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Interviewees: Caroline Geisberg Funkenstein (b. 1920, Anderson, SC; d. 2005, Anderson, SC)
Louis Funkenstein (b. 1913, Athens, GA.; d. 2000, Anderson, SC)

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Begin Tape:

DR: Mr. Funkenstein, I just wanted to start by asking each of you when and where you were born.

LF: I was born in Athens, Georgia, December the 27th, 1913. I met Caroline, my wife, during the war. I moved to Anderson after the war and started a paper box company. As I always jokingly say, "I'm a newcomer; I've only been here about fifty years."

DR: How many generations do you have to live in Anderson to be an old-timer?

LF: Our granddaughter is the sixth generation to go high school here. Isn't that right, Caroline?

CF: I think so, yeah.

LF: Her grandmother, her father, her daughter, and Caroline is six.

DR: Mrs. Funkenstein, when and where were you born?

CF: I was born in Anderson, right up here where my home place is. I was born in a hospital—but I lived there—[on] December 23rd, 1920. I've been here pretty much ever since, in and out, but I've been living here for the most part, other than a short time off at school. Then, in New York, I worked four or five years.

DR: Can you tell us anything about your family of origin, where and when the first Funkenstein—well, Funkenstein is your married name—Geisberg.

CF: Well, first of all, let me say this. My grandfather, Oscar, said that he came from Vienna, that he came here with the Union Army. He said that the correct pronunciation was Geisberg [first syllable rhymes with “rice”], but he never could get anybody here to say Geisberg, so they called [him] Geisberg [first syllable rhymes with “geese”]. He came here with the Union Army, and he met my grandmother. She was a Lesser, and they were sitting out on the porch; that's where he met her, and they ended up here. So that was my grandfather from Vienna.

My grandmother, Carrie Lesser, was born here, and she had a lot of sisters and brothers that lived here, but I'm not too familiar with who her mother was, and who her father was.

Years ago, we didn't have a Jewish cemetery here, but our families pretty much started one, where all the Jewish families, *our* families, are buried. It's Old Silver Brook, but that park is consecrated as a Jewish cemetery.

My mother was from Elberton, Georgia, and her parents, Grandma and Grandpa Cohen, came over from Poland many, many years ago. They settled in these little Georgia towns, Madison, Eatonton and Covington, and Grandpa was in Elberton. They all sort of intermarried. Sisters would marry brothers, and brothers would marry sisters. My mother was raised in Elberton, and she was one of three. She lived there until she married and moved to Anderson. She went to Brenau College and my father went a short period to the University of Georgia. They married in 1914.

DR: Can we go back a minute to the Civil War story?

CF: Yes.

DR: Could you tell us a little bit more about that part of the family history?

CF: Could you?

LF: What?

CF: Grandpa.

LF: Grandpa?

CF: Yes.

LF: Well, he came here as a merchant or something after the Civil War with—

CF: No, but he was with the Union Army.

LF: —with the Union Army. Now, what the situation was exactly, I don't know. They all said he was a [sounds like "carly kiddis"], say he was a carpetbagger, but there were very few Jewish people around here when he—

Her grandfather, incidentally—we've received from letters—was very much Jewish-minded, very civic-minded. He started the Chamber of Commerce here in Anderson, called the Board of Trade back then. The Lessers, when he met her family, his wife's family, he thought they were heathens, because they didn't adhere very much to the Jewish—

CF: They weren't very well educated. He was a very bright man and he—they always said—was ahead of his time.

LF: I guess we don't adhere that much to the Jewish home and whatnot, but our family, our children—believe this or not, it's always been amazing to me—our son married a gentile from Oklahoma City, and he would not be married in a church. We took Rabbi Goldberg with us to Oklahoma City, and they had a joint ceremony. He felt enough Jewish, having no Jewish education—well, we had it, but not that much—and I thought that was quite unusual. Because some of the people—I'll only tell you a little story about four of them here that converted.

CF: They don't care about those. [We're] talking about us.

LF: They were so much with the Jewish, that they all converted. So I guess it's just—I don't know whether it's the individual or what it is.

SR: You mean they married people who were not Jewish and the people all converted to Judaism?

CF: Right, yeah.

SR: What was your grandfather's name?

CF: Oscar.

SR: Oscar?

CF: Yeah, and he died the same year I was born—1920.

SR: He was Oscar Geisberg.

CF: Yeah, but I never knew him.

DR: Why did I hear that he had been wounded in the war, and your family had taken care of him?

CF: I think he was. I think they took him in.

LF: Well, when he came to Anderson, how many Jews were here? They were the only ones.

CF: But she said he was wounded and they took him in.

LF: They what?

CF: He could have been.

LF: I don't know.

CF: He did stay there; that was it.

DR: He stayed at their house.

CF: I can't you tell you where the house is because it's gone, but the house was just behind the Methodist church—where the Lessers lived. It's been demolished and there is a parking lot there now.

SR: What street is that?

CF: Okay, the Methodist church is on McDuffy and River Street, East River, and the Methodist church is on the left. If you turn down to the Methodist church, going down River Street, there's a parking lot, and that was where they lived. That was where the Lessers lived.

His family, when they were growing up—Grandpa—they were eight children. My father was one of eight, and they lived on South Main. It's now sort of a boarding house or something, but there were eight children. There were four boys and four girls. Back in those days, there was just one bathroom in the house, and that's all they had. The family, most of them [were in the] mercantile business. So was my mother, for many years here. She had The Vogue Shop.

SR: Right.

DR: Dry goods?

CF: Well, hers was ladies' ready-to-wear, but they were dry goods. My grandfather in Elberton, he had a store. He always told the tale—his name was Joe Cohen—that a man came in there to buy some overalls or something. He said, "It sure does smell bad in here." Mr. Cohen said, "It's not the overalls, it's you." [Laughter.]

DR: So what were the Lessers doing during the war?

CF: Way back?

DR: Yes, during the Civil War.

CF: I want to say nothing [laughs], but what would you think? They never did—[inaudible]. Lesser Company was here on the Square, but now, back then, how old would they have been? If Grandpa came here as a young man and there was a bunch of sisters and brothers— There was Carrie, there was Annie and Abe, there was Sam and there was Saul, and they did have a store, but those kids— It might have been their parents that had the store before them.

SR: What kind of business was Lesser?

CF: It was mercantile, on the Square there, and they had a nice [inaudible] for many years, many years.

LF: At one time, it was the oldest store in Anderson.

DR: Really?

CF: Yes.

LF: Oldest business in Anderson.

DR: Do you know the founding date by any chance?

CF: No, I don't know, but somebody might know. I don't know who it would be. Dick Breen isn't here anymore, is he?

DR: I interviewed Dick Breen—believe it or not—two years ago.

CF: He died.

DR: I know.

CF: See, he married Martha Lesser, so that was part of the other family.

DR: I remember him talking about a wedding dress in the Lesser family—

CF: Yes.

DR: —that I think wound up at the County Museum, or some place?

CF: Could have, yes.

DR: He talked about the Lesser family.

CF: Yeah, Dick died.

LF: I might add this; it might be of interest. When they formed the Jewish cemetery and had it dedicated a number of years ago, I looked up the deed. I wanted to see what the situation was, and I turned a copy of the deed over to my nephew that lives here now. The cemetery said in the deed the only people that could be buried there are Geisbergs and their white heirs. [Laughter.] That's in the deed. However, Aunt Flore always said Aunt Marie was going to need the money, and she sold a lot to the Silversteins and sold one to Breens.

CF: Dick's sister.

LF: Of course, you can't dig anybody up, but I don't guess they have clear title [laughs] to the lots that they have.

CF: Well, it won't matter.

DR: The Lessers, as far as you know, nobody fought in the Confederate war?

CF: Oh, no. They didn't do anything but sit there and rock. [Laughter.]

DR: How do you know this?

CF: Well, Momma used to go down there and see them.

LF: Aunt Annie could remember when the Union soldiers came and drove the horses—

CF: Aunt Annie said that—she lived to be ninety-something back then—there was no point in getting married; she had plenty of time. [Laughter.] So I don't know. They just never did anything much, to be honest with you. They were not educated people.

