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Interviewees: Sylvan Lewenthal Rosen (b. April 1, 1913 in Georgetown, South Carolina; d. May 2, 1996 in Georgetown, South Carolina)
Meyer Rosen (b. November 17, 1919 in Georgetown, South Carolina)

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Begin Tape

DR: If you don't mind, I'm going to call you by your first names, so that the person transcribing the tape will know which of the Rosens I'm talking to. Is that all right? . . . Sylvan, would you tell me just a little bit about what you know of your family background, starting with your grandparents' generation, if that was the first generation.

SR: I know they came here and my grandmother and her husband, Philip Lewenthal, as I understand, were married probably in Darlington, South Carolina, and they came here. She seemed to be the more aggressive of the two people. She opened a bakery and also sold chinaware and things of that sort that I guess went along with that bakery. Meyer, do you know about what time it was? I don't remember.

MR: I think they came here about 1887, because my mother, she always said that she was three years old when she came here, and she was born in '84. I think '87 would be when they came here. My mother was three years old. She was the second child.

DR: What was your grandmother's name?

SR: Sally Lewenthal.

DR: And her maiden name?

SR: Weinberg.

DR: Would you go back to what you were telling me before, about when the Weinbergs came to America?

SR: Well, based on this article, they came here shortly after the Civil War. That is my grandfather now. I mean, that would be my great-grandfather. I don't know when his wife came here. He first went to New York, according to this thing, and then came down to Charleston and it seems that he may have had two wives. May have been both at the same time, so far as this article says. Anyway, he married a lady in Charleston, Riis, R-I-I-S, and they had either twelve or thirteen children. [Some family documents show spelling as Reis.] A cousin of mine who lived in Washington—I've forgotten his first name now—told me that they had one child, that his father had one child by his first wife and twelve children by Ms. Riis. And most of those twelve children stayed around, their families are still in South Carolina.

MR: They're predominantly around the Pee Dee area, around Sumter, Darlington, Manning. As a matter of fact, one of the descendants was the mayor of Manning—Julien.

SR: Julien Weinberg. You may have run into him over in Manning.

DR: Okay. So, Sally Weinberg was one of the children of this marriage?

SR: One of the thirteen children.

DR: Do you know the first names of either of these great-grandparents? Riis or—

SR: It's in that article.

MR: I think his name was Isaac. Wasn't it Isaac?

SR: I don't know. You know, with twelve children, he didn't name any of them after himself and he must have an unusual name, to run out of names. But it's in that [article]. It may have

been Isaac Weinberg. Isaac Weinberg was one of the—no, that was Isaac Lewenthal, I think, who lived in New York.

DR: Well, we can get the names from the—

SR: From that article. I have a copy of it. It must be home.

DR: This article is a manuscript? It's not published?

SR: It's not published, no. Both of our grandparents died relatively young. I think that they both died prior to 1912 or 1918, didn't they, Meyer? I know they did. [Mr. Meyer Rosen later confirmed that Sally died in 1904 and Philip in 1910.]

MR: I don't know how old Philip was, but Sally was forty-eight when she died.

SR: That information is in the cemetery.

DR: Because they are buried here.

SR: Yes, they're both buried here.

DR: Do you know how the family got from Charleston to Darlington?

SR: I have no idea.

DR: Do you know why they decided to settle in Darlington?

SR: Well, the oldest son, Sally's oldest brother, lived in Darlington—Abraham Weinberg—and she had a brother, Henry Weinberg, who lived over in Mayesville, and I think Henry Weinberg actually helped her get into business. He was right successful. He was one of the first investors in Coca-Cola. His daughter's living now in Mayesville.

DR: And what is her name?

SR: Her name is—

MR: They call her "Blue Eyes."

SR: Marvelle.

MR: I think that was the other girl. Carmel, maybe it's—

SR: Carmel was the other one. I think Marvelle is the name. I'm not positive.

DR: That's an interesting name. Is she still a Jewish person?

MR: No, she—

SR: She married a Goza. And I believe they have one son, don't they, Meyer?

MR: Yes, they have one son but she was in—when Mayesville was really—

SR: Her father didn't marry a Jewish woman. Her father would not. Her mother was not Jewish.

MR: And they were probably the only Jewish fam—he was probably the only Jewish man in the community at that time.

SR: No question about that.

DR: Well, it turns out there were quite a few Jewish families in Mayesville, at least for one short period.

MR: Is that right?

DR: There were Mazurskys—

SR: In Mayesville?

DR: Yes, sir.

SR: Mayesville? You're not—

DR: I'm not talking about Sumter. Mayesville.

SR: No, there was a Mazursky in Barnwell.

DR: That was Morris's uncle. Morris David Mazursky was *born* in Mayesville. His dad lived in Mayesville.

SR: Mortimer Mazursky and Herman Mazursky, most of them lived in Barnwell. Mortimer Mazursky married my wife's aunt, Minnie Surasky. She was originally from Aiken. I didn't know Morris as well.

DR: He was a nephew of the Barnwell Mazursky. They didn't get along that well—that's what Morris told me.

SR: Mortimer didn't get along with anybody, including himself [laughter].

DR: And so he eventually got into a business in Mayesville, and then eventually moved to Sumter. But, at that time, Mayesville might have had, I don't know, it sounded like four, five, six Jewish businesses.

SR: The only person I knew that was over there was Uncle Henry.

DR: So, the move from Darlington to Georgetown in around 1887, do you know what caused that relocation?

SR: Well, I think she came back to go into business.

MR: I'd say probably economy.

SR: She opened a store and Iseman . . . Uncle Abram married an Iseman, that's how that relationship came in. And there was an Iseman Drug Store down here that I think Sally—in fact, Sally built the building, I believe, put up the building for them to go in business. Now none of these things are necessarily documented, you understand.

MR: I've got an article here from the *Georgetown Times*, where Sally Lewenthal was just completing a building for the purpose of Dr. Iseman coming here.

SR: You clipped it out?

MR: I got the paper, it's—

SR: Oh, I see. That's just a recent publication?

DR: Yes. Philip Schneider told me this too, so whether it's true or not it's—

SR: No. I mean, it's true. I just don't know what the sequence of events was. She also had a nephew, Meyer Weinberg, who came down here. He was a doctor, and he was in the drugstore—he was in Georgetown for a short while. He later went to Baltimore to practice medicine.

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DR: Leaving the Weinberg connection for a minute, would you tell me how the Rosen side of the family came to Georgetown?

SR: My father came to Georgetown and went to work first, I believe, at about fifteen years of age—not Georgetown, came to South Carolina when he was about fifteen years of age. And he

went to work for—the first person that I know of that I ever heard him say he went to work for was a Mimnaugh, who was in the mercantile business in Orangeburg, South Carolina.

DR: Would you spell that?

