

**JEWISH HERITAGE COLLECTION  
COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON  
Mss. 1035-009**

Interviewee: Isaac Jacobs (b. June 19, 1916, Charleston, South Carolina; d. February 21, 1999, Charleston, South Carolina)  
Mr. Jacobs is joined by his wife, Ruth Bass Jacobs

Place of Interview: the Jacobs' home in Charleston

Date of Interview: February 22, 1995

Interviewer: Dale Rosengarten

Transcriber: Ruth Bass Jacobs

Date of transcription: July-September 1995

Editor: Alyssa Neely

Date of Editing: September 20, 2011

Proofreader: Isaac and Ruth Jacobs/Alyssa Neely

Date of Proofing: 1995/September 22, 2011

---

**Note:** The audio quality of this recording is poor. Corrections and additions made during editing and proofing by Isaac and/or his wife, Ruth, are in brackets with their initials. See Mss. 1035-005 for the first part of this interview, dated February 1, 1995, and Mss. 1035-173 for another interview on January 26, 1998.

**Begin Tape**

DR: Mr. Jacobs, before we move ahead from where we left off last time—I listened to the tape and I just wanted to ask you a couple of more questions about things that you said the other week. Bialystok—do you remember people telling you stories about life there or the shtetl?

IJ: No, because first thing, my mother's—all the family came here well before our parents were born. Our parents were born in either Charleston or in Branchville and we weren't told too much.

DR: You didn't know your grandparents?

Isaac Jacobs  
 Mss. 1035-009

IJ: No. I saw my father's mother before she passed away in 1920, so [inaudible]. There is one little story that back in the early part of the 1800s—one of the Pearlstines was killed by a windmill. Before that time, [inaudible], the name was—what was that name, Ruth?

RJ: Farber.

IJ: He was killed by a windmill blade. They must have started it up and it killed him, and they changed their name from Farber to Pearlstine so that the angel of death wouldn't find them. We never knew his name, but that's how the name got changed from Farber to Pearlstine.

DR: Of course, in the Old Country even Pearlstine would have been something else.

IJ: Well, I don't know when they changed—about 1825, or something like that.

DR: But the Jewish or Russian version of Pearlstine would have been [inaudible]—

IJ: I wouldn't know.

....

DR: The story about the nephews in Liverpool who got held up—

IJ: That was my two grandfathers—my mother's father and my father's father.

DR: It was their nephews though, wasn't it?

IJ: [Inaudible] nephews.

DR: Oh, it was they themselves?

IJ: I think my mother's father was an uncle to my father's father. [IJ/RJ: No, it was the other way around—my father's father was an uncle to my mother's father.] At that time, one was sixteen, the other was going on nineteen. They had to be left either in Holland or Liverpool because the rest of the family came over in 1854, and they didn't have any more money for their passage. From what somebody told me, a lot of the Jewish refugees from Europe were left in Liverpool rather than London because they were given a place to stay there. Whether they were given just rooms or rooms and board, I don't know. Liverpool did help out a lot of the youth.

Did I tell you how they were in Liverpool [inaudible] on a Friday?

DR: You told that story but go ahead and tell it again because that's a very interesting—

IJ: [Inaudible.]

DR: Well, first tell me how you know the story. Who told the story in your family?

Isaac Jacobs  
 Mss. 1035-009

IJ: My father got the story from his father. I learned very little about my mother's father because he passed away just a few weeks after my mother was born. She was born March the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1886, and he died May the 15<sup>th</sup>, 1886. She didn't know her father. The only things she could learn, she heard from her mother. She didn't tell me, but she might have told Ruth some of those stories.

RJ: I think you could find out more from my sister-in-law Rose because she lived with her and she does know a lot of her background.

DR: Who is Rose?

RJ: Melvin's wife.

DR: But your father told you the story about his father.

IJ: My father used to tell a lot of stories about his life [inaudible]. It was a Friday and they had very little money left and they wanted to buy some food to eat on Shabbos. They were in downtown Liverpool and one of them told the other one, "You meet me outside this store and when I come out, you bump into me." He went in and bought a piece of window glass. So maybe my father's father, being the younger, he went and bumped into his uncle [IJ/RJ: nephew], [inaudible]. My grandfather dropped the glass on the ground and it broke. They started crying, "Look what you did. I was going to try to make a little money to put in a window glass for somebody so we could have some food for tomorrow and now, we don't have any money left." I guess they were in the busy part of Liverpool and they started crying so much, passersby gave them a little bit of money. So they had enough to eat.

The next story I know—they got to Charleston about 1856 or 1855, I don't know. They came through Ellis Island and that's when my father's father changed his name from . . . Karesh to Jacobs. It happened around 1910 when my grandfather Jacobs was seventy-two years old, two of his sons were going on a buying trip to New York. They used to go by Clyde Lines steamer from Charleston to New York, or they could have taken a train—either the train or Clyde Lines steamer. The three of them were walking along Broadway after they got to New York and saw an old man look at them and he started following them, like he wanted to catch up with them. So they stopped and my grandfather said, "Maybe he wants a handout." They asked him, "What can we do for you?" I guess they spoke to him in Yiddish. He looked at my grandfather and said, "Don't you remember me?" "No." He said, "Well, fifty-four years ago—what was the name of the boat you came to America on?" He told him. I don't know the name of the boat. I wish I knew. He said, "Don't you remember me? We were such good friends on that boat." After fifty-four years, this man recognized my grandfather—by that time my grandfather had a white beard and was seventy-two years old—from the age of sixteen.

I don't know when my mother's father got married. [Inaudible] married a Tobish. My mother's mother was a Tobish from New Jersey and this is a picture of her brother—[inaudible]—Joe Tobish.

DR: This is a picture taken in Branchville in 1894, but you said your mother's not in the picture—is that right?

Isaac Jacobs  
 Mss. 1035-009

IJ: My mother's not in it. She might have been in Charleston already.