DR: Well, but in the Confederate war, educated or not—

CF: I understand. I don't know. I don't think they took any part in that, that I know of. I never heard of it.

DR: The Lesser family—

CF: The reason I'm saying that is none of them were married. See, my grandmother married, but Aunt Annie wasn't married; Uncle Abe wasn't married; Will wasn't married, and Sam wasn't married. Dick's father-in-law was Saul—he *may* have been married then, I'm not sure.

[Inaudible.] They all lived down there.

DR: There weren't any people of the right age, maybe, to become a soldier?

CF: Could have been. Back then, I don't know whether they ever thought about it. I don't know.

LF: Mr. Geisberg, her father, wasn't too fond of the Lessers, his wife's family, because they didn't adhere to the Jewish traditions like he felt they should, and they were not educated. He was highly educated.

CF: I know when somebody, I guess it was when Grandma Geisberg's mother died—of course, that was before my time—she left her out of the will, because they didn't like Grandpa.

LF: —like Grandpa.

CF: Yes, Oscar. They didn't consider her part of the family.

DR: Where—you may have said this, but I don't remember—where did the Lessers originally come from?

CF: To my knowledge they were always— See, I don't know back from her mother and father. As long as I've known, they were here. I never heard of them coming from anywhere else, unless it was Columbia or someplace. They had to come from somewhere, but I don't know where.

DR: You don't know if they had originally been German or—

CF: Well, I'm sure they were German.

LF: The Lessers were German, weren't they?

CF: Oh, I'm sure they were. Everybody— They were, and we were—family, you know?

DR: I think Mr. Breen—I may be making this up—but I think he told the story about how the Lessers got their name.

CF: How?

DR: This is not familiar to you?

CF: No.

DR: Alright, don't quote me on this because—

CF: No, but I'd like to know.

DR: I think he said that it was some long name.

CF: And they changed it.

DR: And they got there, wherever they were immigrating through, and they said, "What is your name?" He said whatever it was—this long name—and he said that the guy said, "Make it lesser, make it lesser."

CF: That's cute. Well, I'm sure that might have been true. [Laughter.]

LF: Dick was pretty good at that.

CF: Sounds good, yeah.

LF: If Dick told you that, it's probably right.

DR: He had a good recall.

LF: Yeah.

CF: Yeah, he did.

DR: So obviously, the Lessers had no trouble accepting a Yankee into their fold.

CF: Apparently not, no. Apparently not.

DR: Well, I can't wait to tell Robert Rosen. [Laughter.] We have a colleague who is working on Confederate Jews. He's looking at all the Jewish men who fought in the Confederacy, all over the South.

CF: Where are you from, originally?

DR: Originally from New York City. I'm a good Yankee.

CF: How did you get to McClellanville?

DR: It's just one of those things.

CF: By way of hook or crook.

DR: The car ran out of gas. [Laughter.]

CF: Yeah.

DR: But I have kind of a long-standing joke with Robert. I'm always looking for the non-Confederate Jews in South—

CF: Well, I think what y'all are doing is very interesting. What was Heather doing when she wrote that paper?

LF: About what?

CF: My grandniece finished up at Dartmouth a year or two ago, and then she had a scholarship over to Jerusalem. She wrote a paper, a thesis on Jewish Women in the South. I never saw the paper, but she turned it in at school. She went up to Chapel Hill to get some information. I think she even went to Charleston.

LF: You might want to get hold of that paper.

DR: I would love to. What's her name?

CF: Well, I could get it from her mother. Her name is Heather Geisberg. See, my nephew is a doctor here, Harry, and he's a Geisberg, 'cause my brother, who moved to Louisville years ago, was always a Geisberg. This is his daughter, Heather. She is in Louisville now. She's applying to law school and she's getting married in July. I think the paper would be very interesting to you all doing this, 'cause she spent a lot of time on it. [Inaudible.]

LF: She graduated from Dartmouth, magna cum laude, and spent a year in Israel.

DR: I just want to let you know that my son, who is a senior in high school in Charleston, is going to Dartmouth in September.

LF: Wonderful.

CF: We loved it up there. We went to the graduation. Well, he sure must be a bright boy.

DR: He sure is. [Laughs.]

CF: Well, she's made some nice contacts there. She got the—there was a Wallenberg Scholarship—that's what she had.

DR: Good for her.

CF: She spent a year over there going to law school. She spent a year over there, and it was at the time when there was so much strife. Well, just recently, with all the murders.

DR: I'm just going back to the Lessers for a minute. Would you say that they might have been the first Jewish people in the community?

LF: Yeah.

CF: Definitely.

LF: Definitely.

CF: There weren't any others, because he goes back so many years, there wouldn't have been any others here.

SR: You mentioned some letters. Do you have letters, old letters?

LF: Where is that letter that your brother had that Mr. Geisberg wrote about the Lessers? You remember when he said they were heathens; they didn't adhere to the Jewish ceremonies. Where is that letter?

DR: You want to take that off? I'll put this on pause a minute. [Pause in tape.] Wait a minute, let me just get this again. Tell us what the letter is.

CF: This is a letter that my grandfather, Oscar, wrote to his daughter in Athens, Georgia, and it tells a lot about family and all. It's very interesting.

DR: What year?

CF: April 5th, 1912.

DR: Oh, I'd *love* to make a copy of that for the archives, if we could.

CF: Yeah.

DR: Did you know where your grandfather came from, before he came to Anderson?

CF: He came from Vienna.

DR: Directly?

CF: Well, he came in, and came on down, yeah.

DR: And then came from some place in the North first.

CF: Had to be, yeah.

DR: But you don't know where?

CF: You know, I was in Vienna, and they always said there were no other people by that name, but there *was* a name over there, and we called them. They had the same name, but she was very—didn't have much to say.

DR: Were they Jewish?

CF: Yeah.

DR: Interesting. So you don't know what part of the northern states he settled in before—

CF: I would imagine New York is pretty much where they were. You'd be interested in this because it's talking about the holidays and all, and about how his wife, Grandma, would [inaudible] the family [inaudible] heathens, so to speak.

DR: Go ahead, read a little bit.

CF: [ed.: the letter which follows in quotation marks was transcribed from a copy of the original letter rather than from the oral rendering on the tape.] "My dear Minnie, Your letter reached me yesterday, and I can assure you that I regret my absence on the festive eve fully as much, or more than anybody. The joy of reviving childhood memories and incidents are more appreciative as one grows older even if its religious significance depreciates as the world grows more modern in its ideas and habits.

When I recall the festivity of the occasion when Grandmother, on the paternal side of the house, would stand anxiously at the doorstep, awaiting the arrival from Synagogue of Sons and Grandsons to lay her hands on our heads with kisses and blessings, beaming with joy in her face in recognition of the privilege and sacredness of the event,—I cannot ignore these holy memories in spite of the so-called advance the world has made since those days, but still cherish these traditions, despite their having become antiquated.

I would still observe and celebrate this festival with becoming dignity and reverence, if your Ma and her offspring possessed any degree of reverence, but they are such heathens—I mean the whole bunch on your Mother's side, ridiculing and deriding everything unproductive of direct gain,—that I have become disgusted and in consequence abandoned it,—tho' I shall never cease to honor and remember the joy and pleasure it afforded me while under the parental roof. I received the other day two more photographs from Vienna[.] Dora and her husband Dr. Joseph Reitzes who despite is his millions he inherited occupies a foremost position in Vienna as Haf-Gerichts Advocat (Royal Counsellor) a position Jews never hold in Austria, but I suppose money makes the more [illegible] in Austria as well as in America.

That I am enjoying the renewal of these kinfolks more on account of their position socially and intellectually, goes without saying.

Yes—I am very proud of them. Dora's daughter Marguerite married on March 23rd and I am expecting a letter from her and photo from her husband soon.

Marguerite is a lovable creature judging from her letters to me and her photo. I hope that

you will soon be here to see them.