SR: M-I-M-N-A-U-G-H, or something like that. It was a right prominent name later on in Columbia. They had a relatively large store. And how he came in contact with it I don't know, but he later had some connection with Bubba Strauss, who had also married into the Weinberg family in Sumter. I don't know what the itinerary was, but he went to work for—Isaac Strauss had a son who apparently was not as stable as he might have been, and Papa went from there, as I understand, to either Summerton or Summerville, and assisted in the management of some cotton, textile business. It wasn't a needle business, it was, you know, probably a cotton gin or something of that—or maybe just dealing in cotton, but it had to do with raw cotton somewhere. And from there, he came over here to work for Mr. Ringel. He came over and worked for Ringel too, didn't he, Meyer?

MR: Yes, he and Mr. Schneider, both of them worked there at the same time.

SR: He and his brother-in-law. I never heard Mama and Papa talk about how they met or how they got married. It might have been one of those pre-arranged weddings, you know, in those days or something of that sort. But, anyway, they were married and settled in Georgetown and they went in business originally as a Hyman-Schneider business. Mr. Hyman from Darlington was probably the financier, put up the money. That business failed by reason of Mr. Hyman's speculation in real estate, and one thing or another. And they reopened as the New Store and they continued in business as partners until my father died. Then the business evolved from a mercantile business to a furniture and appliance business which Harold and Philip—Philip is one of the ones you talked to—continued until they retired, what, about five or six years maybe?

MR: January of '89.

SR: January of '89 is when they retired. They sold the property and retired. That business, as I understand, originally started around somewhere between 1910 and 1912, something like that.

MR: Let me just show you what I was talking about. [Opens newspaper; the article is part of a series, titled "A View from the Past," which contains brief excerpts from previous news stories which ran on the same month and day in past years.] Now, this will be interesting. All of these people, except the last one, Mr. Steele, were Jewish people. This is May the 30th, 1991, "One hundred years ago," this says, "Our principal thoroughfare shows evidence of life. Mr. Brilles is rapidly going ahead with his new and commodious store." Brilles was a Jewish fellow. "Mr. Sittenfield is driving the pile for the foundation of his place on Prince Street." That's a Jewish person. "Mrs. Lewenthal is clearing away old rubbish and gathering material for the handsome edifice to be occupied by Dr. M. S. Iseman." Then it says something about Mr. Steele. But every one of those people, over a hundred years ago, was improving establishments on Front Street.

Now, J. B. Steele was not a Jewish person, but he went in business with a Jewish person.
[Laughing.]

....

MR: Now here's another article [from the same series]. This is a hundred years ago, and this is the paper of March the 2nd, of '91, and it says, "Mrs. Lewenthal has just completed a good wall back of her store. She will soon be commencing the erection of a handsome brick store next to the bakery." That's the brick store they were building for Dr. Iseman that's in *that* article. If they came in '87, that would only be four years after they got here.

SR: Well, you know what Mr. Schneider said if Sally had lived she'd have owned Georgetown. Unfortunately, we didn't know either of our grandparents, but she evidently was a real aggressive go-getter, you know. And that was not uncharacteristic of *some* of the Weinbergs in that generation. All of them seem to have done reasonably well. Some of them became farmers, particularly the ones around Manning and Mayesville and Sumter, they were primarily farmers and I don't know but what Rusty [Mortimer M. Weinberg, Jr.], for instance, his family probably still owns a good bit of land out there. His grandfather was Sam Weinberg. His father was Mortimer Weinberg. We used to do business with them; we associated with them [inaudible].

DR: Let me ask you about something that Philip implied about his grandparents. He was telling me about Sally opening this bakery and I said, well, what about her husband, where was he? And Philip said he was probably studying the Talmud. [Laughter.]

MR: As I understand—you know, we never had a rabbi; we were serviced by other rabbis—but as I understand the people in the community, he would hold some services, he did have some background.

SR: He was probably more educated than the others. He probably could read Hebrew, you know, and read the prayers and conduct them. Now, I've never heard of him doing anything except sitting on his butt [laughter].

DR: I think that's what Philip meant, but he said it in a nice way. He said that was typical of the family structure at that time, that the woman worked in the business and the men studied.

SR: I don't know about all that [inaudible] but, because all the other men that I knew around here, the ones that I knew, they all worked. But, as I say, that was what I heard about Philip, he didn't do much. He came down here from Cincinnati, I understand. The Lewenthal family came from—and how he got here or why he got here, I don't know. You remember that information we got from somebody that had a lawsuit about the Lewenthal recovering the property in Cincinnati?

MR: It was a farm at one time. I never went up there but it seemed like somebody told me along the line that it was where the grand central station was in Cinn—the railroad station was right in the center of the county.

SR: But it was a hundred years after, fifty years or something.

MR: They lost it at a tax sale, as I believe.

DR: Let me get a couple of names and places straight here. Your dad's name?

SR: Harry Nathan Rosen. Harry N. Rosen.

DR: My grandfather's name was Harry Rosen.

SR: Is that right?

DR: Yes. And you say he came to South Carolina when he was about fifteen?

SR: This is my recollection. Do you recall anything different than that, Meyer?

MR: Well, no. But he must have come down shortly after the turn of the century—

SR: His father came down at the same time.

MR:—because he worked in those places, he worked in Summerton and he worked in Sumter and he worked in Orangeburg, and then he came to Georgetown and he worked for Ringel and, during that time, they went in business. Philip said the charter is dated 1911, so if he worked in all those places, [he must have arrived] say about 1905. I don't know, but you know he worked in those other places. It would just be a guess. But it was some time shortly after the turn of the century that he came down.

DR: Do you know his date of birth? Is that on the tombstone?

MR: Yes. It's April—his birthday was the same year—no, that was—died in January—

SR: Yes, he died in January. He was seventy-nine years old, seventy-eight, seventy-nine [seventy-six] when he died.

MR: He was born in '84. He and my mother were born—he might have been born in '83, but the birth certificate said it was in '84. You remember drawing Social Security?

SR: Mama said she changed the birth certificate so she wouldn't be older than he was. [Laughing.] That was when things were more convenient than they are now.

DR: Then if he were born around 1884, came to South Carolina when he was about fifteen, that would put it right at the turn of the century.

SR: Yes, that sounds about right.

DR: And your mother's name?

MR: Dora Lewenthal.

DR: And she was born about the same time.

MR: In Darlington.

SR: Dora was born in Darlington, wasn't she, Meyer?

MR: Yes. I think Philip said Fannie was born in some place, Summerville or some place different than that, but I know we got—Link was born the year after Mama, and when he wanted to get a passport, one of those delayed birth certificates, I got it from Darlington.

DR: Mr. Sylvan, you told me you weren't sure whether your father was born here in this country or abroad?

SR: I'm not sure. I think he was born in this country. His older sister said he was.

MR: And she was born over—she came over as an infant.

DR: Where did the family come from?

MR: Poland or—

SR: They came from, I really—Russia—

MR: Russia or Poland.

SR: —something in those areas, I don't know. I'm not positive. As I say, we don't have any—I want to go up, go to Ellis Island and find out some time.

DR: That's something else I plan to do this summer, and since I'll be looking for Rosens, I'll look for yours too.

SR: Her name was Rosen before she was married.

MR: Is that right?

DR: My maiden name is Rosen.

MR: From where?

DR: My grandfather immigrated to New York. All my grandparents came to New York. He came from somewhere in the vicinity of Warsaw.