DR: Ruth said someone else isn't here—Sara?

IJ: She [IJ/RJ: Mom] came to Charleston to live with her oldest sister Sara. My grandmother Pearlstine didn't want my mother living in the country around non-Jewish boys. She also sent her to Charleston to get a better education. Just what age she came to Charleston, I don't know—she was two years younger than Kivy—but she finally went to Gibb's School for Girls for high school. That's on Coming Street, facing Montagu, and is being used by the College of Charleston now. There's a plaque up there saying this is the former Gibb's School for Girls. Two sisters ran it named Gibbs.

DR: Was your mother the only one of the daughters in the family who came to Charleston for an education?

IJ: I don't know. Because her sister, by that time, Sara had to be married—instead of A. Shep Pearlstine, who was her brother, she married a cousin, D. Shep Pearlstine, and they finally moved to St. Matthews.

My grandfather Jacobs married . . . [IJ/RJ: Jeanette Slager] from Memphis, Tennessee. [Inaudible.] He must have married her in 1860, and when the Civil War was breaking out, he wanted to escape being in the service. There must have been railroad trains from Charleston to Cincinnati by that time, I don't know.

DR: I think they probably did. The railroads were built in the [inaudible].

IJ: [Inaudible] railroads. My grandfather and grandmother Jacobs were married in Ninety Six, South Carolina.

....

RJ: In Due West, you mean.

IJ: Due West.

....

IJ Then they went up to Cincinnati.

DR: Do you think they had a Jewish wedding?

IJ: A Jewish wedding? Yeah. The reason they picked Ninety Six [IJ?RJ: Due West] was because some other Jewish families were there.

DR: Would there have been a rabbi?

IJ: Yeah, must have been. [IJ/RJ: Rabbi Volaski.]

Isaac Jacobs  
Mss. 1035-009

RJ: You don't need a rabbi.

.....

IJ: Lena Berkman was there with her mother, I guess.

DR: Lena Berkman was in Ninety Six [IJ/RJ: Due West] at that time?

IJ: Yes, during the Civil War.

RJ: In Ninety Six, Isaac? Or Due West?

IJ: Due West.

DR: What did the Pearlstines do during the Civil War? Where did they go?

IJ: The Pearlstines? They went to Cincinnati.

DR: They all went?

RJ: They also went to Memphis, didn't they?

IJ: They might have gone to Memphis. [IJ/RJ: Perhaps not. One of the first trains went from Charleston to Cincinnati. My grandfather married Jeanette Slager from Memphis.]

RJ: Harold Jacobs is Isaac's first cousin and his [Harold's] mother and father were first cousins. His mother was a Cohen and I think they were related to the Slagers in Memphis.

DR: And Slager would be spelled S-L—

RJ: A-G-E-R. Now that's the Jacobs side.

DR: And the Pearlstine side is the side that went to Cincinnati?

IJ: No, the Jacobs side—my grandfather and his wife.

DR: Do you know what the Pearlstine side did during the Civil War—where they were living during the Civil War?

IJ: [Inaudible] Branchville.

DR: Branchville?

RJ: I don't think so, Isaac.

Isaac Jacobs  
 Mss. 1035-009

....

RJ: I know when we were in Columbia, my mother-in-law happened to see a grave and she didn't realize that one of her, I think, siblings was buried there as an infant. Where they went from there, I don't know. Melvin can probably tell you. [IJ/RJ: They lived in Due West for a few years.]

DR: But they did not get involved in the war—either side of the family?

RJ: I don't think so.

IJ: Never heard of it. That would be my mother's side of the family. [IJ/RJ: Isaac's great-grandfather Tanchum Pearlstine made and sold buttons during the War Between the States. He peddled behind the Confederate lines.]

RJ: Now if you go to Columbia, you could talk to one of Isaac's cousins there who is interested in that because I know she wanted to join the Daughters of the Confederacy—Sura Wengrow.

....

IJ: She was a Wolff. Her mother was one of my mother's sisters—Rae Pearlstine.

RJ: Her son is very interested in family history, so [inaudible]. You can also talk to Maynard Pearlstine who lives here. He lives out at Kiawah, I think. He's a retired architect. He designed several buildings here in Charleston.

DR: You think that Sura Wengrow would have more information about the Civil War?

....

IJ: Did I tell you about the time my grandfather Jacobs [inaudible] in Cincinnati?

DR: No, you didn't tell me. I'm very interested in that period. Go ahead, tell me.

IJ: That was a northern base-town and they had a little garrison there and they heard Southern troops were coming toward Cincinnati. So a directive was issued that all able-bodied men had to report to headquarters. My grandfather Jacobs, he didn't want to have anything to do with the army; he didn't report. Sure enough, the next day, a captain and a couple of his soldiers went from door to door and he knocked on my grandparents' door. My grandmother answered and he asked for my grandfather. She said, "He's not here." But the oldest child, a little girl, said, "Yes, he is, Mama. There he is under the bed." [Laughter.] Well, the captain didn't want to embarrass her too much; he said, "It's a capital offense not obeying military orders. He could be shot for not reporting."

Isaac Jacobs  
 Mss. 1035-009

The southern troops never got to Cincinnati as far as we know. Then after the war, they came back to Charleston. In the meantime, Uncle Natie had been born. [IJ/RJ: Nathan Jacobs was born in Memphis before reaching Cincinnati. He was the second oldest child.]

. . . .

RJ: Another person you can talk to about the Pearlstines, who is interested in their background, is Jane Meyerson. Do you know her?

DR: No, I don't. Is she here in Charleston?

RJ: Yes, she's the daughter of Edwin, isn't she Isaac?

IJ: I guess so.

RJ: Yeah, Edwin Pearlstine. . . .

DR: Mr. Jacobs, you just said a name that I'd never heard—Mada?

RJ: Nathan.

IJ: Nathan. That was one of my father's brothers.