When are you going to Atlanta? or will you have the operation performed at home?
Please let me know in your next letter. With love and kisses to all, I remain your loving father[.]
Marie is some better. OGeisberg.”

DR: What kind of letterhead? Let me take a look at this.

CF: That’s a D.

DR: Yeah, I see that.

CF: That was Aunt Dora that had a millinery shop.

SR: His daughter.

CF: Yeah.

DR: So it’s her stationery, “D. Geisberg, Millinery, Ladies’ Ready=to=Wear.”

CF: Yeah, 1912.

DR: Did he actually work?

CF: I don’t think he worked there, did he?

LF: Well, he did [inaudible]—he went to—

CF: Might have done some of her bookwork or something.

LF: —I don’t know.

CF: I think he—

LF: They always said there was only one Geisberg that ever had any fun, and that was Isadore. They all did something.

SR: What did the D stand for?

CF: Dora.

SR: Dora Geisberg.

DR: When Mr. Geisberg first established himself in Anderson, his business was, you said, a mercantile?

LF: Do what?

CF: Was he in the mercantile business—Grandpa?

LF: Sort of, in and out.

CF: And then didn't he move to Alabama or something like that?

LF: Yeah, I think he was never that financially successful. He was—

CF: A scholar.

LF: —very brilliant and everything, but not too productive, as your brother put it. But he was really somebody in the community.

DR: In terms of his civic involvement?

CF: Yeah.

LF: And he was recognized as being very bright.

DR: How many children did he have?

CF: Eight.

DR: Four boys and four girls.

CF: Yes.

LF: All of them but one are buried down here. One's buried in Athens.

CF: [Inaudible.]

LF: Yeah.

DR: Would you talk a little bit more about your mother's family? I know they don't come from South Carolina, but just to establish your background.

CF: My grandfather and grandmother lived in Elberton, and if you've ever been to Elberton, on Hurry Street, there's a beautiful colonial home which was their home. It was after my grandfather died in 1937 that it was later sold to a funeral home there. He had a mercantile business. I don't think there were many Jewish people in Elberton, but there were two or three families at the time that they lived there.

There were three girls, my mother Sadie, my aunt Minnie, and my aunt Julia. Aunt Minnie married and lived in New York, and Aunt Julia went to visit her. Uncle Ralph, whom she later married, was a doctor—had his office in their apartment building, and *they* were married. My aunt Minnie had two children, and Aunt Julia and Uncle Ralph didn't have any. Aunt Julia is no longer living. My mother died in 1976, and Aunt Minnie is still living in an apartment in New York where she lived for many years. She has help all the time. She's a hundred, isn't she?

LF: A hundred, or a hundred and one.

DR: Wow.

CF: But I can remember my grandmother and grandfather very well.

DR: First, what was your grandmother's name?

CF: Oh.

LF: Mary, wasn't it?

CF: Mary Copeland Cohen.

DR: Mary Copeland Cohen, and her husband was Joe.

CF: Joe, yes.

DR: Copeland is C-O—

CF: —P-E-L-A-N-D. Did you ever hear of the designer Joe Copeland some years ago? He was a [inaudible].

DR: Not sure.

LF: I'll tell you something interesting right now. Hillary Lynn, who just won the World's Downhill Ski Championship in Italy, her great-grandmother and Caroline's mother were double first cousins. In fact, her brother's in touch with her grandfather, who is a federal judge.

CF: They live in Alaska.

DR: So tell us what you remember about the Cohen grandparents.

CF: Used to go over there and have a good time. [Laughs.] They had chickens in the backyard. They'd come over here. They had a Buick and a driver. Neither one of them ever drove. It's sad to think of it. No heat in the car. They had a brick to keep their feet warm and the lap robe. They lived the good life, really good.

DR: They were prosperous.

CF: Yeah.

DR: What did they look like? Do you recall?

CF: I've got pictures.

DR: You've got pictures?

LF: I've always said that our families were quite outstanding. You might be looking at the least of them. [Laughs.] I mean, my family was very—my brother was very outstanding.

DR: [CF's voice in the background.] Okay, would you mind bringing it in? [To CF.] I don't want to unsettle all the wires here.

LF: My brother was Director of Admission as a doctor at the Harvard Medical School for twenty years.

CF: There is Grandpa.

DR: He is a distinguished looking man.

CF: This is the three daughters.

DR: Ah, I love these. I wonder, after the interview, if you would let me take a picture of the pictures with my camera?

CF: Yeah.

DR: Oh, these are marvelous. So he was a very, obviously, well-dressed dapper—

CF: Oh, yes.

DR: Beautiful.

CF: I don't know if I've got one of Grandma—

LF: They were first-class people.

SR: Oh, beautiful—look at that!

DR: That's your mother in her wedding dress.

SR: Oh my goodness, isn't that beautiful?

CF: She was eighteen, I think, when she married.

DR: Do you know her birth date?

CF: Yeah, She was born April 15th, 18—is it '94 or '96? Let me see. She died in '76—

LF: Yeah.

CF: —and she was eighty-two years old.

LF: It must have been '94.

CF: 1894 was her birth date.

SR: I can see why she had The Vogue Shop. Look at that *dress*!

CF: Yeah, isn't that something.

SR: The Vogue Shop was absolutely the nicest dress store.

CF: My daughter has one in the mountains now.

SR: She's in this picture? She's right here, I see her.

CF: That's mother, Aunt Julia, and Aunt Minnie.

SR: Oh, it's wonderful.

CF: Look at that dress. [Inaudible.]

DR: So this picture, if your mother was maybe twelve years old or something, ten, would have been maybe in 1904?

CF: There was very little difference in the ages. There was just eighteen months difference in any of them, so this picture— What would you think she was? Like ten or twelve?

SR: Ten or twelve, I would say.

CF: Yeah. Cute picture.

SR: Oh it's a *wonderful* picture.

CF: These are some mother had in her house.

DR: I'd love to take pictures of that, and arrange to make a copy of your letter. These are terrific. This is exactly— You know when we were talking about trying to—

SR: We could possibly copy the letter right here; go to the library and copy it. I'm sure the library must have a copy machine. Where is the library now?

DR: If you don't mind, I'm going put this back on.

LF: Did you notice the Rite Aid Drug Store, the new one?

SR: No, I didn't notice.

LF: Well, I'll have to show you. It's on the corner of Fant Street.

CF: Even if we're gone, you can take pictures of this and just leave them. No problem there.

DR: Oh, that would be great. So we were talking about the Cohen family—

CF: Yeah.

DR: —in Elberton. Do you know how they got to Elberton? Or where their family of origin was?

CF: They came from Poland, Grandpa *and* Grandma. But now, when they came to New York—they *all* came to New York—and somehow or another, they got into these little towns in Georgia. I don't know—

LF: His brothers were in Covington and Madison.

CF: Yeah, they all settled in Georgia. I don't know why or what. One came, then the other one came, and you know.

DR: They all went into similar kinds of businesses?

CF: I think so, yeah, I really think they all pretty much were. But Elberton— Of course, it's still not a big town. I will tell you one little story about Grandpa. The Granite City Bank— When they started the bank there, he was one of the original stockholders. How much was it? A hundred dollars?

LF: A hundred dollars.

CF: —he put in there.

LF: It was two hundred dollars, I think.

CF: Two hundred. Well, you tell that story 'cause you know it better than I do.

LF: He paid a hundred one year, and the next year, he paid a hundred more 'cause he didn't have two hundred. Of course, Caroline's mother, when he died, she got a third of the stock that he had. I won't go into the details. And she bought a little bit of it. She put [in] a total of eight hundred dollars, including what he put in it. Today, it's worth right at eighty thousand dollars. Isn't that something?

DR: He made a good investment.

CF: Yeah, it's been a good many years.

LF: But he was the kind—

CF: It's the Bank of Eastern Gainesville now, Regions Financial in Alabama.

LF: —[inaudible] if they were to start a bank in Elberton, he'd be one they would go to, to help them get going.

CF: I wish I had a picture of Grandpa. Julia's got one.