SR: I don't know where Papa—I think he's from Russia. But they were related. There was a big mercantile establishment, and this must have been on the mother's side. I knew my grandmother Rose for a short period of time. She lived in New York and I spent a summer up there with her. Her name was Rose. But they were related to the Whites who were in the mercantile business in New York, but what the relationship was or—it had to come on the mother's side because—unless it was on the female side and the White side. I heard Papa talk about that but they never followed it up.

DR: Now, Rose was married to your Rosen grandfather?

SR: Yes. I have a picture there at the house. I think I have a picture of both of them. I know I have. Have you ever seen a picture of Philip Lewenthal, our grandfather?

MR: No. But Rose's husband was named Isaac Meyer.

DR: Which is how you got your—

MR: I was named— [laughing], but I never knew either one of them.

DR: Isaac Meyer Rosen was your grandfather.

MR: Yes. That was Rose's husband.

SR: I don't know what her maiden name was.

DR: When they came to this country, they already had one child that you've mentioned, your father's older [sister], Ida. . . . Besides the aunt who was older than your father, did they have any other children, do you know?

SR: They had a lot of children. They had Minnie and Fannie and Julius and Jenny.

MR: There were only two boys.

SR: And Harry, of course. That would be my father. He was the second oldest. Then there was a sister—Jenny—Fannie, Minnie, and Julius.

DR: And the oldest daughter?

SR: Ida. I know her last name but I don't really know the last names of any of the others except Julius. Her last name was Sisser. She was Harold's mother-in-law, Harold Schneider's mother-in-law. Harold married a first cousin of ours.

DR: How do you spell Sisser?

SR: S-I-double-S-E-R, I think. I'm pretty sure.

DR: So, she married a Sisser?

SR: Yes, she married Jake Sisser.

DR: For the purposes of finding information at Ellis Island, all I really need to know is Isaac Meyer Rosen, his wife Rose, and they would have had one daughter, Ida. If they're listed, that's who would be there.

MR: And the possibility they would have had a son, Harry.

SR: It could have been Harry too, I mean, that's a possibility. It is pretty questionable.

DR: And they would have been arriving right around the turn of the century?

SR: No, no, they would have been arriving before that, because it was around the turn of the century that he came to Orangeburg.

DR: And they'd already been in New York.

SR: That's right. He was fifteen years old.

DR: Oh, of course. So they would have been arriving in 18—

MR: It would have been around 1884, 1885, somewhere in the mid-'80s.

DR: People have gotten an amazing amount of documentation. They have ships' lists—

SR: I was up there the other day—well, last year—for a wedding, and some of the people that went to the wedding went out to Ellis Island and they said they didn't have any problem at all. It was almost—

MR: You can punch the computer.

SR: They had a computer and they put the name in and it came right up on the thing.

DR: So we don't know why the Rosen family decided to relocate.

SR: He's the only one. The rest of them stayed in New York until later on when the children separated—got out. But he was the only one that came down South. That's why all the Rosens down—Morris Rosen and all the Rosens down there—we have no relation. And this Rosen family in Columbia . . . he was the only one that came down. The *family* didn't relocate. You see what I mean?

DR: Absolutely. He came as a very young, enterprising guy.

SR: Well, you see, I think his father came too at that time. His father went back, but I think that when he came down, he didn't just come down alone at fifteen. His father was down here and they probably came down here to get a job and that's how—I don't know how they got to Orangeburg.

MR: He went to work for the store—the football stadium over at Orangeburg is named [for that family], they had a big department—

SR: Mimnaugh was the name, I remember that.

MR: The football stadium is still named for him. He went to work for that man.

SR: He had a big mercantile and he went in Columbia, had a place in Columbia too. I think he later moved to Columbia.

MR: And he worked for a merchant in Summerton, because I remember one time when he was sick, I got a telephone call. I just happened to be up there one Sunday morning, somebody phoned and they—you know, that was after he had his stroke—

SR: He was working with Bubba Strauss's son in Summerton.

MR: Is that right?

SR: Yes, he told me about that. I didn't know about it until just—I guess it was later in his life he was telling me about—just talking you know. We were sitting down talking about what he'd done and that sort of thing and he was talking about working in some kind of cotton mill, probably a big gin or something of that sort. Bubba Strauss was associated with—he was a

lawyer, but he was in the farming, you know, directly or indirectly. As I say, his son was a little—not as stable as he might have been, [so] he got Papa to come down there.

DR: You don't know how your parents met each other, is that right?

SR: Do you know, Meyer, how they met? I don't have any idea. Never heard them speak about it.

MR: But it would have been in Georgetown.

SR: Yes, it would have been in Georgetown after he came down here to Ringel, although they were not married in Georgetown. As I recall, they were married in Darlington.

MR: That might have very well—that's where the family was.

DR: Might have gone to her family home to get married.

SR: Let's see. They were married prior to Sally's death. She died in 1913, or something like that, wasn't it? [Mr. Meyer Rosen later noted that they were married *after* Sally's death; as he already noted, she died in 1904.]

MR: I can't remember.

SR: No, I don't remember either, but I was born in 1913, so I think that she was married prior to the time her mother died, that's what I'm talking about.

DR: When in 1913? When was your birth?

SR: April 1st.

DR: And, Meyer, what's your date of birth?

MR: November the 17th, 1919.

DR: Tell me a little more about Mr. Ringel and what your dad was doing in regard to Mr. Ringel.

SR: Ringel was a person that came down here, and I don't know when he came but he had children that were born in America. I'm sure they were born in America. They were older than I am. He originally had a store down here on Santee, and I think—I'm not positive again—I think it was the Sittenfields that owned the store building that he came in, and there was an industrial banker here by the name of Mr. Morgan. J. P. Morgan.

MR: No, no, that's the banker [chuckles].

SR: That's the bank.

MR: That's the bank. Mr. Morgan was—

SR: It was the Bank of Georgetown but Mr. Morgan was the industrial banker. He was president of the bank, that's who he was. And he induced—now this again is, you know, what I've heard—the person who was in that store, and I think it was the Sittenfields, I'm not positive about that, they had . . . borrowed money on the building and they evidently defaulted, and Mr. Morgan induced Mr. Ringel to leave South Santee and come to Georgetown to go in business, and he was very successful.

And during the time that he was in business, he must have brought in—oh, I don't know how many; I can't remember; of course I don't remember all of them—but starting with, say, my father and Mr. Schneider and possibly some others about that same age, he just brought young Jewish people, children, to come down here to work for him. And I would say that virtually every one of them ultimately went in business for themselves. And I think that was the same inducement that brought Schneider and Rosen into Georgetown. Now, not any of them that I know stayed in Georgetown, but there were merchants in Conway and Kingstree and other places that all started working for Mr. Ringel and then, ultimately, went in business for themselves in some of these other small communities. And to tell you how he, or why he, came in—except that maybe Mr. Ringel was looking for some clerks at that time, and they knew of each other, and it was just a normal employer/employee contacts and ultimate employment. That's just an analysis of the situation. But I don't know how many . . . well, there was Kalisky, there was Childs, and there was Popper, and Mr. Schneider, and there were others, too, that went in.