RJ: He's the one who [inaudible].

IJ: He went up to New Jersey. My grandfather, I guess he must have been a peddler and [inaudible] Cincinnati [inaudible] and sometime in the 1870s, he opened up Jacobs Dry Goods Company which was next door to where Sokol Furniture is now. If you look up on the top of the building, the word Jacobs is up there yet. They put it up in the 1870s.

DR: I saw the picture of that in—

IJ: [Inaudible] snapshot.

DR: It's a snapshot, yeah. You're talking about your grandparents and conversing, for example, with the Union recruiter. How did they learn English? I presume they were speaking English.

IJ: Just like everybody else, they just picked it up. Every foreigner just picks it up.

DR: By the time you were born, were your parents still fluent in Yiddish?

IJ: My parents didn't speak Yiddish. [Inaudible] my father. My mother didn't know it. My father probably understood it, but he didn't [inaudible].

RJ: He didn't speak to his father [inaudible] in Yiddish?

Isaac Jacobs  
Mss. 1035-009

IJ: Not that I know of. He never spoke it around the house.

RJ: [Inaudible], right?

DR: So the old languages really ended with the immigrant generation. Would you say that was true?

IJ: Yeah.

DR: It was not passed on.

IJ: Did I tell you the story about the parrot?

DR: No. I knew you had some good stories.

IJ: You see—well, I'll tell you about something before then. My grandfather Jacobs became a peddler and he used to peddle across the Ashley River in this area. At that time, they had to catch a ferry boat across the river, before they built the first wooden bridge. One time, it was getting too close to Shabbos and he couldn't get home before Shabbos started. So he stopped at a farmer's house to find out if he could spend the night there. He asked the man if he could put him up until Sunday morning. He told him why. He told him, "I'm Jewish and I don't work on the Sabbath and I don't work my animal." The man told him, "You don't look Jewish. You don't have horns."

Another time, he got late getting back—he must have gotten back on the ferry boat—he got late coming home to King Street and he decided not to eat meat anymore. Well, in later life, he was told he had to take cod liver oil regular, but he didn't ever eat meat. He made a vow because of breaking the Sabbath. He was very strict.

RJ: Did you know there was another synagogue before Brith Sholom that he was a member of?

IJ: I had forgotten.

RJ: I saw that in their archives.

DR: Do you remember the name?

RJ: No. There was a clipping that I think Sol Breibart had given to somebody, probably Louis Kirshtein.

DR: It wasn't Shearit Israel?

RJ: No, it wasn't Shearit Israel.

Isaac Jacobs  
Mss. 1035-009

DR: That was a later, splinter—I would be interested to know. Did your grandfather keep this vow? Once he said he would never eat meat, then and he never ate meat again?

IJ: No, he'd never eat meat. That's why [inaudible] [IJ/RJ: he had to take cod liver oil.]. He had four sons, two daughters. One daughter married a Bernstein and went to Greensboro, North Carolina.

RJ: [Inaudible.]

IJ: The other daughter, Sara, never married; she stayed in Charleston and ran a hat shop. My father had a brother Nathan, and Jacob Jacobs, who was called Yank Jacobs. That was Sammy Pearlstine's father.

RJ: Sam Jacobs.

IJ: Sam Jacobs' father.

DR: And he was the one who went—where did he go?

RJ: Florida. [IJ/RJ: Graceville.]

IJ: Sam Jacobs?

DR: No, Nathan.

IJ: Nathan went to Lakewood first, Lakewood, New Jersey. Or maybe he went to [ed.: sounds like "Hopatcong"], New Jersey, and finally went to the Boardwalk of Atlantic City. He had a hotel there called the Esplanade, a kosher hotel on the Boardwalk.

DR: Did he become affluent? Did he make a lot of money?

IJ: I don't know how much he made.

RJ: He lost it all.

DR: Oh, really?

RJ: Evidently—didn't he?

IJ: Well, there is a story about the Lakewood, New Jersey, hotel. The government took it over for disabled troops coming back from Europe during the First World War. When the war was over, they gave him back the hotel without paying him any rent. Well, he turned it over to a lawyer to sue the government, and this lawyer was, I understand, not a good lawyer.

Finally, when his son Irving—he became a lawyer when he grew up. In the early '30s, they sued the government and they got something like seventy-two thousand dollars. They had it in the bank in New Jersey and, in 1933, President Roosevelt declared a bank holiday and that

Isaac Jacobs  
 Mss. 1035-009

bank was closed up. He had the money for about a year. He got it in '32. That bank closed up and what he got out of it—I don't know if he ever got any money out of it. He had money in the bank and the bank closed up—after all those years. He made money in the hotel business in Atlantic City.

DR: What made him go north to New Jersey to run the hotel?

IJ: I don't know. He met and married a northern girl [IJ/RJ: Molly Jacobsen]. He just wanted to seek his for—at first, they opened up a men's clothing store [IJ/RJ: haberdashery] in New York City. They sent him a letter up there marked number one, New York; it was supposed to go to number one Lafayette Street, and you know when he got it from Charleston? He got a letter marked number one, New York. That was in the 1880s . . . it might have been 1890s.

He had two sons and a daughter. [IJ/RJ: His son] Irving, he kept Orthodox, and he had two sons. One of them [IJ/RJ: Mark] is in Dallas and one's [IJ/RJ: Matthew] lives out in California. I went up and met the one from Dallas before he moved there; he moved from Morristown, New Jersey. He had a big job with Bell Telephone Company.

DR: So one branch of the family moved to New Jersey and, basically, has never come back to Charleston to live.

IJ: My uncle Yank, he married a Pearlstine, Flora Pearlstine from Charleston, and she died of tuberculosis in a tuberculosis hospital in Summerville.

DR: The tuberculosis hospital in Summerville?