DR: You know, if you find one later, this is not our last trip to the Upcountry, so we can come bother you again, and I'd love to have a pair of the grandparents. Also on the Geisberg or the Lesser family, if you find any photographs, we would love to make copies.

CF: Yeah, okay. I wasn't exactly sure what—you know, I didn't look anything up before you came.

DR: Right, Well this is—

LF: You want to tell her about Arnold Patz, the other Jewish—I think that was the only two Jewish families in Elberton.

CF: The Patzes?

LF: Yeah.

CF: Well, they're not interested in Georgia.

DR: Well, that's all right, go ahead, if you think it's appropriate.

CF: They were a family that lived over there, and they were friends with our family and they—the Patzes, Sam and Sarah Patz were their names—

DR: P-A-T-Z?

CF: Yes, and they had a number of children. One of them was Arnold, who was [inaudible] I imagine [inaudible]—Raymond would know him. He's about my age, maybe a little younger, but he went on to school, and went to school, and everybody said will Arnold ever stop going to school? He ended up being an eye doctor. He lives in Baltimore and he has a chair at Hopkins. I mean, he's very outstanding.

LF: He's the one that discovered the reason children go blind [when they're] premature. They didn't have oxygen in the thing.

CF: And they also—the Patz family—were in the mercantile [business].

LF: They were close friends.

CF: They had a big store over there.

DR: Where would the Patzes and the Cohens have gone to synagogue?

CF: They didn't.

DR: They just didn't go.

CF: Now, they may have gone—Did they ever go to Athens?

LF: Louis went to Athens—his son.

CF: Yeah.

DR: Did they observe any Jewish customs in the home?

CF: I'm sure they did. I'm sure they had—It's just like—Well, we don't go anywhere now, since the children, but we used to go to Greenville to the temple. We always have Passover.

DR: In your father's family, were they observant in any way?

LF: Your father's family?

CF: Not much.

LF: They were all Jewish-minded, though. I mean, you can't say they wouldn't convert—I'll put it that way—and they wouldn't deny it or anything like that.

DR: What does it mean to you, though? What is Jewish-minded?

LF: Well, they knew they were Jews and they never hid. Never said they weren't, and they let it be known they were Jewish, and they had a strong Jewish feeling. But they didn't do much practicing, like we don't either, but there ain't no doubt that we're Jewish.

CF: [Where do] you all go in Charleston?

DR: Sandra Lee is a member of Brith Sholom, and we are members of Emanu-El in Charleston, but we—

CF: Is that the temple?

DR: No, that's the Conservative synagogue, but we're very far.

CF: What is this one?

SR: They're Orthodox.

CF: Yes. What's the name of the temple there?

DR: Beth Elohim. I can't say that we're very observant, and partly—

CF: I didn't want to change the subject, but I was interested about your son going to Dartmouth. Did he apply at other places, or was that—

DR: He applied early. He applied in October for early decision. He's a very clear-thinking boy. He made up his mind that he wanted to choose a school early, get in, and not have to be—

CF: Does he go to school in Charleston?

DR: He goes to school in Charleston at the Academic Magnet High School, but he made a real, clear choice. He applied. He got in. He got a scholarship and—

CF: Got a scholarship, that's wonderful. It's *very* expensive. I think Harry said the last year that Heather was there was over twenty-six thousand dollars.

DR: It's very expensive, yeah.

CF: But I think a lot of them are on scholarships.

DR: Yeah.

CF: Well, that's quite an experience.

DR: So, as a child growing up, what kind of identification did you make, in terms of did you celebrate any of the holidays? Did you observe the Sabbath? Did they light candles?

CF: No, no, no.

LF: Always had Seder at your mother's.

CF: Yeah, well, we'd have that, but we might light the candles on Friday night, but not that much, not that much.

DR: But you *would* celebrate Passover?

CF: Oh, sure.

DR: What about the High Holidays?

CF: Yeah, we would usually— When we were younger, we went to temple in Greenville on High Holidays.

SR: Were there services here at all when you were young?

CF: Yeah, with the synagogue.

SR: Yeah.

CF: A lot of it was in Hebrew and more often than not—

SR: You preferred Greenville.

CF: The Reform was the one that we liked.

LF: As you know, the Reform Movement started in Germany, and about the age that our families moved here, it was the top in— It was what we became, our background is that. Like this thing in Athens, when one came, the rest of them came, and if one was Reform, then they all were Reform.

DR: Would you describe your brothers and sisters, the order of the family?

CF: My brother?

DR: Yes. You only have one brother?

CF: Yeah. He's two years older than I am. He lives in Louisville, Kentucky. He graduated from Clemson, and he served in the army. He went to Louisville, and mother told him—he didn't know anybody up there—"Young man, go to temple. You'll meet some people." He did; he met his wife. They married and they have the one boy who is a practicing doctor here. I'm sure your husband knows of Harry. He went to Charleston in the family practice program.

SR: Right. I think he does. I'm sure he does.

CF: That's pretty much them.

DR: Where did he serve in the war?

CF: He was just in the States, like quartermaster, but he was up around— What's that place? Aberdeen? Around Baltimore?

LF: Not too far from Louisville.

CF: He was in Louisville, around Louisville, and he didn't go overseas or anything like that. He didn't have to.

DR: As kids, where did you guys go to school, you and your brother, as children?

CF: You mean grammar school?

DR: Yes.

CF: I went to a school called North Anderson, and then North Fant. Then where the library is now used to be what they called the girl's high school. They had a girl's high and a boy's high here. Now they're all combined. My brother went down to the boy's high school. He went to North Fant, into the boy's high school, and then he went to Clemson. I went up to Greensboro to college for two years, a woman's college. Then I went to New York and took a business course. I worked up there four or five years for the Shell Oil Company. I lived with my aunt there.

DR: Where?

CF: In Brooklyn.

DR: In Brooklyn? Where? What part?

CF: 372 Sterling Place, right around Prospect Park. You know that?

DR: I certainly do. That's where both of my parents grew up, near Prospect Park.

CF: That's right. You take the subway.

DR: Near the Brooklyn Museum.

CF: Yeah, that's right. Prospect Park and the Brooklyn Museum is not a block away. Yeah, I lived there. I used to ride a subway to work and back.

DR: How did you like New York?

CF: I liked it then, 'cause I was young, had a good time, and not a care in the world. But now it's different. I would no more get in a subway now than anything.

LF: They say the subways have been made safe now.

DR: I want to get back a little bit more to your childhood. Obviously, you had a strong relationship with your maternal grandparents.

CF: Yeah.

DR: Similar with your father's family?

CF: Well, the grandfather, I never knew. He died. And Grandma— Do you know what it's like [when] you used to see pictures of the old lady just sitting, rocking? Well, that was it. We're grandparents and we don't think we're as old as they were then. I think I had a closer relationship to my grandmother on the other side—she died in 1930—and my grandfather, over there, he lived with us one year before he died. So I got to know them pretty well.

DR: Mary Cohen died in 1930?

CF: Yes.

DR: What was the Lesser grandmother's name?

CF: Carrie.

DR: Carrie? C-A—

CF: —R-R-I-E. I guess I'm named after her.

LF: Hmm?

CF: I guess I'm named after her even though they called me Caroline.

LF: Carrie? [Inaudible.]

CF: Yeah, but that's that other—[sounds like “Rosenberg”] family.

LF: Oh yeah, that's right.

DR: Do you know when she died—Carrie?

LF: You'd have to go down to the cemetery and see.

CF: I'm not sure.

CF: But she did live [inaudible].

LF: All the dates are on the stones down at the cemetery.

CF: Of course.

DR: Do you remember any of the funerals? One of the things we're interested in is the way rites of passage are observed.

CF: Well, there was always a rabbi. Where he came from, I don't know, unless it would have been Athens or Augusta or somewhere. I know my father, I remember—well, my mother's too. My father's funeral—he died in '36—Rabbi Shillman from Sumter came up here for that. My mother's funeral was [conducted by] Rabbi Goldberg from Augusta, because he used to come over here and do services up here at this temple for quite some years—no longer there.

SR: He came to Greenville to do—

CF: No, Anderson.