DR: Kalisky? Childs?

MR: He went to Conway.

DR: And he was Jewish also?

SR: Yes, all of them were Jewish.

DR: Do you remember Mr. Ringel?

SR: Oh, yes, I did some work for him—handled his estate.

MR: Mr. Ringel was very religious. He wouldn't go to the store on Saturday; he would send his wife [laughing]. That's a joke.

SR: That's a *fact*.

MR: That's a fact. [Laughter.]

SR: He lived right across the street over there. He was the one who kept a Sefer Torah. He had literally a safe, a kitchen safe, and he kept the Torah in it except for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and then he'd take it down to the Winyah Indigo Society Hall to use during the services. We still have the Sefer Torah, by the way.

DR: You do?

SR: Yes. It's in the temple.

DR: That's what you use for an ark?

MR: We have two Torahs now.

SR: Well no, the Torah itself, we have the Torah. It's not in that kitchen safe anymore [laughing], but we still have the Torah that he had. . . . I don't know where he got it but—I mean, you can buy these Torahs at the regular printers. We have another one now that was donated to the temple by—what was that family?

MR: Isaiah.

SR: That was the Moses family, Mark Moses' family.

MR: No, Isaiah. The ones that owned the old building that used to [inaudible].

SR: You think it was Isaiah?

MR: I know it was.

SR: Okay, okay [chuckles]. I thought it was Moses.

MR: They were deep thinkers. Their family came—they had been away for several generations and they wanted to make a contribution to the temple. The ladies in the temple wanted to ask if he'd build a fence around the temple . . . because it's on a corner and people were walking across and making paths. So I wrote him and told him that the Sisterhood had met and they would like that, and I got this letter from him. He said no, that he wouldn't contribute the fence; that if the congregation wanted to build a fence, he would contribute some very nice gates, because gates let people in; he was opposed to building a fence; fences kept people out and he didn't—I said they were deep thinkers. [Laughing.]

DR: Now who is this? Mr. Isaiah? That's his last name?

SR: Yes. I don't know who they are; they owned this building here. There was a Bubba Isaiah but I don't know.

MR: We had a relatively large Jewish community at one time. There was, I guess—well, I don't know. I'll take you around to the temple and show you some of the pictures. That will be more demonstrative.

DR: But take a guess. How many Jewish families do you think were in Georgetown at the *height* of this community?

SR: I'd say there were as many as twenty families, or twenty-five.

MR: I was thinking maybe more than that.

SR: You know, it's difficult to get, chronologically, names and so, for instance, I didn't know the Brilles; I just know the Brilles were here. And the ones that I knew—and some came and left, you know.

MR: The Rosen family, we had a mother and father. Sylvan had his family, I had a family. Would that be three families or one family, you know? That would be—

SR: The same thing with the Schneiders. They stayed here. They and then the Fogels, two of their three children stayed here. But if you go back to the generation before that, you had the Fogels and you had the Ringels and you had the Golds and you had Schneider and Rosen, and—

MR: Gladstone.

SR: —Gladstone. Then there was a Rosen, there was a fellow, a Rosen that came down here—

MR: Rosenblum?

SR: Rosenblum or some similar name. And Shizelle was here.

DR: Iseman?

SR: Well, Iseman was—you know, there was an Iseman drugstore when we came up . . . the name was there but the man that ran it was not Jewish.

DR: You think the original Iseman, Dr. Iseman—

MR: He just left. He came and left.

SR: This fellow Meyer Weinberg, the doctor, came down here and ran the drugstore for a while, but he was just here temporarily.

MR: He went in business with Rosa.

SR: There was Flaum and Schenk, Kaminskis we have named and—there were five Kaminskis, five families of Kaminskis. There was Eddie Kaminski, Harold, Joe—and who was the other one? Eddie, Harold, Joe—

MR: Eddie, Harold, Joe—Nat.

SR: Nat. His father lived in Awendaw.

MR: But he was one of the five.

SR: One of the five Kaminskis, yes.

DR: That would be Nathan?

SR: Nathan, yes. His grandfather didn't live here. His grandfather was the only one of the Kaminskis that's buried in New York. The rest of them are right here.

DR: What about the other families who, like the Kaminskis, had—

SR: The Ehrichs were here. In my generation, the Ehrichs had—the Dundas was here—remember, A. J. Dundas was here? And Louis Ehrich was not—he had a family, a relatively large family, Louis Ehrich had. He didn't have any boys, did he, Meyer? All his children were girls. No, Arthur was a son. He had one son, Arthur Ehrich. And there was Rose and Linie [Adeline] and Selena and—one of the Ehrichs lives in Manning, married to one of the Weinbergs.

But as I say, if you go over a long period of time, it's hard for me to chronologically fix them. The ones that I named basically were here when I was growing up. There was Herman Schenk and Joe Schenk. Joe Schenk was active in the congregation. Herman Schenk never went. They were brothers.

MR: Yom Kippur.

SR: He didn't go on Yom Kippur. But Joe Schenk went. And then the Flaums, Mr. Flaum was very, very active in the congregation.

MR: You had the Benjamins here too.

SR: The Benjamins. What was that fellow, Louis—you know, he went up to Johns Hopkins?

MR: There was Louis Benjamin.

SR: No, his name wasn't Benjamin.

MR: He was not much older than you.

SR: No, I mean I don't think his name was Benjamin. He was related to the Benjamins. Hanks. Some of these were intermarriages, but then the mother would be—the children went to Sunday school. Bournes.

MR: Levys.

SR: Bournes, Levys. They were all confirmed. All of the Bourne children were confirmed.

MR: Yeah, but that was the end of it.

SR: That was the end of it. None of them remained. I think they had rabbi guests at that time, but then there never were enough here to support a rabbi. We had somebody—Dr. Raisin was the first rabbi that I remember coming over here from Charleston.

MR: When Elzas was here.

SR: When Elzas was here before—I used to hear Mama talk—when the congregation was formed, Elzas was the one who came and he came over from Charleston.

DR: That would be Dr. Barnet Elzas?

MR: I don't remember his first name.

SR: I never knew anything about him.

MR: But he came from Beth Elohim.

SR: Yes, he was with K. K. Beth Elohim.

DR: He was a very prominent scholar. I think he may have been a lawyer, a rabbi, and a historian.

SR: I think that you're talking about our great-grandfather. I don't know, but what he was one of the people that was either an original member or maybe participated in the organization of K. K. Beth Elohim in Charleston.

DR: Now, which great-grandfather?

SR: That would have been Weinberg.

MR: Isaac Weinberg.

DR: Okay. He may have been an original—

SR: A member, yes.

DR: —an early member.

SR: Yes. You see, that's about two hundred twenty years old, twenty-five, something like that?

DR: Beth Elohim—the congregation of dates from 1749 and then the first structure was something like 1792.

SR: I mean it was not originally—I mean, when it became Reform—I went down to the two hundredth anniversary of the—Tarshish was down there.

DR: Right, in 1950.

SR: Tarshish was down there at that time.

