the heart. You've got to recognize the state of medical diagnosis in those days. My [great-] grandmother, Hannah, who was married to him— And at the time, it shows you, moving around. He died on February 21, 1916 and he lived at 565 King Street. That is the location of what was then Uptown Sample Shoe Store, owned by Alex Karesh, in later years. It was owned by, at that time, by Charles Karesh, my great-grandfather on the other side. So he died, at that time, over where the store was and that's very close to the intersection of Wolfe Street and King on the west side of the street.

Hannah Kaminitzky died—and she too was born in the Bialystok area—on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1920, at age seventy-five of what was called chronic interstitial nephritis.

Now I want to tell you very briefly about these maternal grandparents of mine. Well, I've got to tell you that's my great-grandparents on one side. My great-grandparents on the other side was Charles Karesh, who came from Bialystok as well. All the Kareshes in this area are related to each other whether they want to admit or not. A *number* of them married each other because it's said that nobody else was good enough for them or they didn't consider anybody else being good enough for them. He came from Bialystok, Charles did. He married twice. He was married to my great-grandmother, Sarah, by whom he had a number of children, and then he married someone else whose name does not come to my mind, by whom he had two other children. It is said that the second wife was actually a niece of his deceased brother. [Laughter.] I'm certain it violates something.

The two children born of this niece of his deceased brother, one ended up being the mother of Selma Barshay, who lived in Summerville, who died maybe about fifteen years ago, Selma did. Her daughter Wendy, now named Block, lives in Wilmington, North Carolina. She has two other daughters as well. Another was a woman whose last name was Moss, who moved up to New York and whose daughter married my uncle. These people marrying each other—just incredible. So it's all like marrying your own cousin kind of thing.

Charles Karesh was a peddler and in the shoe business. He owned this Uptown Sample Shoe Store and he died in Charleston on May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1926, at age sixty-seven. Sarah—I had written somewhere else as to when she died, but as you go into Beth Israel Cemetery, and you turn immediately to the left, theirs is the first gravestones you see on your immediate left as you go in. You'll see right next to that a little small child's grave and that was one of their daughters who was born in the early 1900s who died of a ruptured appendix at about age ten.

They had a number of children, one of whom was my grandmother, Bettie Karesh, later Kaminski, and she married Josiah and Hannah Kaminski's son, Samuel Meyer, Shmuel Mayer, Kaminski. They had five children and the only survivor of all those children—my mother died, whose name was Estelle Kaminski Kahn, she died on February 8<sup>th</sup>, 1996.

One other thing about my—well, let me tell you about my maternal grandparents. Sam Kaminski met my grandmother—he was born in 1880 and my grandmother, Bettie Karesh Kaminski, was born in 1883 here in Charleston. My grandfather, Sam Kaminski, was six years old when the earthquake of 1886 hit, and I can remember sitting on his lap and him telling me about the earthquake. I didn't realize, at the time, that he was telling me through the eyes of a six-year-old at the time [laughs], you see. He obviously wouldn't have the big picture and a lot of, I'm certain, what he told me was stuff he read or heard later on.

But he worked over the years—my grandmother, who was one of the best cooks in the world; to get an invitation to eat a Shabbos meal at her home was something that people looked forward to—he worked as a clerk in various clothing stores. One, he worked as a clerk for Sam Banov, who was his brother-in-law, who is Dr. Charles Banov's grandfather. My grandmother's best friend was Charles Banov's grandmother, my Aunt Rachel. I can remember as a child, they were so close, they would just start—when they were in their seventies, they would giggle like little girls when they were together. They were very, very close.

My mother, Estelle Kaminski Kahn, met my father when he had a grocery store at 575 King Street, and got a job as a bookkeeper working for him, and a couple of years later married him. She succeeded, at that job, my aunt Dolly, who had worked as a bookkeeper for him. Now before that—and it's very important to mention because I don't think I've told you about my paternal side, have I Sandra Lee?

SR: No. [Laughter.]

EK: Okay.

DR: I'm keeping track of a few things that are loose ends, but go ahead. I don't like to interrupt, because this is fabulous.

EK: That's all right, I'm married; I'm used to being interrupted. [Laughter.]

DR: Well, you did mention Charles Karesh was your paternal great-grandfather. That's as far as [inaudible].

EK: Yeah, on my father's side—

SR: [Inaudible] maternal.

DR: Maternal.

EK: Yeah, that's maternal. On my father's side, my father came to this country on—I can give you an exact date. He landed in Baltimore with my grandmother, Rachel Kahn, on June 13, 1914, a week before World War I started. Now let me go back a little bit about my—

DR: Would you say their names again?

EK: Her name was Rachel, and her maiden name was Ofsheovitch.

DR: How would you spell that?

EK: Well I can give it to you in Hebrew. I took a photograph of her gravestone.

....

EK: She was born in Ponewez, Lithuania on August 4, 1855. I see from looking at the Hebrew inscription on the tombstone, her father had the same name, that says Yuda bas Yuda [EK: no, it's Rochel bas Yuda], as Sandra Lee's father. So that's who—I don't know whether you knew that's who he was named after. Anyway—

DR: And her husband—

EK: Her husband died in Europe in 1913. He weighed about three hundred pounds. It was said that he couldn't fit in through doors. They lived in a place near the town of Kaunas in Lithuania that my father says was eighteen viorsks from Kaunas, which was about eighteen kilometers, I believe. Their home was one room. In this one room, there was five brothers and one sister and my grandparents.

My grandfather, his name in Hebrew, was Yisroel Yitzhawk. Israel Isaac would be the translation—Kahansky. He was born in 1850 and he told my father stories of the second Napoleon who came through Europe. He actually saw the second Napoleon's army. This is my grandfather—when I think back in terms of time and European history—he died in 1913. At the time he died, the only one of the family that remained in Lithuania at that time was my father—whose name was Ruvane or Robert; when he came to this country, he changed it to Robert—and my grandmother. All the other brothers had already left for America. My father told me that he had actually heard that the streets here were paved with gold. He didn't exactly believe it, but he wanted to believe it.

The brothers who had come before were, first, Morris, whose children—and he came here and peddled; he literally peddled up until virtually the time he died; he did other things too;

he made coffee, roasted coffee, and other things—Morris, his children were Jack, Arthur, and Evelyn, and the only one surviving now is Jack Kahn. Philip Kahn—whose son is Ralph—Philip Kahn was born in Lithuania on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1890. He had a twin brother, which we only learned about very recently, who died at about age three or four. I asked my father, when he told me about it, “What did he die of?” He said, “I don’t know. He just died.” We forget how far we think we’ve come in terms of modern medicine. Philip died here in Charleston on September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1957. He’s got a son Ralph who happened to have visited with us this past weekend and we had a good time with him. Ralph has three or four sons and never did have that daughter they wanted.

SR: Four sons.

EK: They have four sons. Then my uncle Julius, who is Sandra Lee’s father, he came over and [inaudible] what I’d said—there was one brother named Gershon and Gershon stayed in Europe. Gershon was killed by the Nazis—either the Nazi’s or the Lithuanians, because what we’ve later found out after the war, that when the Nazis invaded, a lot of the local people, mostly Catholic in background, just went on rampages against the Jews. That is a literal historical fact. There has been a lot of ground covered to overcome that in recent years, but that is a fact. Anyway, the Jews got the worst treatment in the predominately Catholic countries of Eastern Europe. When the Nazis came over, a lot of these people had open arms for them.

DR: Ellis, do you know why Gershon stayed?

EK: No, but I know he had two sons, and I have to tell you a story about that. He had two—no, he had a son named Beryl and he had a daughter whose name does not come to mind. He had another son, also named Yuda—must have been named after the same person, the late Rachel’s father, who moved to Mexico City—he could not get into this country. They wouldn’t allow—this is my father’s nephew and my first cousin—

I have to just tell you a little vignette. When Janice and I discovered that they existed there—I discovered they existed there—at the time, I was at The Citadel as a student. I was stationed in the air force in Waco, Texas, and when I went on our honeymoon—my wife was from Shreveport—we went to Mexico City for our honeymoon and we had made contact with these people who I had never met before. When I met this son of Gershon—Yuda was his name, or Julio, there in Mexico—he took a look at me and said Bernado, or Beryl, depending on where you are. He went into a drawer in his home and pulled out a picture of a young man that was made in the 1930s. This photograph was made of his brother Beryl, and it looked like my picture. It was the most eerie thing that ever happened to me, because I always thought I looked like my mother’s side of the family. So you never know where the genes are going to pop up. I *never* got over that eerie feeling I had, and thinking about it produces all sorts of emotion.