SR: To Anderson.

CF: Yes, Louis got him. He used to come up here about one Sunday a month.

LF: Yeah.

CF: We'd have a covered dish supper and everybody participated in it. It was nice.

LF: I think that was right interesting. As we said, it was very Orthodox—everything here. We wanted to make it more Conservative, and my mother's family's from Augusta, and I knew Rabbi Goldberg. So I went to Nathan Fleishman, Alvin's father, and we discussed and discussed, and I said, “Well, I'll tell you what we'll do. You let us have it all the year long, and when the High Holidays come, you have it just like you want it.” Nathan Fleishman was for it, and he agreed with that, and so they got Rabbi Goldberg. He came over here on a trial. Then they met

again and decided to let him come. He came for many years. He buried Raymond's father, didn't he?

CF: I'm not sure.

LF: I'm not sure, but he married people and buried people.

CF: I'll tell you something else about my grandfather. He loved— He would come over here, and he would always go down to Mr. Rosenblum's store, which—his name was Nathan, I think, right?

SR: Yes, Nuchum.

CF: And Mrs. Rosenblum?

SR: Freida.

CF: Freida, and she was a wonderful cook.

SR: Yes.

CF: He used to go down there, he would sit, talk with them, and he'd have dinner with them quite often. They had a lot in common. He loved being with them.

SR: Yeah, lunch was always sent to the store at midday.

CF: Yeah.

SR: A meal was sent down to the store.

CF: And it was [sounds like "something"], yeah!

SR: A stacked Russian [inaudible].

CF: She was wonderful.

SR: She was a wonderful cook, yeah.

CF: Now, did Sarah die?

SR: Sarah died quite a few years ago.

CF: She was my age, I think. We were in the same class together.

SR: Right, right.

CF: And then there was [inaudible] Allen.

SR: Allen died.

CF: Yes.

SR: Yeah.

CF: So you've got Raymond, and there's Irving.

SR: Irving and Caroline.

CF: And Caroline.

SR: Caroline lives in Charleston.

CF: What about Irving?

SR: Irving lives in New Jersey.

DR: These are Raymond's siblings?

SR: Yes.

DR: I don't know if we got your father's name. What was—

CF: Harry.

DR: Harry Geisberg.

CF: No middle name.

DR: Okay, and what date did you say he died?

CF: I didn't say, but he died November 3rd, 1936.

DR: And the rabbi came from Sumter?

CF: Yes.

DR: What was the name?

CF: Shillman. Samuel Shillman.

DR: I've heard a lot about him. Okay. Of course, that was a very Reform community.

CF: Right, absolutely.

DR: Yes, very Reform.

LF: When one came, they all came. That's how it happened. It happened all over Georgia, like Caroline's grandfather, his brothers and whatnot. My grandparents came to Athens and along came a lot of them with them.

DR: How would you characterize the relationship between the Jewish community in Anderson—and again, I'm talking more about your earlier years—and the gentile community?

CF: My relationship was always very good. There was so few of us, and we assimilated, I would say. But then again, back years ago, you couldn't be a member of the country club and things like that, which now, it doesn't matter. It's entirely different today.

DR: When did that change?

CF: When would you say that changed?

LF: I'll tell you exactly when—in '62. I'll tell you why I know, because I'm a senior member there now, and you had to be thirty years continuous membership to be a senior member. I looked it up and I found the letter, and it was '62 when we became—

CF: So it's been, really, over thirty years.

DR: So when you were allowed to become a member, you became a member right away?

LF: We were invited to join.

DR: How do you like that? I'd love to know what happened.

CF: Well, it was just the times. There are still places today that Jews—I don't know whether it's the Breakers or the [inaudible].

LF: Do you know that they have Jewish members at the Piedmont Driving Club in Atlanta now?

SR: Really?

LF: You know what the Piedmont Driving—

SR: Yes, I do. I certainly do.

CF: They used to wouldn't take them at the Cloister. They used to have a thing on there—"restricted clientele"—but no more.

LF: As my son says, in San Francisco, there is no Jewish country club anymore. It's just the country club.

SR: To my knowledge, the Charleston Yacht Club in Charleston has no Jewish members at this time.

CF: Probably not.

LF: They do not.

CF: I'm sure.

LF: But I think that Piedmont Driving Club is the last bastion [inaudible].

CF: They've got a wonderful Jewish community in Charleston.

SR: Yes.

CF: Tell me, I used to go with a fellow, when he lived in New York, from down there, and I don't know whether he's still living or not. He's a lawyer—Irving Levkoff.

SR: Oh, yes.

DR: Yes [laughs].

CF: He was a good-looking guy.

SR: He's still a good-looking guy.

CF: He is?

SR: I'm sorry. [Laughing.]

CF: He married the girl from Columbia, whatever her name—

DR: Alice.

SR: No, no, Irving married Yetta from Charleston. She was from Charleston.

CF: Oh, she was from Charleston.

SR: She was Yetta Dumas.

CF: That's exactly right. He doesn't still practice, does he?

SR: I don't know.

CF: 'Cause he was a good bit older than I was, by several years.

SR: I don't know whether Irving is practicing or not, but he's well.

CF: He used to work for his uncle up there that was in the box business in Brooklyn, and that's how I knew him, back some years ago.

DR: So apart from the country club, you felt the Jews were really an accepted part of the social fabric here?

CF: I would say so. We were.

LF: Yeah.

CF: I think that some of them didn't feel they were, but I don't *know* that. I don't think some of them mixed as well as we did, or as much, or maybe they didn't want to.

DR: What would you think the difference was?

LF: That's a good question. What was the difference?

CF: I guess the difference was the customs. They were so much with the customs, the Jewish customs. Like you said, Mr. Fleishman wouldn't ride to work and this and that. Not that there was anything wrong with it, but it was different. Maybe we felt we weren't different, or they felt we weren't different. I don't know.

DR: Well, your family had been here a lot longer too.

CF: Oh, sure, sure.

DR: So the more observant of Jewish customs, the less easily assimilated maybe.

CF: I would say so. I could be wrong; I don't know. Right or wrong, in these small towns—and this was a small town—people looked on the Orthodox Jews as real different, didn't they, Louis? You understand what I'm saying?

SR: Absolutely.

CF: They were just different. Not that there was anything wrong with them. They were good folks, but they were just not the same. I don't think it's that way anymore.

DR: Is there still an Orthodox community here?

CF: They're Conservative, aren't they, at the temple?

LF: I think so. Frankly, when I heard y'all were coming, I tried to think of how many Jewish families there are in Anderson.

CF: Well, there's some around. They get a pretty good crowd. They get them from Anderson, Clemson and [inaudible]. Alvin could tell you more about that.

LF: They get them from Clemson and around, but I don't think Jewish families in Anderson [inaudible]. Alvin can tell you that better than I can.

DR: Tell me this, did your family have black servants or black household help?

CF: Yeah, oh, sure.

DR: Tell us a little about that.

CF: Well, we always had help. Betty, that used to work for us when I was a child, she rode the bus to work, and she worked seven days a week. She would come at seven o'clock in the morning, and she was highly paid; I think she made seven dollars a week. She worked for years.

After she was gone, we had help, and of course, we, as growing up here, always had help with the children—black help. The one that I had for the children worked for us for a number of years. She came to me one day and she said that she had been offered a job out at Singer. They had never hired a black person at the Singer Sewing Machine place, and she said, "I just hate to leave you, but I don't see how I could give up this opportunity." I said, "Well, I couldn't begin to pay you what [they will.]" So she went to work for them. She was the first and only black out there, and we saw Lila the other day and she said, "I want to tell you, I'm retired."

SR: What was Lila's last name?

CF: Johnson.

LF: She said, "I'll come and do some work for you."

CF: She said, "Yeah, I'm retired," after thirty years or something like that. Oh yeah, we always had help. Now the young people seem to send their kids to daycare and all, but we never— They went to kindergarten, but—

LF: You know, this is the Bible belt you're in now, and the church is very strong here—every church. I think there are sixty something Baptist churches in Anderson County.