DR: You talked a little bit about these early families being traditional. Would you describe a little bit about that?

SR: Well, they were just Orthodox Jews, that's all.

DR: They kept kosher?

MR: Some of them did, as far as they could. As a matter of fact, the Danzigs—[in] the house now, not outside—but they kept—

SR: Mr. Ringel kept kosher.

MR: Yes. They kept kosher as far—you know they'd have to get meats from Charleston.

SR: Alwyn's first wife kept kosher in the house.

DR: Who did?

SR: Alwyn Goldstein.

MR: Alwyn Goldstein. But the meats would have to come from out of town. The rest of it, you know, vegetables and that sort of thing, would be—

SR: But they didn't keep kosher outside of the house, the ones that we're talking about now. The only one I know that kept kosher all the way was, possibly, the Ringels, the last ones. Frank used to do it; Frank's wife used to do it.

MR: Yes, Vita did it.

DR: Who's Frank?

MR: Frank Danzig.

DR: And the Danzigs, you said, are one generation in Georgetown?

SR: Yes.

DR: And they came from—

MR: Baltimore.

DR: You say they would have gotten the meat from out of town. Where—

SR & MR: Charleston.

DR: And how did it come up?

SR: Mazos used to send it.

DR: The Mazos? Not the Zalkins?

MR: Maybe, maybe.

SR: The one I knew was Mazo.

MR: They had an uptown/downtown Mazos, I know. In *our* generation, you know—Sylvan's talking about the Ringels who came here long before we were here—but I don't know how they would get it here except—

SR: Ringel was the only family that I know of that kept kosher, except the ones that I say, you know, were kosher in the house.

DR: Philip told me about an aunt of his who came to live with them.

SR: Caroline Weinberg. She kept kosher.

MR: Yes, she kept kosher.

DR: And how. He said she really—she had her own stoves. [Laughter.] Caroline Weinberg—so she was Jewish.

MR: She was Sally's sister.

SR: She never married. She owned a place down there south of Broad in Charleston. Now that's where they were in business, that's where the Weinbergs were in business—at that place. I don't know whether she got that or whether Uncle Henry bought that for her. I'm inclined to believe that that may be where the family lived.

DR: In Charleston.

SR: In Charleston.

MR: In Charleston—98 Broad Street.

SR: You know who might know about that when you talk to somebody in Charleston—and, unfortunately, Milton died, but talk to Edwin Pearlstine.

DR: Okay. I know who he is and I've met his sister, Jane.

[Ed.: static at this point in the recording makes it difficult to hear.]

....

DR: And I should ask him about the Weinberg business—

SR: Ask him if he knows about [inaudible]. They own—I know they own the property down there—

MR: It was 98 Broad Street.

SR: 98 Broad Street. [Sounds like “Fannie”] got the [sounds like: “property”] and Caroline stayed up here and she when she died, she left it to Fannie or [inaudible]. But anyway, Fannie [inaudible] that property .

DR: What kind of business?

SR: It was a grocery business. [Inaudible.]

DR: You say it’s a grocery?

SR: I just assumed that it was. [Inaudible.]

MR: [Inaudible], you know that obituary said he was supposed to go out west and trade with Indians and all that sort of thing.

DR: Now, wait a minute, which generation—

SR: That’s the first one.

MR: That’s the first one that came over. He—

DR: The first Weinberg.

MR: Yes.

SR: He finally settled in Charleston. He was going out west and doing all that stuff [inaudible] children. [Inaudible] married at that time. Originally, as I say, he was in New York, and he went—the story says he went [inaudible].

DR: And then went to Charleston?

MR: How he got there—

SR: [Inaudible] and stayed there.

DR: Possibly established this grocery business.

SR: I’m just saying the grocery business. I don’t know what he did. I just assumed—

MR: Established a business.

SR: —that 98 Broad Street, that place down there was probably there was a store and a residence. On the other hand, I may be absolutely mistaken about it. Uncle Henry Weinberg—

that would have been Caroline's brother—he set her up to maintain her and he may have bought that place for her in Charleston, so far as I know.

MR: She lived there at one time.

SR: She lived there since she—

MR: Because Alwyn's mother remembered her being there.

SR: Well, when she came up here she wasn't a spring chicken, you know. She was an elderly person when she came up to live with Fannie. She wasn't a youngster. But she got to the point where she couldn't take care of herself, I'm sure that's the reason she came to Georgetown. As long as she could take care of herself, why, she did it. She used to walk from there to wherever the Orthodox synagogue was on Fridays and things like that.

DR: So what period are we talking about here?

SR: This would be in—

MR: In the '30s. She died in the '30s.

SR: I was in law school when she died. I hadn't graduated.

MR: That's right.

DR: I want to jump ahead a little bit. I know that there's a lot more about these old families we could talk about, and I would love to go into it, but I really want to get a little bit more on your own lives here. Could you describe your own family? I don't know if you're the only siblings in your family—

SR: We're the only ones.

DR: You two are the only children?

SR: Yes.

DR: So, Mr. Sylvan, if you were born in 1913, your parents would have been in Georgetown—

SR: I've lived in Georgetown all my life. I was born here.

DR: You were born here.

SR: [Inaudible.] I have three children. No, I only have—hell, I can't remember how many children I have. I only have two children.

....

DR: Let me ask you, when you were growing up, were any of the families of the earliest Jewish Georgetownians here? They're named in this document, the Cohens, the Myers, the Josephs, the Solomons, the Sasportas—

SR: The Sampsons were here—well, when I say the Sampsons were here, Hettie [Esther] Kaminski—she married Joe Kaminski—she was a Sampson and I think that's about—

DR: Hart, Moses, Aronson, Woolf—

SR: There was one of those. The Moses, Marks Moses—you know, come to think of it, Marks Moses' sister was living here. She married a Flaum and she lived here. I think she's in Sumter. I think Flaum married out there. What was his first name—very active in the congregation, used to teach Sunday school. He and Joe Schenk—the one whose brother didn't have anything to do—both of them worked for the Kaminskis. Both of them were related to the Kaminskis.

DR: The Schenks?

SR: Yes. Now I say that with some reservation, but I'm reasonably sure they were related to the Kaminskis. Joe Schenk and Herman Schenk worked for the Kaminskis.

DR: What do you think happened to those old families that were no longer here, say, by the turn of the century?

SR: Well, neither Herman Schenk nor Joe Schenk had children, so they just died.

DR: And the earlier ones whose names I was reading off from the paper?

SR: The Myers, Abe Fogel told me the other—a relative of Myers, who also had some connection with the Confederate Army, was living in Florida. In fact, I told him to write him and tell him that the grave was in terrible condition, to send us ten thousand dollars to maintain it [laughs].

DR: So some of them moved away.

SR: Obviously, all of them have moved away. They didn't die. Except the Kaminskis; the Kaminskis were not that generation, you know, they came after that. Actually Sampson—and I don't know about Myers, but it's in that Joyner book—Sampson was a slave owner, so he was

here prior to the Civil War. Now, I didn't know the Sampsons, except we used to live right next to Hettie [Esther] Kaminski, Joe Kaminski's wife. She had two children, Charlotte and Edward. They're both dead. Charlotte left a child and Edward had no children. His widow's living. She's not Jewish.