IJ: Well, that's what they said anyhow. He lost his business here in Charleston because of a fire. In fact, I don't know what month it was—July or December—the insurance agent called him up and said, "You've got to pay your premium today. Tomorrow your insurance will lapse." He said, "I have been paying this insurance all this time." He wasn't going to pay the money. He also was tight with his money. He wouldn't pay it. The next night was either Christmas or the Fourth of July—I think it was Christmas—and a firecracker, a rocket, a roman candle, or something, landed on the roof of his building and burned it to the ground. He couldn't get any insurance.

He didn't remarry, but he moved to Graceville, Florida. He had three sons—Sammy and Theodore [IJ/RJ: and Floyd, who was raised by the Pearlstines after Flora Pearlstine Jacobs died.] Three sons and two daughters. Finally the daughters grew up. They married two brothers [[IJ/RJ: Zbar] and moved to Tampa. My uncle Yank Jacobs died in Charleston in 1934. He was buried right here at the cemetery [IJ/RJ: next to his wife, Flora].

DR: This is your uncle Yank who was Nathan?

IJ: Who was Sam Jacobs' father.

RJ: Yank is a brother. [IJ/RJ: Nathan's brother.]

Isaac Jacobs  
 Mss. 1035-009

IJ: Wasn't it Sam and Theodore and Toots and Estelle? Or Sadie and Estelle? Estelle was Toots. It was just the four of them; they moved to Graceville. [IJ/RJ: Yank's four children, with their father, that moved to Graceville.]

DR: So, of the Jacobs, your father's siblings, there were four brothers. Is that right?

IJ: Yeah. Sam stayed in Charleston.

DR: Sam stayed in Charleston and your father stayed in Charleston. And one eventually wound up in Florida and one in New Jersey.

IJ: It was New York. [IJ/RJ: He was first in New York and later in New Jersey.]

DR: The family who stayed in Charleston, did they continue to be prominent members of Brith Sholom?

IJ: Harold's father Sam, he was a member; he wasn't a prominent member. He married Mignonette Cohen whose family lived in Memphis, Tennessee.

RJ: San Francisco, I thought.

....

DR: What about your father, in terms of his—

IJ: My father, in the early '20s, was president of Brith Sholom. He also was in charge of the cemeteries for about ten years, in the '20s and the early '30s. His father, I think, was the president too. My brother Melvin was president in the '50s.

DR: What kind of a religious education did you have?

IJ: I got it down here.

DR: Okay. In the written piece? [IJ/RJ: Isaac attended afternoon Hebrew school (cheder) on George Street.]

....

IJ: Can I tell you the story about the parrot?

DR: Oh yes, tell the story about the parrot.

IJ: When my grandparents were living above the store on King Street, they had a [IJ/RJ: former] slave; this was in the 1870s. Her name—they called her [ed.: sounds like: "Mom Rhody"].

Isaac Jacobs  
 Mss. 1035-009

DR: Mom Rhody?

IJ: Yeah, [inaudible] to call her Mom Rhody. They also had a parrot that she took care of. She was an old woman. Every morning she'd come up the steps, she'd tell the parrot, "Good morning" and the parrot would tell her, "Good morning." She'd take care of the parrot. She died. Somebody else must have tried to take care of the parrot and, for two or three days, the parrot wouldn't eat a thing. Wouldn't take any food. The parrot must have realized that Mom Rhody was not coming back. She got up on the front bannister, overlooking the sidewalk, and fell to the sidewalk, and went up the steps, got back on the bannister again, and fell again. She did it a third time. The third time she must have learned how to fall; she killed herself, grieving about Mom Rhody. They must have called her Polly, I don't know

DR: Listening to the other tape, I realized that you had talked quite a bit about your brothers, but you had six sisters, is that right?

IJ: I had six sisters.

DR: Tell me a little about your sisters.

IJ: Well, Florette was born in 1911.

DR: Who was that?

IJ: My sister Florette. My sister Sadie Lee was born a couple of years later, 1913. They went to school here—James Simons and Memminger. Sadie Lee went into training at Roper Hospital as a nurse and she became a registered nurse. Florette finally got a job with the health department as secretary or bookkeeper or something like that when Dr. Banov was a county health officer. They both married Savannah boys in about '38 or '39. I've forgotten. They got married in a double wedding here at Brith Sholom Synagogue. Really, they shouldn't have gotten married the same day.

RJ: I think they figured out a way to get around it.

IJ: The Orthodox rabbi permitted it. He knew the parents of one of the boys.

DR: It's normally not permitted?

RJ: You're not supposed to have one simcha on top of another [inaudible]. You are supposed to have one at a time, but I think they probably [inaudible] [IJ/RJ: figured a way, there must have been a loophole].

IJ: [Inaudible.] That was fourth. My sister Miriam was next. She was born in 1920 and my sister Janette was born in 1922. My twin sisters were born in February 1925—Doris and Betty.

DR: Boy, your mother was a busy woman. [Laughing.]

Isaac Jacobs  
Mss. 1035-009

IJ: Yeah.

DR: You were born in 1916, Sadie and Florette were, what did you say, 1911 and '13?

IJ: That's right.

DR: So Melvin was the first.

IJ: He was born in 1909. I think I wrote that my parents were married in Branchville on September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1908. Melvin was born the following July.

DR: And there were no other boys?

IJ: No.

DR: And no children who died in childbirth? All of your mother's children survived?

IJ: She might have lost [inaudible] [IJ/RJ: one baby, maybe].

DR: That's an unusual record because there was so much—

IJ: Six daughters and two sons.

DR: Are there any photographs from the double wedding or from your parents' wedding? They didn't take pictures?

IJ: I don't know.

DR: Any part of their wedding dress or a [inaudible] or—

IJ: I don't know. Ruth's family was the photographic family, not ours. [Laughter.] Could have had some. One thing I think I mentioned was that at my parents' wedding in Branchville, they hired a train to come up from Charleston, with two coaches to take the family and guests to the wedding in Branchville that day and to bring them back to Charleston after the wedding, which is unusual. They had a big crowd.