They have three daughters, two of whom now live in Israel and one lives in Mexico City. I literally talked to the one in Mexico City about two weeks ago—Miriam—who manufactures bathing suits for pregnant women. It’s called Los Amazonas. [Laughter.]

The daughters in Israel—one is married; she just moved there recently. She’s a registered nurse. The other daughter, Toby, is married and has three boys. One is in the army, just eighteen, nineteen years old—of course they all go in—the second one is in the middle of going in now.

The third one is about fifteen or sixteen. They're doing well and we have communication with them all the time.

DR: Ellis, let me ask you to pause a minute and talk for a second about what—because I'm going to run out of tape; I don't know how long your video—

**End Tape 1, Side B**  
**Begin Tape 2, Side A**

DR: Ellis, I don't know if you want me to remind you what we were talking about.

EK: Yes, do remind me please.

DR: We were talking about your father's family and, specifically, the brother who did not come, Gershon, who stayed in Europe, and his children who wound up—some of them in Mexico City. I don't know if you want to just continue talking a little bit about the Kahns. Just let me just interject here: one thing that I would be very interested in, if you know it, is what any of your forebears—on the Kaminitzky or the Kahn side—what they did for a living and what kind of circumstances they lived in in Europe.

EK: Okay. I *do* know. On my father's side my grandfather, Yisroel Itzak Kamensitsky, they lived eighteen viorsks from this town of Kaunas.

SR: You said Kaminitzky; you meant Kahansky.

EK: I meant Kahansky. Thank you for correcting me. They grew flax and they had an apple orchard and, another very interesting thing, my grandfather went to Germany one time, according to my father, and while he was in Germany, he saw people manufacturing bricks. He came back and decided, I want to manufacture bricks too, and they started manufacturing bricks. So that was the way that happened.

Another interesting thing in terms of 1997 perspective, I once asked my father—I know they had cows and they had horses—I said, "How was it in Lithuania in the wintertime milking a cow in all that cold and snow," and all this kind of stuff. Well, a couple of things about that: he once told me in very later years, he said, "I'm glad I left Lithuania before they invented wind chill [laughs], a wind chill factor." [Laughter.]

The other thing is I said, "How do you get up in the morning and milk a cow and [EK: with] all this cold and freezing and so on?" He says, "That was easy." He said, "That was women's work; men didn't do that. [Laughter.] So the world was structured a lot differently and that was what women did then, and that was it and that was it. Anyway, they manufactured bricks and they had an apple orchard and flax.

One other story that comes to my mind from Europe: my father told me when he was about ten or eleven years old, he used to like to trade things. He would buy fur from people who killed animals and take them into town and sell them and, you know, just as a young hustler, so to speak. . . . He was about nine or ten years old. He bought a flashlight in the town of Kaunas and brought it to my grandmother who had never seen a flashlight before. When he turned it on, she tried to blow it out. She had just never seen—and we just don't realize. I look at my father,

who was born during the time when battles were conducted on horseback, and he sat in my den and watched somebody land on the moon on a television set.

My grandfather remembered the second Napoleon—that is just incredible. The age span is interesting because my grandfather was born in 1850. My father was the youngest, born in 1895, meaning his father would have been forty-five when he was born. My father didn't get married until late. He was in his very late thirties when he got married in 1934 and I was born in '36. So the time span is just incredible between the birth of a grandfather and the birth of a grandson, for example. Sandra Lee's father married, similarly, relatively late in life, though I guess the current generation is starting to get married later [laughing], much to their parents' chagrin. So there's that component of what my grandfather did for a living.

My father told me, and this was in terms of talking about his in-laws' family, the Kareshes, near Bialystok—as I said to you, here in this country, they all married each other because nobody else was good enough for them, so to speak—he said to me that in Europe, they were in the business of dealing with bristle from pigs, which in a Jewish community, would be a low ranking situation, socio-economically [laughs], as we say these days, to show that they didn't have any money. So, in effect, he was saying they're not so high falutin' as they say they are. [Laughing.] . . . My only source of that information is what my father said, and you've got to realize that was an in-law talking about an out-law. [Laughter.]

DR: Do you know if the Kahanskys grew their flax and apple trees on their own land?

EK: No, Jews were not allowed to own land. My father told me that they rented land. Jews were not allowed to go to school. My father's entire formal education was six weeks of night school when he came to this country. The only word of English he knew when he landed in this country was son-of-a-bitch. [Laughter.] And he said he had fifty cents in his pocket.

As I mentioned to you, he and my grandmother landed at the Port of Baltimore—or maybe I didn't tell you where they landed—on June 13<sup>th</sup>, 1914, and they got on a train to Charleston. What happened with his brothers who had come to this country is Morris was the first one. He worked and earned some money and then sent some money, and then the next one, which was Philip, came over. Then my Uncle Julius came over and then my father. Their mother came over last in 1914.

SR: Ellis, can I interject before we get off that part of it? Did they have any kind of Hebrew school education?

EK: Oh yeah—and I was going to get around to that—with respect to their education, all the Jews in this area of Eastern Europe were highly literate. They could read. Our respective fathers could speak six or seven languages. It was true throughout the Middle Ages and the so-called Dark Ages and, even among females, considering the context of several hundred years ago, were all literate; they could all read and write. They learned Hebrew; they learned Yiddish, and they learned other languages, but it was universal that they could read and write, and that was an accepted understanding. That was no problem because the Jews always educated themselves.

During the same time, in the general community which existed, the only people who were literate were the monks and some of the priests. Even the royalty were illiterate during this period of time. If you look in some documents—where even I see as a lawyer and prepare as a lawyer now and then—from time to time, it says, "Witness my hand and seal." The reason they

had a seal there is these people couldn't write, but they would put the imprint of their ring on some wax to signify their signature.

So that has been said as one of, among other things, the basis of anti-Semitism which they endured, is that these people could communicate effectively and were literate. In general terms, people who, as a gross generalization, are illiterate, don't like the idea of people who *can* read and write and that's just a so-called fact. I can't prove that to you, but . . . my general experience has been consistent with that as well. So I've gone to the—

DR: And you don't know anything specific about the Kaminitzky occupations in the Old World?

EK: No I don't. I do not know what Josiah did. I guess I could—I actually, at one time, looked at his date of death and looked in the old Charleston newspaper to see what I could find announcing his death, but it wasn't even listed in the newspaper. Apparently a lot of the Jews were not even mentioned in the local paper in the early part of this century, upon their death. That is a fact.

DR: Would he have been the person who owned that Kaminitzky Torah that I mentioned [inaudible]?

EK: Yeah probably, because he was the only one named Kaminitzky.

DR: Do you know anything more—I want to put it on the tape about this Torah that—

EK: No, I know that there was some amount of controversy, but even remotely, authoritatively, I don't know anything about that other than he gave the Torah, which apparently was his personal Torah, to Brith Sholom Synagogue and a descendant wanted it back. They said, "No, a gift is a gift and that's it."

Indeed, I lost a case to the South Carolina Supreme Court on the issue of a gift and whether it was complete. No matter what the mistake was, if you've made it as a complete gift and knew what you were doing, or said you know what you were doing, you were stuck with that.

DR: Do you have any reason to believe he brought it with him from Europe?

EK: I have no idea, but I would think that a number of the Torahs came from Europe anyway that were here in this country because, in this part of America, I doubt if there were any Torah scribes. If there were any, they were probably in areas such as New York or maybe Boston or places like that. I doubt if there were any here in the last hundred years, but then I certainly haven't heard of it.

DR: When you said it was his personal Torah, what does that mean? How did people use a Torah?

EK: Well, we are enjoined to read from the Torah and to complete the Torah reading every year, and start at the beginning from the Bereshit, which means in the beginning, and it's read in the synagogue, of course, on the Sabbath, but also on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays until

it's read through. The whole idea and concept behind it, to keep the faith alive, is to read and then have commentaries on it, discussion on it and so on.

Unfortunately, here in modern times, we've been more derelict as we've pursued more secular skills and, unfortunately, a lot of people think that when they make a few dollars, then they become too good for some of that. It's an unfortunate commentary on modern life. Though I've got to say, as part of this historical thing, we have what's now the Addlestone Hebrew Academy—which all my children and all of Sandra Lee's children attended—that is doing an incredible job of teaching children Hebrew and inculcating them in a way that the parents are either not adequately equipped to do or are unwilling to do or make the commitment to do. So it's serving a vital, vital function. Part of what the federation has raised money for continually is to support this school because it produces a wellspring of nourishment for Jewish life in our community. That is a fact.