DR: The house you're talking about, is that the house you grew up in?

SR: The house that I grew up in, yes.

DR: Where is that?

SR: It's right down Front Street, about a block and a half from here.

DR: It's still there?

SR: Still there.

DR: In your family?

SR: No, no, we sold it. Meyer and I sold it. The house that the Kaminskis lived in is right back of it, facing on Prince Street. Our house faced on Front Street. It's a very big house—it's for sale now. A builder owns it. The only one of the Sampsons that was living during our lifetime would have been Hettie [Esther], wouldn't it, Hettie [Esther] Kaminski?

MR: That's the only one I knew.

DR: I was asking what had happened to the old families, the Jews who were here by the time of the Civil War.

SR: I imagine that's in that book of Joyner's. I think the Sampsons may have had children, but I don't remember. Now, the Myers did—as I say, Abe Fogel met that fellow, you know, Jack, came up here from Florida.

MR: Yes, he was Fort Myers, Florida.

SR: He was in Fort Myers?

MR: I think they said that he was an officer in some—

SR: Well, his father was, the one who's buried out here.

MR: They said that the Fort Myer was named after that family.

DR: I had heard that Fort Myer was named after a Jewish family. Let me ask you to tell some more about your childhood, your growing-up years. What was life like in Georgetown for a young Jewish boy?

SR: It was fine. There wasn't any—I didn't know what the word anti-Semitic meant until I went to college. We used to celebrate Purim parties and things like that, and we integrated. And you know we'd have outsiders as well. This was an activity that's gone by the way, but I guess we used to have Purim parties very frequently you know, every year.

MR: As a matter of fact, the only one that I can remember, they probably had it at [sounds like "phone land"], they called it a Purim Ball. They had an orchestra, a community dance, dancing. Then after that, when I was coming along and when his children [were growing up], we had parties for the congregation. But back before that when, like Sylvan's talking about, the community used to come to the affairs like that.

DR: So the gentile community would be invited?

SR: Yes. You had some anti-Semitic, just like you had anti-Negroes but, generally speaking, it just wasn't a—there wasn't any difference, that's all. There just wasn't any—it didn't make any—

DR: You just went to a different church, so to speak.

SR: Yes. Well, sometimes we'd go to the Catholic church on Christmas Eve with a group of Catholics. We'd go there sometimes. It wasn't all one-sided. The Jews did the same thing as the non-Jews did. We participated in their affairs just as they participated in ours.

MR: You know, the families were close. Protestant and Catholic and the Jewish families were close. And if they had children your age and they were having something at the Episcopal church or the Methodist church, well you went with them. You know, you went there. There was no proselytizing that I can remember or anything on either side. But you did participate in the social activities. And the people were—Sylvan's right on the mark. But you take when— He was captain of athletic teams and things like that, you know, that would be something that you would participate—you wouldn't run into a bunch of anti-Semites. It would be—you'd be served in those things as—

SR: Well, I was president of the senior class and, as Meyer says, captain of the football team. Which I never deserved because I never worked for it [laughing]. But as I say, you were just a person, you were just a citizen of the community like everybody else. Occasionally, you know, you'd run into a rabble-rouser, something like that, but it was rare. And I would say that the Catholics particularly [were close to the Jewish community] for the reason that so many Catholics were Lebanese, and you had a very similar economic background and they were—they've been equally as successful as the Jewish second generation, my generation; the Lebanese

in Georgetown have all been very successful people. They're doctors and dentists and merchants, successful merchants, and that sort of thing. There was a similarity because of the time in America, and the manner in which they came. They came as peddlers, the same as Mr. Kaminski. He didn't have a monopoly on peddling, you know [laughs]. He just happened to be a more successful peddler than most people.

DR: Kaminski came as a peddler?

SR: Yes, that's what they always talked about. He came with a pack on his back and he ended up—I guess in my lifetime . . . the Kaminski business interest was the largest in Georgetown, of the native Georgetonians. He had a hardware store and a grocery store.

MR: And wholesale.

SR: The next generation didn't have the initiative to move forward. They could have been in the chain store business the same as these other people, but they just never moved from one, you know, never went—in fact, the second generation were rather dullards. What's his name, this fellow Harold Kaminski, who lived in [inaudible], if he owned the land . . . [now that his family once owned] he'd be worth fifty million dollars. He just dissipated it, actually. Joe Kaminski never did anything. Eddie Kaminski was involved in the stock market, but never really did anything. Harold Kaminski was more active in the community affairs than anybody. He was formerly mayor of Georgetown, too. Harold was married, I'm sure he was married. And he was active in the government, but he was the only one of the Kaminskis that did anything that was obvious. Now, I'm sure maybe back-door and financing and things like that may have happened, but, basically, he was the one. In fact, he ran against me for mayor.

DR: He did? A Jew running against a Jew?

SR: But I always liked Harold. His wife was a nice—his wife was a member of one of the oldest non-Jewish families in Georgetown. She was a Pyatt, P-Y-A-double-T.

DR: Tell me a little bit about your dad's business.

MR: Well, they were in the mercantile business, and when they started they sold very—

SR: Exclusive—

MR: —exclusive merchandise and they really got more on the books than they got in the cash register [laughs].

DR: What do you mean by that?

MR: I mean that the accounts receivable weren't paid, [laughter] and for other reasons within the family. Anyway, there's no use going into that, but they had a difficult time. They had two stores. They had the original store that was the bakery and the other store that they built for Dr. Iseman. One was a ladies' department store and the other was a mens' store. When the Depression came along they combined the stores and they actually rented one of the stores and the person that rented it, he went out of business. Then they went into the furniture and electrical appliance business on one side of the store and they maintained the mercantile business on the other. And I think they stayed like that until they—the two Schneider boys took the business over when they died.

SR: I think they got out of the mercantile business before Papa died.

MR: Well, they still had that store over there but, nevertheless, they were in the electrical—they ended up in the electrical appliance and furniture business—and the Schneider boys took it over. I'm sure Philip could tell you; whatever he said would be more accurate than we. We weren't involved in the business.

DR: He talked about the tough times of the Depression.

SR: Actually, they went broke in 1921. That was the depression prior to the '29; that's when it happened. Then it was resolved and they got back into business. And Mr. Schneider actually was on the road; he used to peddle himself. Even after that time, he used to go out and visit these places. Papa was more the interior man. Then things got better and they were doing reasonably well, you know, after the mid-'30s when the national recovery began.

DR: Do you know when the store ceased to be a bakery and became a mercantile?

SR: That was when—

MR: Probably can get that off of Sally's tombstone.

SR: That was when she died, I'm sure. My father and Mr. Schneider never operated it as a bakery.

DR: The man that put up the money for the original store, Mr. Hyman—

SR: Hyman Schneider, that was Hyman Schneider.

DR: Would that have been M. H.?

SR: Abe Hyman, from Darlington.

.....

SR: Abe Hyman was a big merchant.