DR: I'll say. So the family in Branchville, the Pearlstines, must have been well established by that time in their business.

IJ: Well, my mother's brothers helped run the business and my mother's mother ran the business as long as she could.

DR: How long did the family stay in Branchville and how long did the store stay open?

Isaac Jacobs  
Mss. 1035-009

IJ: Offhand, I don't know. . . . My mother's brother Tom—well, I don't know when my mother's mother came to Charleston. She got old and my mother took care of her in her house on Bogard Street.

. . . . [Tape interrupted]

DR: Your mother's mother passed away in 1918?

IJ: Yeah, when my parents were living on Bogard Street.

DR: And she had come from Branchville—

IJ: Before then.

DR: Before then. Were any of these people involved in the First World War? Any of your uncles or—

IJ: No. The only one I ever heard of was my father's sister's son who was in the navy during the First World War. Was it Pincus or—

RJ: Oh, that's right. It was Bernstein, one of the Bernsteins.

DR: Pincus Bernstein?

RJ: Wasn't it Bernstein?

IJ: Yes, Bernstein—from Greensboro.

RJ: Wait a minute, not Bernstein. No, it wasn't Pincus Bernstein. [Inaudible.] Wasn't it Rosalie's—her name was Bernstein; her brothers' names were Bernstein. The one that had the jewelry store?

IJ: No, that's—you're talking about the Second World War.

RJ: Yeah, I know.

DR: [Inaudible] the First World War.

IJ: The First World War.

RJ: Who was it that was in the First World War?

IJ: I [inaudible].

DR: Okay. One of the things I wanted to find out was people's military service and [inaudible].

Isaac Jacobs  
 Mss. 1035-009

....

DR: We'll get back up to the World War because I think there was one story that the tape ended on, so I wanted to go back to that. Last time we talked about the Jewish community, the neighborhood that you grew up in, in Hampton Park Terrace, and you said you thought there might be as many as eighteen Jewish families living there.

IJ: I think eighteen to twenty Jewish families.

DR: Would you talk a little bit about some of those families—the Robinsons, the Kareshes, the Banovs, the Rittenbergs?

IJ: Well, Joe and Betty Kaminsky and the Schwartzmans, Louis Karesh and his wife, and Dave and Bella Bernstein lived there. Uncle Sam and Aunt Mignonette lived in a couple of places. The Banovs lived on Moultrie Street.

RJ: Which Banovs?

IJ: Sam Banov. That's Buster's parents.

....

DR: Which is that?

RJ: This is Charles Banov, [inaudible] his grandparents. The Needles lived on President. The next house was Mitchel Robinson and his family for a while. Across the street was the Needles.

DR: Needles?

IJ: That was Morton Needle's father who was a city architect.

RJ: Engineer. He was the one who did the plat for the cemeteries.

....

IJ: Then the Rittenbergs, Sam Rittenberg and Sadie, lived on Huger Street on the corner. The Alex Kareshes lived across the street. A family named Brown lived on the corner of Huger and President. Around the corner, on Parkwood Avenue, lived the Hyman Karesh family. Hyman Rephan and his family lived on Elmwood Avenue. [Inaudible.]

RJ: How about the Rubins? Didn't they live near you?

IJ: Yeah

DR: Which Rubin?

Isaac Jacobs  
Mss. 1035-009

IJ: That was Louis D. Rubin. [IJ/RJ: They lived two doors from us on President Street.] Had an electrical store on King Street opposite—[IJ/RJ: Liberty Street]. He finally took very sick and moved to Richmond with his family.

RJ: Wasn't he the man who was very good with weather forecasting?

IJ: [Inaudible.] His daughter [inaudible] Joan finally moved back down here and she's living back here. A few years ago she moved back here.

DR: What would her last name be now?

IJ: I don't know what her last name is.

....

DR: Joan, formerly Rubin. So what's this about forecasting weather?

IJ: Well, Louis Rubin, he became a weather forecaster in Richmond because he couldn't work regular. [Inaudible.] He was lucky to have an insurance policy that kept him alive financially.

RJ: His son is an author. He wrote—your husband would probably know him. He wrote a number of books. I know the University of North Carolina Press put out some of his books on the South.

DR: This isn't Louis Rubin who has a press?

RJ: Right.

DR: Oh, I know who Louis Rubin is.

IJ: Louis D. Rubin, Jr. lives around Washington, D. C. [inaudible].

RJ: [Inaudible.]

DR: It's Algonquin Press, I think.

RJ: Right. [Inaudible.]

DR: Was this a method of forecasting weather that he invented?

RJ: Yeah, I think so.

IJ: He just observed. He knew about it and [inaudible] different kinds of clouds and everything and predicting—

Isaac Jacobs  
 Mss. 1035-009

RJ: I think his daughter kept it up for a while, somehow or other, but—

IJ: He had two sons and a daughter—Louis, Jr., and then Manning Rubin, and Joan Rubin. Joan became friendly in Richmond with my sister Doris. She finally moved back here.

DR: This little neighborhood in Hampton Park Terrace, how did it happen that so many Jewish families lived in one place?

IJ: It was a good living area. The Ellisons lived there. That's Arnold Ellison's family. They moved up there near The Citadel.

....

DR: Do you know which family was first? Who moved there first?

IJ: That was mostly in the '20s and early '30s. Most of them started moving out in the '30s or [inaudible]. By the Second World War, there were very few Jewish families living there. [Inaudible]—

RJ: You're wrong, Isaac. Up in the northwest section up there?

IJ: I'm talking about Hampton Park Terrace.

RJ: That was a Jewish area, the northwest section.

IJ: [Inaudible] Hyman Rephan [inaudible] there.

DR: Was it in walking distance of the shul?

IJ: Two and a half miles. Our house was two and a half miles from Brith Sholom on St. Philip Street. I used to walk it.