DR: All right. At any point that you remember any European stories, you can go back to it, but let's start with the immigration. The Kahanskys came through Baltimore—and that would be K-A-H-A-N?

SR: That's the way—

EK: K-A-H-A-N-S-K-Y. You know, it's any way it was sort of written down. They say your real name was whatever your name was in Hebrew and this other name, this English name, that was something that was for the rest of the community. When you're called to the Torah, you're called in your Hebrew name, you know? I can't remember who wrote a book on that—I want to say Elie Wiesel, but it wasn't; maybe I'll think of it—where he starts off at the beginning and say what your real name is and then what people call you.

DR: He came to Charleston, your grandfather, because his sons had already preceded him?

EK: No, my father came—

DR: Your father.

EK: Yeah, my father came in 1914 and, what he did is, he started off peddling. His first job, other than peddling was to—and keep in mind they knew no English, no English. But what these immigrants were taught—they would take whatever it was that they had with them and they would go out in the country, whatever they could carry on their back—they were taught to watch the eyes of the people as to what they were interested in and, over time, they picked up the language. That's how they made a living, just watching the eyes and seeing what the people were talking about, and honest and fair dealing.

SR: Ellis, when your father got here, the last of the Kahn brothers to get to Charleston, the other brothers were all peddling at that time.

EK: I think Morris at that t—our Uncle Morris, who was the oldest, well no, Gershon, the one who died in Europe was the oldest, but the next one was Morris. He had a grocery store on the corner—about two hundred yards from where we are sitting right now—on the corner of Queen

and State Street. My father's first job, in addition to doing peddling, was working as a clerk in that store. That's where they first lived right here in quote, downtown Charleston, where to rent an apartment across the street from that with just one bedroom and no yard or no nothing cost about a thousand dollars a month. [Laughs.]

DR: Do you know what brought the first brother who came to Charleston, what brought him to Charleston?

EK: What brought him to Charleston? I asked him that many years ago, my uncle Morris, "Why did you come to Charleston?" He said, "I heard there was good peddling here." That was it. It could have been just some stray word somebody had and that was it. But no, the Charleston Chamber of Commerce certainly didn't send him a brochure, I can tell you that. [Laughter.]

DR: But there were numbers of Bialystok people, from the vicinity of Bialystock; he may have heard from someone about—

EK: Speaking of that, I've got to tell you about a society called the Kalushiner Society. There was a little shtetl in Poland called Kaluszyn. A large number of immigrants who came during the 1900s—that is, after this first wave in the 1880s and 1890s—came from just a little shtetl, a village. And these immigrants formed the Kalushiner Society, which was to help each other out. The dues for—whatever it was, was twenty-five cents a week or a month or whatever, just, you know, relatively nothing. They accumulated funds and there was a self-help thing of giving them loans, or putting people on their feet and becoming a merchant and so on.

This Society existed in real terms until 1967. In 1967—well first of all, about the Kalushiner Society, these people would meet from time to time. They'd have a dance or a little banquet or something like that to try to raise a few dollars, and it became less and less active. In 1967, when Israel was faced with extinction, they had—something in the back of my mind says a hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars in this thing, but it may have been less. They voted to give everything to the State of Israel, and that sort of was the end of that, in terms of a functioning society. The only person I know who now is alive in this community who was from Kaluszyn is Henry Yaschik. He can tell you about this building, even though I think he was born in Brazil when his parents couldn't get into this country. But he's got some kind of connections where he can tell you.

DR: Argentina, he was born in Argentina. [Inaudible.]

EK: Yeah, right, Argentina. But the Kirshtein family, the Sokol family, a lot of Goldbergs, all from Kaluszyn, and the Chase family. I mean they lived . . . in homes that the floor was of dirt. They didn't even have wooden boards and that's the poverty that these people came from who came to this country with a high energy level and did well.

DR: Do you know if there are any records of the Kalushiner Society?

EK: I don't know of any records. I know that the late Morris Sokol, Joe Sokol's father, was active in it and I remember him talking to me about that society. So his son Joe may know of any kind of records. Now back to—we digress. [Laughing.]

DR: We were talking about your father's entry into the business world. [Laughing]

EK: Right. Well, my father apparently was born into the business world, peddling and hustling. He and my Uncle Julius, Sandra Lee's father—and I just learned this last night looking in the city directory—along with our uncle Philip, owned Kahn Brothers. Later on, Philip was working as an employee, but according to the city directory of around 1920, Philip was one of the three Kahn Brothers. They had this business on the corner of East Bay and Market Street and they, quote, owned the building or had the mortgage on it or something like that. They were there for a very few years during the '20s and then they sold it.

Then they moved to the middle of the block on East Bay Street right across from the customs house between Cumberland and Market. A few months after they moved out of the building, a tornado came to Charleston and destroyed a lot of the market and that building. Of course they didn't have insurance in those days, so that saved us from financial, or worse financial ruin [laughter], it might be.

SR: How much worse could it get? [Laughter.]

EK: And I remember as a young child—

DR: That was 1938, is that right? The tornado?

EK: Yeah, somewhere close to there.

DR: It destroyed the I. M. Pearlstine Warehouse. We have pictures in the library of that.

EK: Yeah. But they had sold it. Meanwhile, around '39 or '40, my father broke up his partnership with my Uncle Julius and their business of Kahn Brothers on East Bay Street and he moved to 575 King Street. Over the years, it is a fact that both my father, Robert Kahn, and my uncle, Julius Kahn, always said of each other that the other couldn't have made it in the business if it wasn't for him. [Laughter.] They were saying this when these people were in their eighties. [Laughter.] They were still saying it, talking back, and both Sandra Lee and I heard it—just what a lousy merchant they were. And yet, they were very close and supportive of each other over the years. But they weren't respectful of their business acumen respectively. [Laughter.]

DR: What kind of merchandise?

EK: Anything they could sell. It maybe went back to being peddlers. My father moved to 575 King Street and I remember the old place, as a very young child, on East Bay Street, and then they moved. I was born in '36. Then, irony of ironies, shortly after my father moved to 575 King Street, Sandra Lee's father moved to King Street on the same block, about a half a block away. So they could then argue at a closer distance. [Laughter.] They were really, despite their protestations, they were very close to each other and they went on long walks together and long rides together and were very close.

My father was a small wholesale grocery business. It was also sold retail too. In other words, if somebody had the money, they'd sell wholesale, retail, whatever it is. It was a matter of

literally keeping the wolf from the door. I don't know whether it was a blessing or a curse, but when I was just the youngest child, and my father had to go to the bank to borrow money, he would take me with him. I don't know whether that was to make an impression on me or not, but it did—about when you're borrowing money, boy, that's a helpless kind of situation. Fortunately, the banks always gave him whatever he asked for.

DR: Who were his suppliers?

EK: Well he sold tobacco and so all the major tobacco companies. He sold a lot of rice, grits. Most of his customers were the black community of Charleston or merchants who sold or catered to the black community. As I mentioned or alluded to, when I got my driver's license—which you could at age fourteen; literally, the very day of my fourteenth birthday, I went and got my driver's license—shortly thereafter, I went on the road, so to speak, in the afternoons after school to sell to these merchants who had, sort of, corner grocery stores, and got orders from them and then the truck would come the next day and deliver to them.

Over time, this had an effect on my grades in school and I didn't recognize it. I'll tell you how I remedied that later on. I still did all right in school, but my grades in high school weren't what they should have been. It had to be that I used to go to work every afternoon and get home at seven o'clock at night. I was foolish not to have recognized what was happening, but nevertheless I finished.

DR: What kind of work? I mean, describe a typical afternoon.

EK: I would take the car and go and call on a local merchant, the overwhelming probability who would be an immigrant. Some of these people—there was a man named Abe Sudit who had a grocery store on Aiken Street, and they lived right behind the store. Later on they moved to St. Margaret Street after they made a few dollars. His son, Howard Sudit, owned a drug store in partnership with Sammy "Schmeelie" Rosen and was killed by a robber about 1980 or '81 when this fellow came in with a gun. Howard just followed the fellow out the door and the fellow turned around and shot him and killed him. It was horrible.

SR: It was on the corner of Rutledge and Cannon Street.