MR: Mr. Schneider married one of the Weinberg sisters first and then they sort of got into the business, and my father married the other Weinberg—

SR: Lewenthal.

MR: I mean Lewenthal, excuse me. And then that's when he went into the business. But I don't think that they got into the business until—

. . . .

DR: Getting back to your boyhood years, did your family have servants? Did you have household help?

SR: Yes.

DR: Do you remember anybody in particular?

MR: Well, like Sylvan said, they used to call the old nurse Da, D-A, but her name was Smalls.

SR: Ann Smalls.

MR: I remember one young boy, he came over from—[actually, there were] two of them, I think. We had a household servant. We used to call them cooks. They cleaned the house and cooked the meal. And then Mama always had a yard boy, somebody that cleaned up the yard. One of the yard boys was a fellow by the name of Richard Martin, and he came over from Pawleys Island section. [He] lived in the section of Georgetown that was the black community. They didn't even have water. They had spigots in the street or something. They had no electricity. And he would stay at the house at night to study. He graduated from the school—they were segregated at that time. My mother got him a job in Columbia, I think it was with Sylvan's mother-in-law, and he went to school and graduated from college up there, Allen University. He went up North in a predominantly white community and he became an Episcopal bishop. He was a bishop in the Episcopal church up there.

SR: He was at Long Island.

MR: And then another one by the name of Joe King followed the same pattern. He came from Pawleys Island, too, and he went to work in Columbia; my mother got him a job up there. He went into the army and was a captain in chemical warfare during World War II. So they—we had servants coming up.

SR: He later committed suicide, this Joe King.

MR: Well, it was some domestic problem that—he married a—

DR: It sounds like your mother was somewhat of a benefactress to these young men?

SR: Incidentally. But I mean, she wanted—she did it—it was not uncommon. Others did it as well. I mean, it was a common thing. Richard was an unusual—in fact, his family—we've known his family up until just recently. I think his sister died. It hadn't been so long since his sister died you know.

MR: Yes, I know.

SR: And Richard is still living, as I recall.

MR: Yes, he's still living. But he doesn't come—he used to come, he'd come by and go to see Mama every time he came to town. He'd go by and see her.

DR: I didn't ask this question before but it pertains to the next thing I wanted to ask you. Did your father speak Yiddish?

SR: No. Enough—numbers, you know—enough to talk in the store, [inaudible] but he didn't speak. I'm sure when Papa came down here he did speak it.

MR: He could read it, I know, I say, Papa would read it.

SR: He could read some Hebrew, but she's talking about Yiddish. [I know he spoke it when he came down here.] Because his mother spoke Yiddish, you know, it was table talk. Everybody in the family spoke Yiddish. When I went up there as a kid, six, seven years old, I used to learn knife and fork and plate and this sort of thing. They just spoke Yiddish in the house, so he must have spoken Yiddish at that time. But non-use—he never spoke it down here. We never—Yiddish was never spoken down here.

DR: You remember visiting the family in New York?

SR: Oh yes.

DR: Do you remember where they lived in New York?

MR: Brooklyn.

SR: They lived in Brooklyn. They lived at Park Avenue, wasn't it? There was a brewery across the street from the tenement house that they lived in.

DR: You remember that?

SR: Yes.

DR: Did you go to synagogue with them?

SR: No.

DR: The reason I was going to ask that is because I just heard the other night from a fellow who grew up around the meat market in Charleston, the Zalkin meat market, and he described this Negro man who worked for his dad speaking Yiddish with the customers, and Sam Solomon's help speaking Yiddish with the customers, and the two of them speaking Yiddish to each other. I thought that was kind of interesting.

SR: I think she lived on Bushwick Avenue, the grandmother. And I had an aunt that lived in Flatbush, she lived out there. I can't remember the name of the street. She lived in one of these brownstone duplexes. In fact, her husband had an automobile agency just down from the tenement that the grandmother lived in.

DR: Mr. Meyer, did you go up to New York as a child?

MR: I think I went up there one time, and I know I was five years old. We were staying over at Pawleys Island and my father came over and got me and I went up there. But I don't remember anything about it. I believe that his mother was very ill and he went up there, and it was shortly after that that she died. I don't remember him going back up there after his mother died. He used to go up periodically to see her.

SR: I don't think he—I don't remember him going up there. Julius's brother used to come down here, and his older sister—well, next [oldest]—Ida and Jenny used to come to Georgetown. But Papa didn't go back up to New York after that.

DR: What kind of a Jewish education did you boys have?

MR: Laymen teaching Sunday school classes under the direction of the rabbi from Charleston; [he] would prescribe the books that you take, and he would come over once a month when we were coming along and he would get the Sunday school together and hold some sort of a—this is me, I don't know whether Sylvan did—but he would get us together and maybe just review the books. But we didn't have any religious leaders giving us any education, other than maybe telling the local people what books to use and that sort of thing.

DR: Where did you actually meet?

MR: In the Winyah Indigo Society Hall. And then we'd meet in homes. For instance, I taught the Sunday school. Sylvan taught Sunday school when he came up. [Inaudible young ones and they'd come to my house. [Laughing.] . . . I didn't do it 'til after the war. But that was—there was no religious leader here.

DR: Sylvan, do you remember the name of the layman who was teaching?

SR: He taught me.

DR: It wasn't Mr. Ringel?

MR: Oh, no, he wasn't in it. Mr. Flaum taught. And Miss Cealy Benjamin taught. And Esther Rubin taught. And later on, when the children came up, Carroll Abrams taught until—

SR: No, not—

MR: Carroll taught, [I'm sure] because I was teaching too at that time. But they were just probably people that—not Ms. Cealy and Mr. Flaum, but most of the ones that came over later—were interested in the children.

DR: Did y'all learn Hebrew?

MR: Nobody could speak Hebrew [laughs].

SR: My oldest child was the first child that was bar mitzvahed in Georgetown. He learned enough Hebrew. And that was his mother's influence, you know, I'm not taking any credit. He learned enough Hebrew, and he now can speak enough Hebrew to read the opening and closing prayer for the Torah and some of the prayers [inaudible]. And his younger brother did, too. Then following that Philip Schneider's child, Laz, was bar mitzvahed too, wasn't he? Was Mark bar mitzvahed or confirmed?

MR: No, they were confirmed in Charleston at Beth Elohim.

SR: In fact, Tarshish was the person who gave Dick's instructions. He's fifty-nine years old. Damn, it seems like a long time ago.

DR: Your son?

SR: Yes.

DR: And Tarshish was Allan?

MR: Allan Tarshish.

SR: Allan used to come over once a month. And then, actually when Tarshish stopped coming there was a successive—I can't remember his name. It started with a K. Klausner or something like that.

MR: Kodol.

DR: Padoll, Burt Padoll. Padoll was in the maybe '60s, early '60s.

MR: I think he was younger than that.

SR: We sort of lost touch with the congregation down in Charleston.

DR: Tell me a little bit about what y'all did during the Second World War.

SR: Meyer went in the service. I was not in the service.

DR: You saw action overseas?

MR: Well, I went in—I was drafted [laughs] about a couple, few months before the war started.