DR: So you used to walk it?

IJ: Many times.

DR: Would most of these families have been Orthodox?

IJ: Yes, most of them.

RJ: The Rubins weren't.

IJ: The Rubins were not.

RJ: And Mrs. Weinberger, didn't she live up there?

Isaac Jacobs  
 Mss. 1035-009

IJ: Yeah, the Weinbergers lived on the corner of Congress and President, across—her husband was one of the managers of . . . the American Tobacco Company factory on Columbus and East Bay.

DR: Who were your particular friends? Who was in your age group?

IJ: Well, Henry Rittenberg and George Kaminsky, those were my two—Arnold Ellison, [inaudible] I didn't go around with him too much. Also, I had a cousin Charlie Pearlstine, who married a non-Jewish woman, a [ed.: sounds like "Schadarassi"], a very fine woman—Marie.

DR: What about the non-Jewish families? Were you friendly with, I think you mentioned the Stoneys and the Hollings?

IJ: I wasn't friendly with the Stoneys as much as the Hollings. I didn't have time to be friendly with all those people. When I got home from public school or high school or grammar school, especially grammar school, I had to rush down to afternoon Hebrew school.

DR: Where was Hebrew school?

IJ: [Ed.: sounds like "I got it listed"] on George Street. That was till up to [IJ/RJ: the age of] thirteen. In the summer months, I don't know, I used to go down to my father's store. Or go to Hebrew school in the morning and to my father's store sometimes in the afternoon [inaudible] after sixteen or after eighteen. I wrote in there that in 1934, I got in the Civilian Conservation Corps, CCC.

RB: You had a bunch of friends when you were teenagers . . . once you got out of Hebrew school.

IJ: That was a different group.

DR: Do you remember this community as being a community?

IJ: Well, we all lived there; we didn't exactly get together, but it was a nice area to live in.

DR: I heard—this is from Faye Olasov—that the St. Philip Street neighborhood was a very close neighborhood.

RJ: Right, they were more like a shtetl.

IJ: We weren't like that.

RJ: They were more like a shtetl, and these were already established people that each had their own thing.

Isaac Jacobs  
 Mss. 1035-009

DR: And apparently they were not related or were not landsmen, which St. Philip Street was very related to one another.

IJ: The only ones we were related to was the Karesh family living up there and the Jacobs family living across the street.

DR: I had made a note last time to ask about Uncle Sam and Aunt Mignonette and about the Weinbergers, and I don't remember what we were talking about, but was there something that we didn't cover?

IJ: Well, you have a different story there because Harold's [inaudible] was Harold's Cabin which he opened while still going to high school. [Ed.: Harold Jacobs.] His father was working for my father in his shoe store and my father's business went down to nothing. Harold finally opened what they call a snowball stand on the corner from where we were living.

DR: That's what, ice?

IJ: That's what they called Harold's Cabin. When you see the name Harold's Cabin today, that's where it originated, on the corner of Congress and President Streets.

DR: You mean like a pushcart?

RJ: A little cabin, I think—shack.

IJ: A small grocery and drinks and cigarettes and candy. He [inaudible] while he was still going to high school, and finally—a black man named Ball owned the property and he built him a combination house and store, a house that had two floors. They got their business from Hampton Park Terrace mostly.

RJ: [Inaudible] around. He began getting gourmet items and different cheeses. He was famous for the—

IJ: That was later.

RJ: Right.

IJ: He had to compete with Rogers and the A&P, which was a few blocks away. They didn't have any supermarkets or any big stores. Piggly Wiggly opened up the first supermarket. Yeah, Harold could tell you about it. He had quite a good business there after the Second World War. [IJ/RJ: He specialized in fancy foods.] . . .

I guess I ought to tell you that in August of 1930, while my father still was managing, not owning, he was managing Jacobs Shoe Store, a man came in from North Carolina with a carload of socks, imperfects, and sold my father twenty dozen men's socks that were made out of acetate and celanese for eighty-five cents a dozen. They were what you call misplates. They were really called fourths in today's terms.

Isaac Jacobs  
 Mss. 1035-009

DR: Say it again?

IJ: Called them fourths, not irregulars or seconds or thirds, but fourths. Part of the pattern was missing, [inaudible]. He sold twenty dozen and sold he them for thirty [IJ/RJ: ten cents] a pair. When the man came back a month later, my father still had sixteen dozen more and didn't buy any more. He came back in October and he bought another twenty dozen from him.

He came back in November just before Thanksgiving and he says, "You know, I notice y'all"—what they call—"dressing the window, the men's shoe window." On the left was the men's side, of the front window, and the women's on the right. He says, "Maybe you ought to put some around the ledge. Put a big sign on them, 'Ten cents a pair,' just before Thanksgiving." Seemed to me, between then and Christmas, they sold one hundred fifty-six dozen of those socks retail. They were giving Edward's, a few doors away, who opened in 1927, a little competition.

Well, those kind of socks, whoever was buying them, they would wear them a week and throw them away. They were no good. Never washed them. After Christmas Mr. Joseph came back to Charleston and says, "You know,"—he talked to my father and Melvin—"maybe you ought to go into the wholesale business. I'll give you a better price and y'all can rejob them." Melvin says, "You know I was thinking of asking you the same thing. I've got a few more months, until May 1931, to go to college and maybe I ought to go into the wholesale business."

I think the first socks he sold to him, instead of eighty-five, he charged him seventy cents a dozen—big deal. Finally later, he came down to sixty-five.

DR: So that's how your family got into the wholesale—

IJ: That's how they got in the wholesale business. He had to give Mr. Joseph a check to give to one of the factories in North Carolina to pay for the goods right away because Mr. Joseph couldn't carry him financially. In fact, the first check, he gave him maybe two hundred fifty, three hundred dollars. He might have had maybe fifty dollars in the bank. Melvin and I went out that Monday afternoon and we sold enough socks along Meeting Street in North Charleston area to pay for the check. Mr. Joseph was a Syrian.