EK: Rutledge and Cannon Street was that; it was called Avenue Pharmacy.

DR: How do you spell Sudit?

EK: S-U-D-I-T.

DR: S-U-D-I—that's a new name.

EK: There are no Sudits left in Charleston now because his mother, Fanny Sudit, died. I have to tell you a story about Fanny Sudit, who I knew as a child, you see. When I was a child, I used to call on them and they would buy from me. I remember going to somebody's bar mitzvah at Brith Sholom Beth Israel. I can't remember—this must have been in the late '60s or early '70s, and I told her that I would give her a ride home. So she is sitting in the back of the car. She said,

“Oh, it was just horrible,” and complaining and complaining. I said, “Well, I thought the child did a beautiful job.” She said, “Well, he did do a beautiful job, but you should have seen the small portions they were serving afterwards.” [Laughter.] So she was insulted by the small portions which, again, there’s another story about small portions, but we won’t go into that. [Laughter.]

I’m trying to think of some other people. I know I called on Sam Rosen’s mother, who had a grocery store on the corner of Radcliffe and Coming Street and there are others that just don’t come to my mind.

SR: Did you sell to Haas, Mr. Haas?

EK: Well, the Haases— who are related to the Altmans, and they were from Kaluszyn too— on Radcliffe and—it’s near Jasper Street. I can’t remember.

I have to tell you a story about Jasper Street. Edith Abramson, my father’s sister, married this man who we called Uncle Jasper. I learned in later years that his name was not Jasper, but he had a little grocery store on Jasper Street and all the customers called him Mr. Jasper. That’s how he got his name Jasper and, for the life of me, I cannot remember his name. He’s got two sons; one is named Arthur, who lives here in Charleston, and another, Phil, who lives in Florida now and he’s retired.

I cannot think of—maybe the gravestone. She died on January 2, 1935 at age forty-four— my father’s sister. I do need to tell you another story about Edith, my aunt Edith. She married this man we called Jasper in Europe. At the time, I think my father . . . plus the older brother Gershon, who had married, were the only ones left there in Europe. The rest had come to America. My father said that when they got married, they gave her a dowry of five hundred rubles. He, for years, really almost literally, up until the time of his death, told about how they, quote, pissed away that five hundred rubles in just six months. [Laughter.] The family fortune was gone and he never forgot their free-spending ways. I doubt if he let them forget it either.

SR: How much money would that be—five hundred rubles? Do you have any idea?

EK: I have no idea what the five hundred rubles would be now, but my guess is it’s probably like a hundred or two hundred dollars in present terms. I do need to tell you this. My father told me that they kept their money, in this little one room house, near the stove behind a brick that would fit back in the wall. That’s where they kept—that was their safety deposit box.

I need to tell you another thing about where they lived in Europe because this cousin—I verified this with my cousin in Mexico City when I met him. The thing that really turned on the light in terms of him feeling warm feelings with me, we were trying to talk in both—I couldn’t speak Spanish, other than some fractured Spanish, and my Yiddish wasn’t that good. And yet, we were trying to conduct a conversation, and we were translating through his daughters who had studied English in school. I asked him if he knew what a katuch was and he lit up like a Christmas tree. A katuch was a place under the stove—you’re talking about poverty—where the chickens would go to stay warm inside the house. That was a katuch, a place under the stove.

DR: That was something you had both been told about the Old Country?

EK: Yeah, my father told me about a katuch. I don't know whether its Yiddish or Lithuanian and, of course, my father—we used to kid him—he could speak six or seven languages, as could Sandra Lee's father.

DR: Did he speak English without an accent?

EK: Oh no, he had an accent and, you see, my father had a stroke at age sixty where it made it more difficult for him to speak. It wouldn't be fair to say that only the family could understand him, but there were some people who couldn't understand him; but that was their problem.

SR: Ellis, I'd like to ask you another question, just a personal thing. Do you remember when you became aware that your father spoke with an accent? Do you have any recollection of that being a revelation to you?

EK: I don't remember anything about it being a revelation. I was blessed with a relationship with my father as a child, going to the store, first off playing, and then working there. We would go on long walks and he'd tell me stories of when he'd be in Europe. He had a big scar on his left knee. How he got that scar, he was skating on the ice—they lived near the Nepa River—and he fell through the ice and had this big cut on his knee.

He told me the story of—when they came to this country with my grandmother—of going from Lithuania through Poland and they had to pay people to go across the border at night. Then they went all the way through Poland, and then the same thing from Poland into Germany. Then they left Europe. Keep in mind we were at war with Germany a week later, after he got here. He left from the port of Bremerhaven, but they had to pay people to go across the border. He told me—I guess a lot of times, people tell stories and they keep repeating them until the children's eyes roll up and say, "Do I have to hear this again?" . . . .

I know that my grandfather's father—and I don't know his name—died in a place called Pushalot in Latvia. I know nothing beyond that. He told me he had gone there for some trip or something like that at Pushalot.

One thing I do remember well with creating this record, is my grandmother Rachel—her maiden name was Ofsheovitch and don't ask me how to spell it. Here it is in Hebrew on her gravestone and her father's name was Yuda Ofsheovitch. So we want to get that in the record.

Anyway, my father told me all kinds of stories and, I guess, impressed the philosophy in life in me of trying to survive. That could be an aspect of my law practice. I represent plaintiffs—and I will get into that in a little while, and then I'll let y'all go to lunch—of representing people who are down and out against the establishment. That's ninety percent of what I do. It's sort of a philosophical bent, if you want to call it. You just have to have ingenuity, almost being like a gypsy, keep trying to land on your feet because the establishment is always trying to beat you over the head, as a generalization.

DR: It sounds like, from what you're saying, that you were the child in the family who was the listener, the empathetic person. Tell me a little bit more about the other members of your family.

EK: Okay. . . . Well, let me just tell you a little bit about—I told you about my mother marrying my father in 1934. I don't know if I told you that.

DR: You mentioned the date, but you didn't tell us how they met or—

EK: My mother worked for my father as a bookkeeper in the store on King Street in 1934 and they married March 14<sup>th</sup>, 1934. My grandfather, at that time, was selling insurance for Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, Sam Kaminski. This is the middle of the Depression. Their financial straits were so bad that my parents had to go to Savannah to get married because they couldn't afford to put on a wedding for their daughter here in Charleston because they had so much family. So they went to Savannah and got married; just the immediate family was there.

My father told me—and my mother acknowledged it—when she was working as a bookkeeper for him at one time, she came to him crying that her parents were getting ready to lose their house and they needed a couple of hundred dollars. He advanced them a couple hundred dollars. I don't know if he ever got paid back, but— [Laughter.]

I do have to tell you this story about two relatives on my mother's side of the family in relation to debts of my father's. Two of them owed him money from the Depression and I can remember, in the '50s, my father saying to both of them—and I'm not going to identify them further; they owed him about five hundred dollars each—my father saying to them, "Blank, what about the thousand dollars you owe me?" Each of them responded, "But it's only five hundred." He says, "Well, I'll take that." [Laughter.] Of course they didn't pay him.

Anyway, I was born on January 18<sup>th</sup>, 1936, and my middle name is Irvin. . . . My sister was born—Ruthie—on August 29<sup>th</sup>, 1939.

SR: Tell the story about Ruthie's name.

EK: Yeah, Ruthie's name is Susan Ruth—or Sori Rachel is her Hebrew name—Kahn. I changed her name. . . . We used to go to my grandmother's house every Shabbos for Friday night supper. There was a young girl named Ruth Ann Johnson who lived across the street from my grandmother. For some reason I liked that name and I started, as a young child, calling her Ruth Ann and, over time, her name became Ruth Ann.

SR: That's the only name I ever knew was Ruth Ann.

EK: That is how her name changed, but her name is Susan Ruth, Sori Rachel. The Sori is from Sarah, who was Karesh, Charles Karesh's wife, and Rachel was my father's mother. Sandra Lee named her oldest daughter Rachel after our grandmother as well.

So anyway, she was born in 1939, a week before the Nazis invaded Poland. We grew up with good old sibling rivalry as, I guess, every family. I went to James Simons—as did she—Elementary School and Rivers High School. When I was born, we lived on Cleveland Street about a half a block from Rutledge Avenue near Hampton Park and I played there as a child.