SR: He was in the Pacific theater.

DR: In what branch of the service?

MR: Signal Corps.

DR: And did you stay in Georgetown?

SR: Yes. I was drafted, called for the draft, but physical—my eyes—and just didn't make it. I was married and had two children, too, at the time.

DR: Oh, you were already married.

SR: Yes. I was married when I was in college.

DR: Tell me a little bit about how you met your wife, her name, and what family she came from.

SR: Blind date. [Laughter.]

DR: Really?

SR: I went to see somebody else and she was there. [Laughing.]

DR: This was where?

SR: In Columbia.

DR: You were at the university?

SR: Yes.

DR: What was her name?

SR: Erma. E-R-M-A. Erma Levkoff, L-E-V-K-O-double-F.

MR: You know Irving Levkoff in Charleston?

DR: I only know the names; I don't know the family yet. But I understand that this is your connection with the Levkoff—

SR: Yes.

DR: The Levkoffs had been in Charleston how long?

SR: The Levkoffs were in Columbia. Erma was born in Camden. Her father was George Levkoff, and he was really a character, that fellow, George Levkoff. He was an interesting person. He had a twin brother, Laz. When I knew Laz, Laz was sick. He really ceased to be active. But George Levkoff had a real interesting career. He, at one time, bought Fort Jackson.

DR: So her family was similar mercantile-type business people?

SR: No, not the type merchandise, not the type business that our parents were in. He was more of a speculator/adventurer. As I say, he bought—when I say bought Fort Jackson, he bought the equipment when they were selling out.

DR: So, you were an undergraduate at USC when you met—

SR: No, I went to— Well, I was an undergraduate for one year and then law school for three years. I went to The Citadel for two years. That was a waste [laughs].

....

MR: My wife was from Georgetown. We grew up together. We were in one of those Sunday school classes that you're talking about there. Her name was Lillian Rubin. Her family name was Gladstone, here in Georgetown. They were merchants of various kinds. They ran a hotel in Georgetown, and ran a clothing store just like my family did. That was her grandparents, the Gladstone family.

DR: These were her maternal grandparents?

MR: Maternal, yes. Father came down from, I guess, New York, but I never knew any of his family.

DR: There are several Rubin families, I'm sure you're aware. Hyman Rubin.

MR: Oh, yes. This was not that family.

SR: Is Hyman still living?

DR: Yes, I interviewed him a month ago. His health is frail but he [inaudible].

SR: How about Sammy? Is Sammy still—

DR: No. That's his brother?

SR: Yes.

DR: I interviewed Sammy's widow, Hannah. Sammy died young. He died right after he retired.

SR: Sammy finally studied law. In fact, his law firm—

DR: Not Hannah's [husband]—maybe it's someone else.

SR: You don't think so? I thought Sammy—maybe it was Hymie's son or somebody like that. Some of them—one of them got into the legal profession. I thought it was Sammy. Hymie's not doing anything now, I don't think.

DR: He goes to the warehouse, you know, with his family business, every day. A little bit like Alwyn and Philip.

SR: They still operate then?

DR: No, it's defunct, but he's there. That's where he met me.

SR: That's his office?

DR: Yes. He said this is the most expensive office in [laughs] Columbia. It's this huge warehouse.

SR: He's still on Gervais Street?

DR: No, they live on Wheat Street.

SR: No, I don't mean live, the building is on—

DR: The business, yes. Mr. Sylvan, tell me a little more about your career. You went to law school, you met your wife on a blind date—that's how it's going to go down in history now.

SR: We were married in—we eloped in 1935. Married, I think, I never can remember, it was either the 19th or—February the 19th, 1935.

DR: Where did you elope to?

SR: We just went over to Lexington and got married. [Laughter.]

DR: Without a rabbi?

SR: We later had a religious ceremony. Rabbi Karesh [inaudible].

DR: Rabbi Alter Karesh?

SR: No. This man here was seventy years old when he married us. He'd be older than Methuselah if he was there.

DR: But was his name Alter? Do you remember?

SR: His name was Cole, Colter or—

MR: Coleman was his son.

SR: I don't remember what his first name was. I just knew him as Rabbi Karesh.

DR: I think it was. Rabbi Alter Karesh.

SR: Probably was. I don't think there was any other rabbi in Columbia by the name of Karesh except him. Coleman Karesh was his son who later taught at the university law school. We had

children early. Dick was born before I graduated. Dick was born in '36 and I finished a month later. Came back, started practicing law in Georgetown.

DR: And your second child?

SR: He was born in November of the following year.

DR: '37?

SR: Yes.

DR: And what is his name?

SR: Larry.

DR: So in the meantime, [to Meyer] you were still a youngster; you were still in high school, I guess.

SR: No, he was pretty much—

MR: Well, he graduated in 1936 from law school, and I graduated 1937 from high school and went to college.

SR: See, I was in school for six years.

MR: And then I went to school, and went in the service, and then came back and went to law school. After graduating from law school, I came to practice in Georgetown.

DR: How did y'all choose the profession of law?

SR: I guess mistaken [laughs].

DR: It wasn't, for example, your father's influence?

SR: No, no. I guess we were not inclined to be in the mercantile business and we just studied law [inaudible].

MR: I think I was just talked into it by my contemporaries. When I was in high school, oh lord, all that time in school I was—they used to say I was arguing and talking, and everybody, even the teachers, used to say, well, you're going to be a lawyer when you grow up. I don't know, I just figured, well, maybe they're right. [Laughing.]

DR: You weren't influenced by Sylvan?

MR: No. As a matter of fact, when I went into the army, I sort of set it mentally that I would have to get out and start practicing by a certain age. But I had planned on going to law school.

DR: I'm going to jump ahead because we really just have a couple more minutes. Tell me a little bit about your decision to run for mayor.

SR: Well, I had a good friend here who was a real estate and insurance agent, and he had been talked into running for mayor, but he said he wouldn't run unless I ran for council. So I ran for council, and he was elected and I was elected. And he died a month after he was elected and I happened to be mayor pro tem and I became mayor. I then ran three more times. That's how I got into it. Meyer was elected to the legislature, and I didn't offer for re-election after he was elected to the legislature.

DR: You were elected to the state legislature?

MR: Yes.

DR: What year was that?

MR: Elected in '62.

SR: Is that right? I didn't realize I—that's right. I think I was elected in '48.

DR: Your first term began in '48. And as I understand it, you were not the first Jewish mayor of Georgetown.

SR: In 1948, I think Jews had been mayor since 1900. [Jews] had been mayor more than any other religion. Marks Moses was the first man that was, then it was Louis Ehrich, then there was Harold Kaminski. And then there was me. I don't know, there may have been somebody else in there too, I don't remember.

DR: And even in the 19th century there were Jewish intendants.

SR: Marks Moses may have been intendant. But he was the first Jewish chief executive. And, as I say, Louis Ehrich, the same fellow that you got there, he was mayor. I don't remember any others, do you, Meyer?

MR: No, other than Harold.

SR: Harold Kaminski, yes.

DR: Harold preceded you?

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SR: Yes.

END OF TAPE