DR: What's the implication, do you think?

LF: Well, they're very close—people that belong to certain churches. They feel very close to each other. They think of it sort of as a family. I think they have a much closer relationship than the Jewish people do, if you want to know the truth.

CF: They have so many activities. They take the kids on ski trips, covered-dish suppers.

DR: It has been proposed—I'm not saying that this is something I believe, but it's been said to me—that the more, I guess you would say, the fundamentalist churches, the Baptist church and evangelical churches, feel more of an affinity for the Jews, maybe, than some of the more Protestant—

CF: You mean they feel more friendly to them?

DR: Yeah, because of the Old Testament. I'm not subscribing to this; I'm just proposing it. It's an idea.

LF: You might be right. You might be right. [Inaudible.] What did Sally ask you the other day you couldn't figure out? You couldn't conceive of how [inaudible]—

CF: Oh, I know what it was. This niece of mine is getting married. They had to get a rabbi. She's marrying a Christian boy. He went to Dartmouth and Harvard Law School. But anyway, they've settled that, and she's going to be married by a rabbi. Then this party would be Saturday night. I was telling my friend, "You know, they can't have the wedding on Saturday, because it's the Sabbath." So she said to me, "Well, how would the rabbi be coming to the party on Saturday night?" I said, "Well, the Sabbath is over Saturday night."

LF: She couldn't quite understand that.

CF: They can't have a funeral on the Sabbath, and they can't have a wedding.

DR: To go back to the question of your household help, did they do the cooking in your house?

CF: Yes.

DR: What kind of food was served, typically, in your house?

CF: Just regular southern cooking. It wasn't kosher or anything like that.

LF: Caroline is a wonderful Jewish cook, but she won't do it. She can cook as well as any of them.

CF: Well, he's talking about the matzoh balls I make. It's so good.

DR: I was going to ask you, were there any parts of your diet that reflected—

CF: Well, at Passover, we have matzoh balls, and I used to make gefilte fish. We don't do that anymore. We just buy it.

DR: So you still eat gefilte fish?

CF: If I can get it, I do.

LF: You still fix the livers.

CF: The chicken livers. Well, is that Jewish?

DR: Chopped chicken livers?

LF: Sort of.

DR: I'll say.

DR: This was true at your mother's house—when you were living with your parents as a child?

CF: Yeah.

DR: Would you also eat gefilte fish and—

CF: Oh, sure, sure.

DR: You say regular, but you did eat Jewish food.

CF: I never think of it as being Jewish food, but I guess it is. [Laughing.] We had fried chicken, rice, gravy, corn on the cob, grits and just the usual.

DR: What about shrimp and bacon and pork and—

CF: Oh, of course, yeah. Ham, yeah. No problem there.

DR: How would you describe the relationship between the Jewish families and the black help?

CF: No different. No different from anybody else, as I see. In fact, we were always very close to them.

LF: That's right.

DR: You mean the Jewish families didn't treat the blacks any different than they treated anyone else.

CF: Oh, no.

DR: In Charleston, people say that the Jewish merchants treated their black customers with more respect, and they allowed them to try on hats, have credit, and do certain things that the gentile downtown merchants didn't do.

CF: No kidding.

DR: Do you think that's true here? Was there any—

CF: I wouldn't know about it if it was.

LF: I never thought of it.

DR: In the family stores, were there black clientele?

CF: Oh, yeah. Well, there were, but they didn't have much money. They didn't shop too much in the stores because they couldn't afford it, wouldn't you say? I never thought about it.

LF: I'll tell you one thing. The Jewish people— My son, in San Francisco, says to me, "Come on, go with me; I've got to go over and get a lease signed. He's a nice Jewish man who runs a bagel shop." Well, if somebody else had said he was a Jewish man, we would have taken an affront to it, but that's how we describe people too! And it describes them perfectly, so you can't get around it.

CF: I'll get this copied. I have a place I can go get it copied, and I will leave it at Alvin's store, 'cause you're going to see him tonight.

DR: He's going to come meet us at a restaurant, at O'Charleys, but if you give it to him, and ask him to bring it by tonight—

DR: Do you need to go, Mrs. Funkenstein? I don't want to keep you.

CF: Yes, but you all don't have to rush. You take a picture of these pictures.

DR: If you don't mind, we'll ask your husband a few more questions.

CF: Okay, and you can leave these right here, it won't matter—the pictures.

DR: Okay. Let me ask you just one more thing, if you don't mind.

CF: Yes.

DR: Were you aware of when the Great Depression began in South Carolina?

CF: Yes.

DR: What do you remember about that?

CF: I remember it was about the time that my father died—'36. It was pretty bad, and we didn't have much of anything. I mean, we still had our house and all, but it was tough. I think they even took the phone out, didn't they?

LF: Yeah.

DR: Out of your house?

CF: Yes. They didn't, we did. Mother went into the business, and like I said, it ended up The Vogue Shop and she did very well; but she worked those years after that.

DR: Did it have a general impact on the community? Did anybody lose their business?

CF: I'm sure they did. It was *bad*. It was bad here.

LF: I wasn't here then.

CF: Is that when the banks went out and all? A lot of this Geisberg family, among the other parts, they put money in the bank a certain day and the next day it closed, and they lost a lot.

DR: Do you remember when things started picking up again?

LF: You were in New York, weren't you?

CF: I went on off to college and they were getting a little better after that.

DR: When was that?

CF: '39, '40. Yeah, a little better. '38-'39, I think. '36 was sort of towards the end of the Depression.

DR: Well, actually, we really didn't start pulling out until we started building up the armament industry, so it was even later than that.

LF: That's right.

DR: Really, all of the wonderful New Deal programs that came in, I don't think actually had much of an effect on the economy; but the war did.

CF: [Inaudible.]

DR: Okay, let me just put this on— [Pause in tape.] Okay. Should we go back to the beginning?

SR: Yes, we need to find out a little bit about your family and your children.

LF: Well, my father was born in San Francisco and he moved to Athens, Georgia, with his father, who had divorced his wife in—I forget the exact date. My grandfather came to San Francisco during the Gold Rush. He came from Germany, walked across the Isthmus of Panama, and caught a ship up to San Francisco and tended bar and he became— We had somebody that checked the family. He was quite well thought of, you can see from that cane. He moved to Athens. It was a very outstanding community.

DR: Athens was a big community at that time?

LF: Not that big. [SR and CF talking in the background.] Mr. Buddy Michael, for example, was Chairman of the School Board in Athens for twenty-five years. He was Chairman of the University of Georgia Athletic Association. [SR and CF still talking in the background.]

DR: I want to go back—I'm a little distracted here—to the Gold Rush. You said—

LF: He came from Germany through the Isthmus of Panama—I'm giving you what I understand—and walked across. In the Gold Rush, he went up to San Francisco like many other people did. He tended bar there, and married and had children. He moved to Athens when my father was three years old. My cousin always said his first wife must not have been very good, because she gave my grandfather custody of the children. He lived there and he was a—I remember they say—of course, unusual—he went into business with a gentile, Mr. [sounds like "Dorsey"]. They were in the furniture business, and he became quite prosperous and well-known in Athens along with—I would say Athens was a very outstanding Jewish community.

DR: Was it already the university town?

LF: Oh, yeah. They lived there. I met Caroline during the war. I was in the navy for five years. I went to Georgia Tech, graduated in the Naval ROTC, and went into active duty in

1940—a ship. I'm very proud of the fact that I was executive officer on the Curtiss, which was a very large ship, and became commanding officer of an AKA my last year in the navy, which I was very proud of. We landed at Okinawa and whatnot. I came back to Anderson looking for something to do. The Kaplans lived here and, you know, you can talk all you want about the Jews, but they sort of stick together in a way [laughs].

DR: Yes.

LF: My mother-in-law knew them. They were in the shirt business and they said, "There is only one box-maker in South Carolina. You go into the box business and we'll buy boxes from you." You can talk all you want about the Jews, but they sort of stick together.

DR: Take care of their own.