Ruthie was born in 1939 and, the interesting thing is, just before she was born—and my mother was pregnant at the time—we lived in Summerville. We lived in Summerville for several months because there was a horrible polio epidemic in Charleston that year and everybody thought that Summerville was healthier because of the pine trees. It shows you. Anyway, my father would come back and forth to work every day on the train. It was an exciting time for me as a three and a half year old because I would get to run to the train with all of the steam and smoke and noise and it was real excitement for a three year old. But I remember old Summerville

with dirt streets and all of that. Every time I have a trial in Dorchester County, which is where Summerville is, I remind the jurors that I used to live in Summerville. Sometimes it helps and sometimes it doesn't. [Laughter.] It probably doesn't help more than I think.

Anyway, we both finished from high school. I had the honor of being active in AZA at the time, with B'nai B'rith, a youth organization, and did a lot of public speaking. I won the oratory contest and the debate contest for Charleston, and I went and won it in the regional contest in Augusta, and then went to the district contest and won it in North Carolina, and then went to the national. When I got to the national thing there was another boy from Charleston, I sort of anointed him to do the debate thing, so two people could go instead of one, and I did the oratory and he did the debate and we both lost.

SR: Who was that?

EK: Jacques Kierbell. Jacques Kierbell, who was an immigrant from France who came and stayed with his relatives the Brickmans. That's another story. He was later killed in a car wreck as a young man—a very brilliant, brilliant young man, but he died.

After high school—well, I just squeaked out but, on the other hand, I had developed some oratorical skills and was a senior speaker at my graduation and I was very proud of it. I went to The Citadel and The Citadel, at that time, had about eighty or ninety Jewish cadets. There was never any sort of discrimination, if you want to call it. There was overt, with respect to anti-Semitism there, that I was aware of.

I have to tell you a story. As a freshman, I was friendly with this boy named Wayne King who was from Horry County, from the town of Loris—really out in the country where they grow tobacco. Something came up about Jews and he found out that I was a Jew. He had never met a live Jew before and had in his mind some of these things with Jews with horns kind of thing almost, that he had learned as a child or heard as a child. So it was a real good lesson, if you want to call it that.

Anyway, I was fortunate to do well at The Citadel. I purposely went to The Citadel instead of the College of Charleston. That was my choice of colleges: The Citadel or the College of Charleston. It wasn't about going somewhere else fancy. The reason I attended The Citadel is that I knew that if I went to the College of Charleston, I would continue to work in my father's store and that was not good for my educational situation as I had allowed it to happen in high school. That's why I went to The Citadel. I was fortunate to do well there. I made good grades.

### **End Side A, Tape 2**

### **Begin Side B, Tape 2**

EK: My father had a stroke in the spring of my freshman year at The Citadel where he was half-paralyzed on his right side, and his right side was his dominant side. I literally spent—I'll fast-forward—the rest of my educational process waiting for the phone to ring to find out if something had happened. But he persevered and my mother was dedicated to him so. It was utter and complete dedication and effort that it was incredible that they persevered and continued to be able to make a living.

Of course, I worked on weekends whenever I could, but I went back to the school so I could study. Later on, I was fortunate. I was editor of the newspaper there. I was what was classified as a distinguished military student and graduate, meaning I did well in the ROTC

program and was offered a regular commission in the service, as opposed to—everybody went in the service in those days—as opposed to a reserve commission, which would put you on the same promotion track as graduates of West Point and Annapolis kind of a situation. I was in the air force ROTC.

I was editor of the newspaper. I was president of the Calliopean Literary Society, which was formed right after The Citadel was formed. I was in Who's Who in America [EK: no, Who's Who Among Students in American Colleges and Universities] and vice-president of a couple of organizations. It's a crazy thing as to how I ended up in law practice in relation to all of that, because I was studying business. The reason I took business is I figured I would go into my father's business.

In the spring of my freshman year, really, shortly after my father had his stroke, Nathan Rephan, who was then a senior, said to me, "Why don't you take political science?" I said, "Why should I do that?" He said, "Because you do a lot of talking, public speaking," which I had learned in this AZA program, which was a great program. I said, "But I'm going to go into my father's business." He said, "No, you ought to go into law because of that." And that had summoned—like it pushed a button and I switched over to political science. Because I figured I *knew* my father's business; I wasn't going to learn anything here in the school about it, so that's how I got into that.

Then I went in through this ROTC program and I received orders, when I was to be commissioned upon graduation—no, let me back up. In the fall of my senior year, one day I said I think I'll take the law school admissions test. Now they have these programs to study it and all that. So I took the test and made a respectable grade on it, with no studying for it; it's just, you take the test. I sent in an application to the University of South Carolina Law School and Yale Law School; that was it. I heard back very rapidly from South Carolina that if you graduated successfully you'll come in, and I really wanted to go to Yale.

Then in the spring of my senior year, I received what my orders were to be. I was to be an intelligence officer in ROTC, an intelligence officer in the air force when I got my commission to go to Pease Air Force Base, New Hampshire, in the Strategic Air Command. I didn't hear from Yale and I didn't hear from Yale, which meant that since I hadn't gotten a rejection, I had a fair chance of getting in, but I wrote to them and said I've got to know something now. Then I got a letter back a few days later saying, "Sorry." [Laughing.] So there went Yale and that famous tavern they sing about, but anyway.

I then petitioned the air force to delay my reporting for active duty while I went to law school. I had to send them my grades every six months, and I did well. I was on the staff of the *Law Review* and I was president of the Phi Delta Phi legal fraternity, which was the premiere legal fraternity and was very fortunate. I worked in the afternoons for a law firm and then, in 1961, I went on active duty in the air force.

They asked me where did I want to go and I told them San Francisco, Denver, or Washington. The reason I gave them is that I'd like to continue going to law school at night to get a master's degree. So they sent me to Waco, Texas [laughter], which is a navigator training base—in Waco. They had Baylor Law School there though, but they didn't have a night program.

I reported on September 21<sup>st</sup>, 1961, on active duty as a first lieutenant. Meanwhile, I was promoted from second lieutenant to first lieutenant in the air force while I was in law school. So I reported on active duty and because I was commissioned in 1958, for pay purposes, I had three years of longevity, and so I ended up getting a hundred dollars a month more, which sort of

generated some resentment in the legal office I was in, since I was making more than some of the people who had been there a year or two. But what are you going to do? So I ended up buying a lot of drinks at happy hour [laughter] for my compatriots in the air force.

I traveled around Texas a lot during that time—I did enroll in SMU at night and took two semesters, driving from Waco to Dallas; it was ninety miles or so each way—and had a lot of interesting and fun things happen riding around Texas, dating. I tried to focus on dating Jewish girls in the Jewish community. I had this friend who was a surgeon there named Paul Kolker, who ended up being the best man in my wedding. We'd go along and people would arrange to feed us, you know, to marry us off to their daughters. [Laughter.] It was a wonderful experience for a young man making about, in those days, three or four hundred dollars a month and, I mean, living off the fat of the land.

I tried court martials and claims. I was also a claims officer. I had to investigate claims that people made. They claimed sonic booms would cause buildings to crack and I'd take engineers with me. I learned a lot and, over time, I had the good fortune of meeting my wife-to-be, Janice. I called her up—I found out she was in town and staying with a girl I had dated in Dallas—I called her up and she wanted to accept because she figured it was a free meal and that is something that she'll confirm. She had graduated from Alabama and had met my sister Ruthie there at the University of Alabama. The ties were interesting. But anyway, she couldn't accept.

The first weekend in March of 1963, we dated and I took her over to Fort Worth for our first date where we went to the Carswell Air Force Base. As an officer, you could go to the officer's club anywhere and you could get a wonderful dinner and drinks. On Saturday night, they'd have a twelve-piece band and the whole evening cost me about five or six bucks—really, I thought I was impressing her—and we danced and it was a lovely evening.

Riding back from Fort Worth to Dallas, I said, "You know there's a place called Phil's Delicatessen in Dallas on Preston. I'd like to take you to breakfast there tomorrow morning." And she finally said, "Fine." Not finally; she said, "Okay." So when I went to pick her up the next morning— And by the way, when I'd stay in Dallas, I would stay at the naval air station where it cost fifty cents a night—I couldn't afford to stay in some hotel—at the visiting officer's quarters. Anyway, I went to pick her up at eight o'clock in the morning to take her to Phil's Delicatessen for breakfast and what did Janice do? She had breakfast there waiting for me. I said, "There's a kindred soul." [Laughter.]