Finally a man named Charles Cohen came to Charleston with a big variety of socks and they began buying. Mr. Joseph quit coming because he was so old. That was in '31. In '31, we got the business started. By that time, Melvin was traveling these country towns, fifty to a hundred fifty miles from Charleston with a carload of socks. In 1931, my father still had the retail shoe store, but then he [inaudible] of Savannah—Sterling Shoe Store. [IJ/RJ: He was bought out by the Sterling Shoe Stores of Savannah.]

....

DR: Let me change the subject for a minute because I wanted to follow up on the notes I took from the last meeting. At one point, you or Ruth said to ask you the story about the KKK meeting. . . . Would you tell that story?

IJ: Well, in the little town of Ridgeville, a few miles west of Summerville, there was a family there named Engelberg in the early '20s. Mr. Engelberg, an old man at that time, he heard there was going to be a KKK meeting in an empty building about a block from him. So when the meeting was to start, he went over there and knocked on the door. The man who opened the door

Isaac Jacobs  
 Mss. 1035-009

said, “Mr. Engelberg, you can’t come here. This is a KKK meeting.” He says, “I don’t want to come in. I came here because I want to sell you some sheets.” [Laughter.]

DR: Do you think that’s a true story?

IJ: That is a true story. In fact, they had a wrong version of it in the *Jewish Press* about a month or so ago—January issue. Didn’t talk about Mr. Engelberg. [Isaac mailed the story to them but they did not give him credit or mention Mr. Engelberg.]

[Tape interrupted.] . . . .

DR: You have another story about Mr. Engelberg?

IJ: My father got into the wholesale shoe business called Charleston Shoe Jobbers in the early ’20s and, a couple of years later, Mr. Engelberg, up in Ridgeville, who had a store that sold groceries, hardware, furniture, dry goods, shoes, owed my father about eight hundred dollars, and he had a fire—couldn’t pay him. One day my father saw him in Charleston. He says, “You’re just the man I’m looking for.” He [ed.: sounds like “called”] my father and says [inaudible] “I’ve come in town and you are one of the people I’ve come in town to talk to. He said, “Look for me in about an hour. I’ll be there.”

He came in and he says, “I know I owe you eight hundred dollars. You know the trouble I had with the fire. I lost out.” He says, “I thought we could make a settlement.” My father asked him, “How much do you want to make a settlement for?” He says, “How about half?” He says, “Write me a check for four hundred dollars and I’ll forget about the rest.” He says, “I can’t write you a check today but, after the weekend business, I’ll send you a check.”

Well, he waited that Monday, the next Monday, a few more Mondays, a few *more* Mondays. Finally, Engelberg came back to Charleston again. [Inaudible.] He said, “I’m sorry, but I wasn’t able to send you the money.” He didn’t send anything. He said, “I’ve come in here to make another settlement. How about two hundred dollars?” That’s how he settled that job [IJ/RJ: debt].

His two sons, they prospered. He died in the ’20s. His two sons, Harry and Nuckie, they made a fortune in that business especially—they were well off even before the Second World War.

DR: At the very end of the last taping session, you were telling a story. You were talking about your years in the Pacific during the war and you were telling a story about the officers going fishing in the ocean. Do you remember? I think we got interrupted and I was going to ask you if you could tell that again so we could get the whole—

IJ: Well, I was stationed on Christmas Island from September ’42, before Rosh Hashanah, until after Pesach in ’43. They used to send a unit commanding officer—he was a general in our vicinity, Christmas Island—for more or less recreation purposes and they used to go fishing. I was friendly with a Protestant chaplain there—Captain Mitchell. When I first got there—I don’t know if I got there before Rosh Hashanah or not; I might have—he let me use a little open-air chapel somebody built for Yom Kippur services. It might have been for Rosh Hashanah too, I just don’t remember.

Isaac Jacobs  
 Mss. 1035-009

And again, Passover was coming and he volunteered to help me and an officer with a Passover service. He had some wine and I think he got matzohs—I've forgotten. But our tent where we ate in—these [inaudible] officers—somebody caught some fish. Could have been tuna, I don't know—something called Ulua, a big fish—and the cooks made us a supper with it.

[Inaudible] Captain Mitchell and he had about twenty Jewish men there from, especially the air force, and maybe some artillery, maybe headquarters—I don't remember just what outfits. The signal corps was there I guess. They had come to our Passover supper. We had one supper.

One of the officers there was a Captain Finger from the medical corps. The last time I had seen him was at the induction station at Fort Jackson in August of '41, the day they swore me into the service, from Charleston. [Ed.: Fort Jackson is in Columbia, SC, but Isaac had been living in Charleston.] Well, he knew me on account of my brother Melvin. He went to the College of Charleston with Melvin and he [inaudible] a medical officer, a medical doctor. He got into service and, it so happened, the next time I saw him was at Christmas Island.

He says, "You know, Jacobs doesn't have to be here today. After he went through the line to be examined by the medical officers at Fort Jackson, I told him to wait for me after the line was finished and I'd talk to him." Well, I did go to the side and got dressed and either he didn't see me anymore or didn't recognize me. He says, "I could have sent Jacobs back home," or "I might have sent him." I thought to myself that if I've got to be in the service, I'm glad that the outfit I was in, even though we were in Saipan and Okinawa and had to go by ship with Japanese submarines and things like that—

DR: Did you meet many Charlestonians in the service?

IJ: Yeah. I met Lee Banov. When I had mastoids back in 1932, one of the officers there was Hirschman from Charleston. He and I were really blood relations because I had to have a blood transfusion and I had some of his blood from the time I had the mastoids in Charleston. I met him. I met my brother-in-law Joe Lipsitz's brother, Hyman Lipsitz, now a retired dentist. I met him at Schofield Barracks.