LF: I went into the box business. I went into that and worked for twenty-eight years. Then in 1973, I sold it to my competitor in Greenville and retired. I haven't done much since except play golf and go to the basketball games with Alvin. [Laughs.]

DR: It sounds like a good life. Before we go on, and I really would like to get more of the story of your family, meaning your kids. Tell me a little more about this cane that I'm holding.

LF: All I know is it was given to me by my father [who] had it, and when he died, I took it, and I'm going to leave it to my grandson.

DR: It says, "Presented to—"

LF: Peter Funkenstein.

DR: Peter, that was your—

LF: Grandfather.

DR: —grandfather's name. "As a token of esteem by the members of—"

LF: Chachim Rachmonin. I checked that down, and from the Jewish Museum in Berkeley I found out—I think it was more of a burial society than anything else.

DR: It says C-H-A-C-H-I-M and then R-A-C-H-M-O-N-I-N. Chachim Rachmonin.

LF: That's right, and he was the president from 1871 to 1872.

DR: Okay, and the date on the cane—it says, "San Francisco, January 23rd," no, "22nd?" 20-something, "1870."

LF: Three or four.

DR: It looks like 23rd. That's what it is. It's 23rd, 1870. "San Francisco, January 23, 1870." So this was presented to him—

LF: Because he was president of the society.

DR: This is a beautiful gold-headed engraved cane, and I would love to take a picture of it. When you said you came back to Anderson looking for something to do, why not Athens? Why Anderson?

LF: Well, we had moved to Macon when I went to school, and I did go. I took a job in Macon for three months in the insurance business, and I didn't like that at all—selling casualty insurance—so I came to Anderson and lived here. It was convenient. My son had been born then. We lived with his grandmother, Caroline's mother, and we lived there for a few years till I got things going.

DR: Where did you actually meet Caroline?

LF: In New York City. I came back to the radar school, and the one—her mother—you know the letter that was written to the lady in Athens? Well, she had some daughters that I knew. So when I would go down to the research lab—I was at the research lab several months—I would go up to New York, and I knew these daughters of hers, this one daughter. I said, "Why don't you get me a date?" She said, "Well, I hate to put the family off on [you]." But she got me a date with Caroline, and that's how we [met]. She came out to San Francisco and we were married at the Naval Air Station in Alameda.

DR: Did you have a Jewish wedding?

LF: Oh, yeah. Let me tell you about that. I was on the Curtiss then. We had a minister, and he said, "I know you'd rather have a rabbi." I said, "Yeah." It happened that the rabbi from Augusta that was friends with my family was in San Francisco, and so I called him. He said, "Certainly, I'll be glad."

It was so simple. I went over to the Officer's Club and told them we were going to get married, and they arranged the chapel and everything. I had a few Jewish friends that I had met; one of them was the best man, and all the officers came. We had quite a lovely wedding and the Jewish rabbi performed the wedding. I've got pictures of it.

SR: So there were no members of your family at the wedding?

LF: No.

SR: And that, I imagine, was quite common during World War II.

LF: I always kid them, how in the world her mother ever let her go all the way out there to get married—you know what goes on today [laughs].

DR: Did you have any honeymoon?

LF: We were in San Francisco—the ship—and we were married on Friday afternoon, and the exec says, “You can have off till Monday.” [Laughs.] So we went to the St. Francis. We stayed the first night at the—what’s the name of the hotel in San Francisco? Then I left, maybe a few weeks afterwards, and was gone for a year.

DR: Wow.

LF: Came back and put this ship in commission.

DR: So what year was this—your marriage?

LF: 1941. [ed.: 1943.] I’ve got to—

DR: That’s all right. I wanted to ask you about your kids. When your children were born and—

LF: Louis is fifty-one. He was born in ’45, born here in Anderson, grew up here in Anderson, went to Baylor School up in Chattanooga for three years, and then went to Georgia Tech and graduated.

My daughter, Julia, was born here in Anderson. Julia’s forty-seven, I think, and she lived here. When her grandmother died, she took over The Vogue Shop. She decided to go to Cashiers [North Carolina]; she wanted to move up to the mountains. She moved up there and started a store there. Eventually [she] sold the one here, and she lives there in the summer, and her daughter goes to high school here. Her daughter is the sixth generation at the high school.

DR: Were your children in school during the period of integration?

LF: I think so. You know a funny thing—interesting—the principal of the high school, who, of course is retired now, is a good friend of mine. He was the principal of the high school here during integration, and he said it was more [of a] problem when they mixed the girls and the boys, than it was when they integrated.

SR: Was that Mr. Reams?

LF: No, this was Hiram Sandlin—after Mr. Reams.

SR: Oh, okay, after Mr. Reams.

DR: Hiram Sandlin?

LF: Hiram S-A-N-D-L-I-N.

DR: Okay, so what did he mean by that?

LF: Well, he had more problems trying to get the girls and boys to straighten out than he did with blacks and whites.

DR: So Anderson was a fairly successful story of integration?

LF: I would say yes.

DR: And your kids actually experienced that? They were there at the time?

LF: To tell you the truth, it just leaves me blank. I mean, it was no big— Well, it's like integrated now, but your social people, you don't mix with the blacks. They [can] talk all they want; the churches are completely segregated.

DR: So the kids go to school together but they don't socialize.

LF: That's exactly right.

DR: What about the sports teams though?

LF: I don't think they cared. I have a good close friend who played all the sports at the high school. He didn't care, just so they played. After they finished playing, they didn't go out together, but they played together. He's a golfer. He's on a golf scholarship at Presbyterian College, but they had no blacks on the golf team. I think Tiger Woods is about the most successful one to come along.

DR: I remember in Spartanburg, Harry Price and other people said that they had a similar story—that integration was really—it went fine. They really just didn't have a struggle like we do in the Lowcountry.

LF: No, we didn't—

DR: Our schools are really not integrated in Charleston County.

LF: Oh, they've got a lot of them out here at the high, but I don't think they've got any in the honors—

DR: The downtown peninsula schools are largely black, except for the magnet school.

SR: The schools on James Island are integrated.

DR: Are integrated.

SR: Absolutely.

DR: That's true.

LF: My [grand]daughter's in the honor section out there. I don't think they've got any blacks—I'll have to ask her—but I think they would be happy to add them if they were qualified. I know they would.

DR: Do you think there were any differences in your kids' time of growing up, in terms of being Jewish in Anderson?

LF: Oh yeah. Folks knew they were Jewish and some of the kids didn't like it. Whether my granddaughter—I don't think she experiences much of that now. She plays on the First Presbyterian basketball team. She's what they call a wildcard. If you don't belong to the church—which, there are other wildcards too.

DR: What's her last name?

LF: Chalmers, C-H-A—my daughter was married to Steven Chalmers a short time. They're divorced.

DR: Does your granddaughter, is she a practicing Jew—observant?

LF: Sort of. She knows she's Jewish and all. She goes to temple with Harry and with Donna, my nephew—she's very close to them—but she doesn't particularly like to go.

DR: I was going to ask you something about your years in the army.

LF: You mean in the navy?

DR: In the navy, excuse me. Were you aware—did anybody in your immediate environment know about what was going on in Germany?

LF: I can tell you this—about the only thing I remember about Germany. Long before the army came, my mother—I was a young teenager—used to get letters back from Germany from their relatives. They wanted to come to this country, and damn if she didn't get them over here. Now, how she did it, I couldn't tell you, but they came and my brother visited them in New York. I don't know how she did it.

SR: What year was that?

LF: That must have been about '32, '31, '33. How in the world—I've thought about it so

much since—that she got them over here, but she was persistent and she got them over here.

DR: That's amazing.

LF: It *is* amazing, and nobody ever gave her much credit for it.

DR: When did you become aware of what was going on?

LF: When they started writing. You see, I was for the most part—for five years, from 1940 to 1945—in the South Pacific on a ship. I would come back for a month maybe, two or three times, but I had no idea about it.

DR: So you weren't really aware of the Holocaust until after the war, would you say?