Three weekends later, we were engaged, and one of those weekends I was dating somebody else who I had been dating in Austin, a girl who was president of AEPi Sorority. This girl, named Phyllis, got drunk and that sort of ended things with Phyllis. [Laughing.] Then the following weekend, I dated with Janice and then the third weekend after that, we went to New Orleans and stayed with her cousins, and we got engaged.

The funny thing is she said, "You know, I better warn my mother. We'll drive back through Shreveport," where she was from and tell her something, because we're now engaged. [Laughing.] So she called her mother and said, "I just want you to know we're going steady." And her momma says, "How steady?" And she said, "We're engaged." This was on a Sunday morning.

When we passed through Shreveport early Sunday evening, on the way back for me to drop her off in Dallas and then go back to Waco, during that intervening time, her mother had talked to the rabbi, the caterer, the florist, [laughter] and somebody else I can't remember—with this, you know, big shot who had come to sweep her daughter off her feet. On August 11<sup>th</sup>, we got married. So my family drove half-way across America to come to my wedding, which

included Sandra Lee and her husband Raymond and her brother Sewell and a number of others to see me get hitched. Then that's when we went to Mexico City on our honeymoon and met this other extended family at that time.

The other thing that Janice talks about is I was stationed at James Connally Air Force Base. I had a job waiting for her working—Janice had a degree in medical technology, as well as bacteriology and chemistry—I had a job waiting for her at the base hospital when we came back from our honeymoon. We lived in an apartment that was so little, it cost fifty-seven fifty a month, furnished. It was so little that we had to keep some of our wedding gifts in the trunk of the car. [Laughter.] That is a literal fact. Until I had done some legal work for the base housing officer on the base and we ended up getting a three—we went from that to a three-bedroom, fully-furnished house, right there on the base. That's where we were living at the time that President Kennedy was shot, just ninety miles away in Dallas, down a road that I had gone past that book depository hundreds of times.

One other story about our engagement. I've already gotten to the point where we're married. About three weeks or so after we were engaged, we were in a restaurant in Dallas—I can't remember the name of it—but the lights were real low and there was just a little candle there and Janice says to me, "You know, our children will have green eyes." And like a fool, I said, "Why, what color are yours?" [Laughter.] I had made the sin, of course, of not noticing what color her eyes were.

SR: Her eyes are [inaudible]; beautiful eyes, too.

EK: So that's how I started off and I've been in trouble ever since. [Laughter.] In terms of this evolution, Janice and I took a trip to California in May of 1964. I was supposed to get off of active duty in September of '64. When we came back to Waco, on my desk was a letter from the dean of the law school. His name was Bob Figg. Interestingly, his wife was the sister of Rabbi Tarshish's second wife.

DR: Tobias.

EK: Tobias. Anyway, He said, "There's a new federal judge that has been appointed. His name is Charles Simons and I have recommended you to be his law clerk, if you would care to work for him." So I called Judge Simons on the phone. He had just been appointed by President Johnson. I called him up and said, "I've got this letter and I would *love* to be your law clerk." For a lawyer to get a clerkship with a federal judge is the equivalent of a physician getting a residency at Massachusetts General Hospital. That's the closest equivalent I can think of. He said, "Good, I need you to come to Columbia right now." I said, "Well, I'm not supposed to get out of the air force until September. Can you wait?" He said, "No." I said, "Well, let me make a call."

So I called this general in San Antonio who, in a court martial representing a major who had killed his mistress, I had accused this general of trying to improperly influence a court martial. [Laughter.] And that's another story, but the case is reported in volume thirty-two of the court martial reports. Anyway, it's called CMR, called In Re Wharton. I was fairly friendly with him in relation to that, and he said, "I'm sorry, your replacement is not scheduled. I appreciate your dilemma, but I can't release you." So I called up Judge Simons and said, "Come September

I can come to work for you, but I can't get out." He said, "Well, I'm sorry." So he called a fellow named Pledger Bishop who accepted it and who was later killed in a car wreck.

Two weeks later, I get a call from a man named Robert Hemphill, who had just come from the congress and also appointed by Lyndon Johnson to be a United States judge, and he said, "I'd like you to come work for me." I said, "My head's as big as a watermelon, but I can't get out." He said, "Well, I just talked to the judge advocate general of the air force and he said you could be here in Columbia in two weeks." So I called this same General Corbin back in San Antonio. I said, "You're going to probably be hearing something from Washington." He said, "I already have; good luck." It turns out that Judge Hemphill, when he was in the congress, used to play handball with the judge advocate general of the air force and they were buddies and that's how I got out. Then I got a—twix, it was called, from General Curtis LeMay, who was then chief of staff of the air force, acknowledging all of that. Now the other irony of this: I had doubled-dated with LeMay's daughter when I was at The Citadel on some mission where—but that's another story.

I went to work for Judge Hemphill as his law clerk and had the opportunity of meeting lawyers around the state, and finally began practicing law here in Charleston in 1966 in private practice. I started off working with Walter Solomon and Bernard Solomon and, over time, we became partners, and then we brought other people in the firm over time.

On January 1<sup>st</sup>, '95, there was an acrimonious dissolution of that law firm in relation to me; it was very unfortunate. But I had the blessing—in the interim, my son Justin, who had joined our firm about a year and a half before, practiced with me and we're continuing to practice together in a very enjoyable and pleasant atmosphere.

During this intervening time . . . while I was working for Judge Hemphill, my son Justin was born in Columbia on May 31, 1965. While Janice was pregnant, she would go around the court with me and sit in the back of the courtroom and watch us try cases. He was born on Memorial Day of '65 and, when we moved to Charleston on March 1<sup>st</sup> of '66, we lived at 29 Church Street. The reason we lived there is it was close to where my office was at 39 Broad Street, and we only had one car and that way we didn't need to buy another car.

Then when our son David was born on June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1967, the little house we were renting was too small. The interesting thing is, he got his name, David, because he was born the same week that Jerusalem was recaptured in the '67 war. But the interesting thing is Janice's late brother, Boris, did a family genealogy of her and there was a rabbi in the 1840s—and her family came from Alsace-Lorraine on her mother's side—named Rabbi David Kahn. So you know these things pop up in terms of names. So David was born on June 10<sup>th</sup> of '67.

Then Cynthia, Chessie Hannah. The Chessie was after Janice's paternal grandmother and the Hannah was the Hannah who was my grandfather's, Sam Kaminski's, mother. Her name is Cynthia Ann. She was born on September 24, 1973.

SR: Let us interject right here—Janice's maiden name. [Inaudible.]

EK: Yeah, thank you. Janice's maiden name was Weinstein. Her mother's maiden name was Levy. . . . The Levys in the New Orleans area, where they were from, were like the Kareshes; a lot of them married each other because they didn't consider anybody else good for them. So that may be a genetic defect on both sides. [Laughter.]

Janice, when she moved to Charleston, she got a job working at the VA Hospital and with Dr. Ralph Coleman's office doing medical technology stuff. Didn't last long because the burdens

of a couple of children but, over time, she became a tour guide in the middle '70s, I think. She has been a tour guide, par excellence, ever since. She was the reason we met this fellow Bronfman, who sent us this [inaudible] money during the hurricane. She's met any number of people who we end up feeding or visiting when we go to different cities and, really, it's been great what she has done with respect to that, because she's probably the leading tour guide in Charleston. As we speak, she's taking some tourists around today.

DR: I don't want to interrupt because this is great sort of stream of consciousness, but we skipped over a big part of your growing up years and, if you have time, I would like to just jump back a little bit.

EK: Okay.

DR: I'd like to ask you a little bit more about your Jewish education.

EK: Okay, all right, good.

DR: And also how your family observed the Sabbath and the various holidays and a little bit more about the feeling of the Jewish community you grew up in.

EK: Okay. As a young child—well, let me say this. My grandmother was a Shomrei Shabbos. She observed the Sabbath strictly and strict kashruth. My grandfather, on my mother's side, was less observant. I went to synagogue as a child—I started—virtually every Shabbos or Sabbath. My father did not. . . . It was a matter of, literally, survival that the busiest day—and it was true with Sandra Lee's father too—was on Saturday. The working people and those that got the day off, generally the black customers that they had, would come from the country; they would come on Saturday; that was the market day. To be closed during that time would have been extremely difficult. It would have made a very difficult situation even worse. So the bottom line was the home was not observant in terms of Shabbat.

We had a kosher home all during my childhood and I really didn't eat meat outside the house until late in my teens and then, selectively. When we'd go out, like Saturday night, there was a restaurant called the Tower Restaurant, which was across from Rivers High School. Some friends of mine would get hamburgers or something like that. My routine would be a lettuce and tomato sandwich and a glass of milk.