....

IJ: I was out working in the field with the corps of engineers, the army engineers, and a friend of mine—[inaudible]—a Catholic boy from New Orleans named Eugene Schwartz, he finally got me in the personnel office in Schofield Barracks and he showed me how to teach myself how to be a typist and how to run—in other words how to be a company clerk, to take care of the service records and payroll. So I got with him, I guess, from sometime in 1943 until I was sent to Christmas Island September '43 [IJ/RJ: '42]. . . .

While I was in [inaudible] Christmas Island, we came back for a few weeks to a staging area in Hawaii and went over to Saipan. I was a company clerk there. A directive came through that—I don't know, we didn't have any bulletin, but as a company clerk, I read it. It said if we had a close relative on one of the other islands of the same group, we could put in a request to visit them. Max Goldman had a brother Reuben Goldman in Guam. Now Guam was one of the three islands in the Mariana group. There was Guam, Tinian, and Saipan.

I put in a request to go visit my cousin Reuben Goldman in Guam. I had been corresponding with him, so I knew what outfit he was in. That's all I knew. I thought it was a big island. In three days' time, I had a pass to go on air transportation to Guam—a real military

Isaac Jacobs  
 Mss. 1035-009

plane; no seats; we sat on the floor. When I got to the air station in Guam, I picked up the telephone connecting me with the unit Reuben Goldman was in, at least ten miles away. We thought nothing of hitchhiking at that time. He told me where he was. He was real happy to see me. I got there by hitchhiking, I guess, within thirty minutes after I got to Guam. I spent the night with him. He was in the navy and he was a dental assistant attached to a marine unit. So I had supper and breakfast there and slept there and came back home the next day.

Reuben came back to South Carolina and married a girl from Dillon, South Carolina. . . . He didn't come back healthy. About two or three years after he came back, he died. His brother lives around the corner—Max.

DR: Ruth has interviewed Max, I believe.

IJ: Max, up till now, has had a good memory and remembers all the business people in uptown Charleston and some in downtown.

DR: What do you mean by uptown and downtown?

IJ: Well, Charleston was divided in my lifetime—south of Calhoun Street is downtown; north of Calhoun Street is uptown. I'm going back to the '20s and '30. At least every third store in uptown Charleston was owned by Jewish people. A lot of them downtown too. Today, I don't think you've got five stores on the entire King Street—maybe ten, counting dress shops—that are owned by Jewish people.

DR: We are coming close to the end of the tape. Tell me what the story is, having to do with the Charleston accent that . . . Ruth wrote me a note and said there was story.

IJ: Well, I did after I got to Christmas Island—after a couple of days, I was talking to GIs. One of them asked me, "Jacobs, what part of the states are you from?" I told him, "Charleston, South Carolina." Well, with my Charleston accent, he said, "You sound like you've got a Yankee hillbilly accent." [Inaudible] the fact that . . . I had my Charleston accent and I [inaudible] with a boy who had a northern accent in Charleston—where he got that, I don't know.

A true story I'd like to tell you—I don't know if the black people would like it. It's true. My father had the shoe store and his father was living. This had to be around 1910. My grandfather passed away in '14. My grandfather was handling the cash register during the week. He saw this black woman come in, carrying her grandchild—had to be. She had on a spring coat, and [inaudible] springtime. He saw her take a pair of shoes and stick them under her coat. He called to her. He says, "You must be carrying your grandchild." [Inaudible.] "Yeah." He says, "That's a good looking little baby. Bring him closer; I want to see him better. I can't see that far away."

He kept on talking to her, enticing her closer and, finally, when she got close enough, he grabbed the baby; the shoes dropped out on the floor. She looked at him, looked at the shoes, and she ran out and left the baby. This was in the morning.

Well, all the people in the store, the clerks and everybody else, the family, started to laugh and said, "What are you going to do with that baby?" He said, "I've got one grandchild upstairs they're taking care of. They can take care of two. Bring him upstairs."

Isaac Jacobs  
 Mss. 1035-009

That must have been in the morning. Hours passed. Finally, it was after six o'clock in the afternoon. They kept on asking my grandfather, when he came back from lunch, what's he going to do with the baby. He said, "They're taking care of him all right. They've got two grandchildren up there, two babies."

Finally my uncle Yank, I think it was, he must have been coming down after supper, down the steps on the side of the store. He heard somebody knock at the door. He answered and there was this black man. He said, "Mr. Jacobs, what did you do with my baby? You got my baby? I've been asking my wife all day what happened to that baby. She finally confessed to me what happened. You know, she ain't never done nothing like that before and I know she's not going to do nothing like that again, because that will be the last of her. She told me the baby is here and I want my baby back, my grandson back."

My uncle said, "You know, that's not your baby no more. That's called abandonment. Your wife and ran off and left that baby downstairs in the store. She left it, just like giving it away. That's called abandonment. Now that fellow was [inaudible]. [Laughing.] [Inaudible] glad to get rid of the baby. He says, "I'll give your baby back this time, but if she ever leaves that baby again, does something like that again, she ain't getting the baby back."

Well, that fellow thanked him for [giving] the baby back. My uncle was only too happy to get rid of the baby. That's a true story.

DR: Who told you the story?

IJ: My father used to tell us the story.

DR: How would you describe relations between the black folks and Jewish people in Charleston?

IJ: They got along good. Better than they do today, I think.

DR: You think so?

IJ: Yeah. Not that you'd invite black people to your house. I mean, there was always blue collar work.

DR: Do you think there were any problems or resentments because Jewish people tended to be merchants and might, for example, have credit difficulties with—

IJ: No, if the black people had money, they paid their bills. If they didn't have money, they might have had a hard job paying them. Some of them—that's how the furniture companies made fortunes. They used to sell them something on credit, so much a week— [IJ/RJ: Jacobs Shoe Store was mostly a cash business.]

**END OF TAPE**