LF: After the war. I knew of Hitler and I knew how horrible it was, but I didn't actually know, really. I was so involved in what I was doing in the South Pacific on the ship that I didn't—

DR: Would you say—and not specifically you, but for the Jewish community, when people realized what the Holocaust was about—what impact did that have on their identity as Jews?

LF: Well, we all felt—I always said if we ever complained about [there] being prejudice against [us], we shouldn't have any complaints; because after what they went through, nobody ever had it as good as we did. You know that. I've felt stronger about it since I've gotten older, than I had. I didn't watch *Schindler's List*. I felt if I could do any good at all by watching it, I would be glad to, but there was nothing for me, and I just wasn't going to watch it. It just gets under me so.

SR: Too painful.

DR: So say what you just said, again—that we shouldn't complain about how we're treated here?

LF: After what they went through, I think we're treated real well. Do you not agree with that?

DR: Well, I think America, and South Carolina in particular, has been a very happy place for Jewish people.

LF: That's right.

DR: In general, with exceptions like you've mentioned. But it's so interesting to me, because of course now, looking back, the Holocaust looms so huge.

LF: Just in the last—since the fifty years. Same thing with the navy and the people that were

killed at Pearl Harbor and all; it's come back in fifty years and all the television has brought. Of course, I think the Jewish people have done a lot in South Carolina. They never wore their Jewishness on their shoulders, most of them. They became part of communities—they still do—and they're very much interested in the communities. The Jewish religion is like the Baptists and their religion, or the Methodists and theirs. I think the Jews have assimilated real well, and they've helped everything that comes along.

SR: South Carolina allowed them to do that.

LF: That's right.

SR: They allowed Jews to participate in the community.

LF: Do you not agree with that?

SR: Absolutely.

DR: I guess you were here when Max Heller was mayor of Greenville.

LF: I know Max Heller quite well. When I started the box business, he sort of helped me get it going too.

DR: How so?

LF: I met Max, oh, in the last year, and we had a long, interesting conversation about the old times. The thing that burns me up, and I'm just still sore about it, is—you know about the Poinsettia Club in Greenville?

DR: No.

SR: Tell us.

LF: Well, they've never had Jews. They don't have them now. When Max became the mayor of Greenville, they said, "Max, we hold a lot of our meetings here, and we're going to change the thing. You're the mayor; we want you to join." Well, after much hesitation, he said, "Well, if that's the way it is"—you know, he's all for Greenville—"I'll join." And damn if they didn't blackball him!

DR: Really?

LF: That's right.

DR: This was in the '70s? When was he mayor?

LF: Whenever he was mayor. In fact, I heard about a friend of ours here that joined recently, and I thought, “They let that guy in there and they blackballed Max.” But what are you going to do? [Laughs.]

DR: Well, I don’t know. [Laughter.] So, where are your kids now? We’ll sort of try to wrap this up.

LF: Julia’s here and at Cashiers, Louis lives in Marin County. He lives in Belvedere.

DR: Marin County, California.

LF: Yeah. That’s right across the Golden Gate Bridge from San Francisco.

DR: Pretty place. Would you say that they make a stronger identity with their Jewish background than you do, or less, or the same?

LF: Frankly, we never much think about it. In San Francisco, they say they don’t have—Louis belongs to the Olympic Club out there. They’ve got all sorts of members. The only thing they didn’t have was women, and they got in trouble with that here recently, because some of the holes are rented from the city. And boy, they really took them to court. They ended up buying the land—I don’t know. But it’s a mess. That’s the only thing they had a problem with, was the—

SR: Is he affiliated with the synagogue out there?

LF: He was, and I think he said he wasn’t going to join this year. But he affiliated with one, I think.

DR: And his wife is also—

LF: No, she’s—

DR: —not Jewish.

LF: I don’t know what religion Kathy is. She never says.

DR: So both of your children intermarried.

LF: Yeah.

DR: The reason I ask these questions is that there’s an interesting sort of swing, I think, in the younger generation, back toward more observant Judaism. I don’t know if that’s true with anybody in Anderson, but in Charleston— Sandra can bear me out. We’ve got—

LF: My wife wasn't crazy about me telling you this tale, but I like to tell it anyhow. The Knobels here—I don't know if you know the name—after we had the meeting when Rabbi Goldberg spoke, there was one man that got up and said, "I think he's too Reform; we don't want that here in Anderson." That was Bob Knobel, who was a good friend of mine. I liked Bob and he died. All four of his sons belong to churches here in Anderson. I think they joined for social reasons, more than—

SR: Interesting.

DR: So there was a real open discussion of how Reform or how Conservative the synagogue should be, and the compromise you made was—

LF: They had it on the High Holidays and we had it during the year.

SR: Do you remember whether my father-in-law had any say in that? Did he have an opinion?

LF: No, I don't remember him saying anything.

SR: I just wondered what he might think about all that.

LF: But he went along with it. He was like Nathan Fleishman. They were willing to [inaudible].

SR: I was just curious.

LF: It wasn't really that knock-down drag-out. Other than Bob Knobel, I don't remember anybody spoke against it 'cause Rabbi Goldberg, he would make it any way you want. If you want more Hebrew, he could put—he was one of those kinds.

DR: What are the other papers you brought?

LF: That was just the minutes of that thing. There's nothing in there really.

DR: The minutes of this society?

LF: Yeah.

DR: And are those originals?

LF: No, they're copies the museum sent me.

DR: Where are the originals?

LF: At the museum in Berkeley, California.

DR: At the Magnes Museum?

LF: Yeah.

DR: I just met some of those people. That's wonderful. Were you the donor of the papers?

LF: No, they had them. This was about Athens. It was in the paper and I thought it described—I'm going to have to—

DR: You need to go?

SR: Is someone picking you up?

LF: Huh?

SR: Are you being picked up?

LF: No, I'm going to go.

DR: Okay, just let me ask you one more thing. Have you ever been to Israel?

LF: Yes. Caroline's mother took us to Israel with one of her sisters. We spent about ten days, two weeks there. I know when Heather was there, we worried to death about her during all the problems.

DR: When did you go?

LF: Oh, a number of years now.

DR: Early '70s?

LF: Probably.

DR: Did it have any resonance to you?

LF: Oh yes, we were very much interested, and very much carried away with the situation. Of course, having been born in this country, went through Georgia Tech, and in the navy, and I'm still [inaudible] retired [inaudible] the navy, I'm a pro-American, number one, whatnot. Maybe I'm a little too— But that's the way I feel.

DR: You're a patriot.

LF: I really feel that way.

DR: Well, I don't know if this is a good way to end or not, but at the moment our exhibit is called "Pledging Allegiance," because it really is the story of how very American South Carolina Jews seem to have made themselves.

LF: Alvin is retired from the navy too. We're very proud of it and we feel very strongly about the navy. I don't think it would have been any prejudice at all, if they had never put me in command of a ship.

DR: Well, this has been a wonderful morning.

LF: When I went to Georgia Tech, they told me that no Jewish boy had ever been in the Naval ROTC. Well, maybe that was true, but I went over there, told them I wanted to join, and the next thing I knew I was in. [Laughing.]

SR: That's interesting. I think after you, Raymond's brother, Irving, I think, was in the Naval ROTC at Georgia Tech.

LF: Yeah. I graduated in '34. This was in 1930.

SR: It would have been much later, but I feel certain [inaudible].

LF: I don't know how true that was.

SR: Yeah. Well, you were a trailblazer. You started it.

LF: I never thought of that as much.

DR: Well, I want to thank you again.

LF: Well, thank y'all, and I hope we've given— As I say now, I'm sure when you get back, you'll say I wish I had asked them this and I wish— I think you'll be very interested in that paper that Heather wrote. Heather is an extremely bright, attractive young lady, and this paper she wrote, I'm sure you'll find very interesting.

DR: Is there anything you wish we had asked?

LF: No, I told you that one thing about the Knobels, [laughter] but it burns me up every time I think about it.

DR: Yeah, everybody makes their own way somehow.

LF: That's all right. One nice thing about America, you do what you please. If you want to be a Baptist, you can join. You can do anything you want to, which is good!

SR: Absolutely.

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END OF TAPE