When I worked with my father on Saturdays, we would go to this restaurant—we closed the store around eight-thirty or nine o'clock on Saturday night—go to a place called the Oyster Bay Restaurant, and *every* single time, I'd get broiled snapper [laughs]—never any meat and never any shellfish.

SR: So Ellis have you not eaten shellfish and foods that couldn't conceivably be kosher your entire life, or was this something you adopted?

EK: No, I have never—I have eaten shellfish before maybe two or three times in my life, but I do not eat it even to this very day. I don't eat pork. I eat meat that's not ritually slaughtered, that is, beef. Back to my education.

SR: I need to interject right here that my husband, Raymond—who did not grow up, whose home was not kosher, kosher *style*, but not kosher—upon talking to Ellis as a middle-aged man, so admired the way Ellis ate, that he adopted that and has stayed that way ever since.

EK: Well, the way I eat is not to be admired because it has produced a big gut.

SR: Well, it did that to Raymond too. [Laughter.]

EK: Anyway, but I started Hebrew school about age six or seven. Before that I had gone to Sunday school in the Daughters of Israel Hall, which was an adjunct of Brith Sholom Congregation and then went to Hebrew school there. When I was about nine or ten, I switched over to Beth Israel, from which I was bar mitzvahed. We went to cheder or Hebrew school *every* afternoon. We played ball together there before and after the class, and I rode there on my bicycle. To go on the bus in those days was a nickel, but you could just go on your bicycle. That was my education, but it—

DR: Who were your teachers? Do you remember your cheder teachers?

EK: The first teacher in cheder was a Mr. Fire and this was during the war, and then Rabbi—I want to say Goldfarb. Then, when I went over to Beth Israel, it was Rabbi Rubenstein. Also helping during that time, was Reverend Sherman, Buzzy Sherman's father. He helped me study for my bar mitzvah. I remember specifically him helping me with my Haftorah. I was bar mitzvahed on February 5<sup>th</sup>, 1949, the third bar mitzvah in the new synagogue on Rutledge Avenue. Preceding me had been Philip Chase and Harvey Oberman. Harvey Oberman died two or three years ago. That and AZA on Sundays was—it was a Jewish-filled life, but we weren't aware of it being anything extraordinary. We were aware of the fact that we weren't living the same way as our gentile friends, but, you know, no big deal.

DR: Would you say most of your friends growing up were Jewish?

EK: Yes, that's true, but it wasn't as a matter of exclusion. I can tell you this; every Jewish child—I grew up with all the males; I don't know if it's true with the females—we got in fights in school because we were Jews, in the sense of being picked on and people saying things, both in James Simons and Rivers. It wasn't frequent, but it happened from time to time. And it happened from time to time going home from school from boys older, not the same size or younger, but older.

SR: That's interesting. At *exactly* the same time period—since we're very close in age; you are younger by a few months—I didn't experience that at all.

EK: The boys did; the girls didn't.

DR: Rivers had a lot of Jewish kids.

EK: Oh, no question about it, and the Jewish kids predominated in making good grades and in leadership in the school too. That is a fact.

DR: Was Sol Breibart one of your teachers?

EK: No, Solly Breibart taught at the Charleston High School at that time. We knew him as an advisor to AZA, but not as a teacher at Rivers. I think he may have later taught at Rivers, but not at the time.

DR: Yeah, he did, later. Who do you remember, Ellis, as kind of influential people in your life, either teachers or in any position, any of these religious leaders or AZA leaders?

EK: My daddy. He influenced, but it wasn't any conscious thing; it was just by association or assimilation or osmosis or whatever it is. I know the rep—as I mentioned, we had a tremendous black clientele. We said colored in those days and that was the accepted language. These people from the country, they were illiterate. Many of them cashed checks by signing X, but they never, *ever* had concerns that they weren't getting honest weight on what they bought or the full change of whatever from their money. There was *never, ever* a question about that. I think, by way of example, that had a tremendous influence on me, though I never thought of it as any big deal.

I can remember this though. I wanted to see this movie called *The Student Prince* with Sigmund Romberg in the middle when I was supposed to be going to Hebrew School. I wrote a note that said, "Please excuse Ellis from class because he has a doctor's appointment," and I signed my mother's name. Later on I—stupid, I guess—told her that I had done that because I really enjoyed this movie, *The Student Prince*. She got so upset that I had forged her name. She said you're going to grow up and be a forger and was crying and all that. You talk about influencing, boy, it just—it was tough.

So they control you with guilt I guess, and that still works, but it was an incredible thing. Her reaction to that was all out of proportion to what I expected. And I was seeing a, quote, classical kind of movie; it wasn't to go to a cowboy movie or something. Boy, but I was going to grow up to be a forger and she was just crying. Now whether she was doing that to influence me or not I don't know.

SR: It was genuine I promise you.

EK: But to show you how children can be influenced, I remember when I was about three or four years old, she had laryngitis, my mother did, and—whatever I was playing or doing—she says, "I've got this laryngitis because I have to holler at you so much." That just like hit me on the head like—and she didn't mean anything, but it profoundly affected me at the time. It made me feel horribly guilty.

DR: And you remember it.

EK: Yeah, I remember that. It hurt me more than any spanking that she'd ever given me and it was just a remark she made. So there's a moral in that about what you say to little children; you ought to be careful.

DR: Tell us some more about your mother—what she looked like, what kind of foods she cooked.

EK: She was not as good a cook as my grandmother, her mother. I had the blessing of a maid named Marie Chisolm, who had worked for my grandmother for a number of months and then, when I was about six months old, came to work for my mother. Marie raised me as much as my mother did, and that woman could cook. Many of the recipes were given to her by my grandmother. In those days, when I look back on it, it was horrible in relation to the neglect of these peoples' families, but she would come to work in time to feed us for us to go to school, and would stay and fix supper at night and then go home. When was there time for her to be with her family? Anyway, that was the world we grew up in. We didn't know any differently.

DR: What kind of food did she cook?

EK: Oh, she would make kugel; she cooked meat; she'd make cakes—and strictly kosher. You name it and she could put it together beautifully. Nothing was written down. I don't remember that Marie could read and write, but she had it in her head. She had it in her head and she raised me and my sister, Ruthie. When this woman died, it was as devastating as a close family member, I can tell you that.

DR: You went to the funeral?

EK: I certainly did. It was the first black funeral I had ever been to and maybe it was the last, I don't know. But with the emotion and the singing and the clapping, when we left two and a half or three hours later, we were so wrung out, we were just emotionally drained.

DR: Where was it? Do you remember?

EK: Yes, on Pitt Street. There's an AME church between Radcliffe and Morris Street. A very interesting impression at the time—they had painted, behind the pulpit area, angels and they were black or they were tan colored. You know, you grow up and see all these angels in all these paintings—they're all white [laughter]. So it was just the first time I had ever seen that.

DR: Can you describe any Seders at your parents' house?

EK: Yes. The Seders, both at my grandmother's and in our home, was always the youngest would ask the four questions. We would hide the Afikomen. The Seders at my grandmother's house were longer. We would read more, mainly when my uncle Romie would come from North Carolina, because he was more religiously strict. The rest of them would say, "Come on, hurry up so we can eat," kind of thing. [Laughing.]

An interesting thing about Seders that always impressed me and that I sort of preach about when I talk to people is that we remember that we were slaves. That's something that we need to remember when we think we're pretty high and mighty—that we were slaves. So I try to remember that; whether my children listen to me, that might be another matter. [Laughter.]

My children went to Addlestone Hebrew Academy, then called Charleston Hebrew Institute. Then they went to other schools after four or five years. I can't remember the varying degrees of time.

I'll tell you about my children. My son, Justin, practices law with me. He went to Tulane undergraduate school, and the University of South Carolina Law School. He practices law with

me since 19—I think '93 he was admitted to practice. A very interesting thing about it is that—two little vignettes about Justin, other than I enjoy practicing with him—is that number one, he made a lot of trouble in law school. [Laughs.] All the professors—he did well there—but all the professors remember him as somebody who always had a question and that's the way he was a troublemaker. He was president of the student chapter of the South Carolina Trial Lawyers Association while he was there.

He would come to work with me in the summertime and, in that connection, he was with me in a trial that we lost while he was working for me one summer in Aiken. After he was admitted to practice in November of 1993, I had a case—that same case we had lost while he was in law school—to argue on appeal in the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond. It was in federal court. So I said, “Justin, come on up with me and you can argue with me. You're familiar with the case because you sat there in the trial.” I had thirty minutes to argue. I said, “I'll take twenty-five and you'll be five minutes. Whatever you do—that way when the case comes out, your name will be on it as well, and you'll be the first one in your class to get so recognized.”

So in the middle of my argument, one of the judges said to me, “Mr. Kahn, is there any case in South Carolina on such and such a point.” I don't even remember what the point was. I said, “No, I don't think so.” So I finished my argument and sat down.

Justin gets up and Judge Ervin, who was sitting on that court, whose father was Senator Sam Ervin, famous from Watergate times, had asked me this question. Anyway, so Justin gets up and his first words to the court were, “I hate to disagree with my father and it may cost me a ride home, but I do know of a case.” [Laughter.] So the judges just loved it, of course. He cited a case from the 1830s that he knew of and I was very proud of him.

The other vignette about Justin is that the day after the bar exam, he was in the office and I said to him, “What are the requirements under rule fifteen to amend a complaint?” or something like that. I said, “You've been studying all this stuff.” He said, “Isn't there a book on something like that?” I said, “No.” He starts raising the roof why there ought to be a book on it. I said, “Well, why in the hell don't you write one?” And he did. He took it upon himself at that time. I just happen to have here [laughter] the 1997 version of the book by Justin S. Kahn and so, since '93, '94, '95, '96, '97—this is the fifth edition of this book, which all the lawyers and judges use in South Carolina. This is the book that all the trial judges and lawyers and appellate judges in South Carolina use with respect to procedure in South Carolina. It comes out every year. He updates it. Indeed, he updates it every six months with a supplement that sticks on the back. This year, he dedicated it to Nancy Wise who was a teacher of his at Porter Gaud.

SR: That's so lovely.

EK: “A teacher who believed in me.” It made her cry.

SR: Oh, it makes me cry.

EK: The first edition, he dedicated to his parents and Judge Sol Blatt, Jr., wrote him a note saying, “It was very nice of you to dedicate this book to your parents.” He wrote a letter back to Judge Blatt and said, “You mean I had a choice?” [Laughter.] Since then, he has dedicated it to his in-laws and he's married to a lovely young woman, Mitzy Mackley Kahn, now. He's

dedicated it to her, to his brother and sister, to his grandparents, to his late father-in-law who died a couple of years ago.

Then the second one he wrote in 1995, and you can see the pocket part that was updated in 1997 on the South Carolina rules of evidence. He and I are going to lecture together in a seminar sponsored by the South Carolina Bar the first week in May. We've done that a number of times. He lectures, probably, three or four times a year and he routinely has judges call him asking procedural questions and the like.

Our next child—

DR: You're not proud of him are you? [Laughter] Sorry I had to say that.

EK: I'm very proud, and the very fortunate thing, in terms of practicing law with him in a close situation like this, is you either get along or you don't get along. There's, sort of, no middle ground and we have the good fortune of getting along well and it really is a blessing. When I give him advice, his eyes don't roll up in his head, you know, like I've heard that before. [Laughs.] We're good friends as well.

Our next child is David. David was born June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1967, and, again, I told you he was named after the city of David, which was recaptured the week he was born. David went to school at Addlestone Hebrew Academy, or Charleston Hebrew Institute at that time, then to a private place called Phelps in Pennsylvania. Then he went to college in West Virginia and came back to Charleston in, I guess—I can't remember the exact date, maybe about four or five years ago—and has done various jobs.

His most recent thing, he works for a wrecker company where he operates a wrecker, but he is in the process of trying to buy into the company where he can be in the wrecker business. David was married last year and became the father of two of our most brilliant grandchildren, Grayson and Sarah. They were born the first night of Chanukah, right in the middle of our having our annual Chanukah Fest that we invite neighbors and friends—and Sandra Lee was there as well—where we cook latkes and have just a grand old time and sing songs. It is really becoming more and more of an institution where people get insulted if they're not asked and we don't have room for all of the people and it's getting to be a very tough situation. So *that* is the evening where Janice and I were presented with these two beautiful granddaughters.

SR: I don't know what they're going to do next year to top that. [Laughter.]

EK: Right. Then our third child is Cynthia, who was born September 24<sup>th</sup>, 1973, and I guess she's—

DR: '73 or '71?

EK: '71. Thank you.

DR: I saw it on your [inaudible], I'm sorry.

EK: Right, '71, September 24<sup>th</sup>. That's the main date I have to remember because that's when the birthday present is due. Cynthia went the Hebrew route, the Hebrew Academy, and then she went to Ashley Hall. She decided that they were just too snooty there and she didn't get along with people who stuck their nose up in the air, according to her. She went to St. Andrews High

School, from which she graduated, and she was editor of the annual. At the time, Hurricane Hugo hit during her senior year and it required, because of all the tumult associated with it, extraordinary effort to put this book out, which she did very well.

She then went to the University of Missouri in Columbia, Missouri, and studied journalism. She went there for a period of time; sort of didn't like it. I think she left there because she really broke up with this boy from St. Louis she was dating, but don't quote me. [Laughter.] Then she came to the College of Charleston from which she graduated.

Then she worked for—journalism, she loved journalism. Keep in mind I was editor of the newspaper at The Citadel, Janice's father worked for *The Times-Picayune* in New Orleans and *The Shreveport Journal* until he retired, and she's interested—journalism is in her blood. Then she worked for this newspaper interviewing people and writing stories for about a year. Then she started working for *The Post and Courier* in January of '96, starting as a clerk writing obituaries. They allowed her to experiment a little and she wrote some other stories, and she now writes a column for single people and one came out, literally, today. Here, in today's paper, Thursday, April 10, 1997, "Wherefore art thou, bold duke?" This is the singles column she writes and it runs the whole length of the page. She talks in this article about part of growing up when you're single, is to realize—and waiting for Mr. Wonderful—is that the poster you've been dreaming about is not going to come to life, a real live person, so you're going to have to change what you're looking for to be realistic. She ends it with talking about maybe the ideal person is like a gingerbread man, just because if you don't like him, you can bite his head off. [Laughter.]

DR: Is she married, Elis?

EK: No, Cynthia's not married. [Laughter.] Cynthia is dating right now, I'm authorized to say, and that's about all. [Laughter.] If I say any more than that—I've got enough troubles as it is. I guess it'd be fair to say, being the girl and so on, she's my favorite child, although I wouldn't say that for publication. [Laughter.] She knows how to get more out of me than any of the other children—that would be *clearly* an accurate thing—

DR: Which both of her brothers would agree with.

EK: Yeah. The interesting thing is she works for *The Post and Courier* and she has written a lot of articles on Jewish content—about going to Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, and the effect on her. She wrote this tremendous article on this Chanukah party when her two nieces were born.

SR: She did. It was wonderful.

EK: Another thing, she wrote an article on Alice Cabaniss, who converted to Judaism four or five years ago, or maybe a little longer than that. Every one of these things she writes in a feature article, at the end—and maybe I'm soft about it—I start crying. What can I tell you?

DR: Has she saved her articles? I'd love to get copies. I think I've missed those.

EK: I'm sure she can provide a copy for you.

DR: That would be wonderful.

EK: There's a lot Jewish content in her articles.

SR: I will make that my mission.

DR: Let's see if we can do that because we're keeping a clipping file.

EK: Okay.

DR: I just want to warn you, we're going to run out of tape again. I hope we haven't messed up your afternoon, but if there's a last thing you want to say, we better—we have about thirty seconds.

EK: I'm just [sounds like "real high"] [Laughter.]

DR: This has been just a real treat, and you've done all the work.

EK: No—

DR: I think I better not get paid for today.

SR: I have just been having a wonderful time.

EK: Thank you for up with putting up—listening to all these bubbe meisers.

DR: This is really, really [inaudible].

Ray Swartz (videographer): This is one of the kindest men I have ever met and ever known. He's done more for me [pauses]—

EK: Don't make me cry! [Laughter.]

SR: I'm getting ready to say something too [laughing], and I don't think I can say it! I just love my cousin Ellis dearly. I love him even more after today. I didn't think that was possible.

DR: Well, it's obvious Ellis is a person with a big heart.

EK: Big heart and, unfortunately, a big gut that I've got to get rid of. [Laughter.]

DR: It's been a real pleasure, thank you.

EK: Thank you.

**END OF TAPE**