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Interviewees: Alex "Al" Lash (b. June 11, 1918, Bayonne, NJ;
d. December 25, 2002, Charleston, SC)

Lila Winter Lash (b. October 7, 1928, Brooklyn, NY;
d. August 13, 2010, Charleston, SC)

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Note: The three interview sessions were recorded on one tape. There are periods during the interview when it sounds as if Lila is reading.

Begin Tape, Side A

SR: Lila, where were your parents born, and when did they come to this country?

LL: My father was born in Mogelnitza, Poland. He came here when he was seven years old. My mother came from Russia, and I don't know what county or what, and she was six months old.

SR: And when you say they came here, where did they come to?

LL: Through Ellis Island, and they settled in New York for a little while. Then my father's family went to Charleston, and stayed in Charleston.

SR: And what was your family name?

LL: Winter.

SR: Okay, and Al, where did your family come from?

AL: Vilna, Lithuania.

SR: They came to this country—

AL: They came to Ellis Island.

SR: Do you know the year?

AL: All I know, my mother was fifteen, and I have no idea of my father. But they met one another here; they didn't know one another in Poland—I mean Lithuania, Russia, or whatever you call it.

SR: Lila, do you know what year your parents came?

LL: Well, Mom was two years old [ed.: six months old], and she was eighty-eight when she died—figure it out. [Laughter.]

SR: Well, you're asking the right [inaudible]. [Laughing.]

LL: Yeah. And Dad was seven.

SR: I see. And your mother died in what year?

LL: She died in 1983.

SR: And what was your family name?

LL: Winter.

SR: Okay, and you said your family came to Charleston.

LL: They came to Charleston from New York.

SR: Do you know about what year that was?

LL: 1918. That's my—my paternal grandparents came to Charleston in 1918.

SR: I see, and they brought your father—

LL: Right, right, and their siblings to Charleston.

SR: And how many siblings did your father have?

LL: At that time I believe there was one—there's Jack and Lou and Belle, Pauline—four. I don't know whether Morris was alive—was Moshe alive at that time?

AL: Don't ask me. [Laughing.] I haven't the faintest idea.

LL: [Inaudible] eighteen—I don't know whether the other son was alive then or not.

SR: What did your grandfather do?

LL: My grandfather, surprisingly enough, when he came to Charleston, became a kosher butcher. [Laughs.]

SR: *Oh*. How long did he do that?

LL: I think they were only here for two years because he said there was not enough Yiddishkeit in Charleston for his children.

SR: And do you know where the butcher shop was?

LL: I imagine on King Street, like everything else was at that time, but I really don't know. I know something—but I don't whether it's true or not; maybe Bobby Zalkin might know—but from what I understood is my grandfather and *his* [ed.: Bobby Zalkin's] grandfather were here at the same time, the Zalkins. Because I think my grandfather knew the old man Zalkin—not Joe Zalkin, but the *old* man.

SR: And did Joe Zalkin's father also have a butcher shop?

LL: From what I understood, yes, but I'm not certain if that's the truth. I really don't know.

SR: I see. So they only stayed for two years.

LL: Two years.

SR: And then your father—

LL: My grandfather and grandmother and the children went back to New York, and then he got into the cloak and suit industry.

SR: So your father grew up in New York, basically.

LL: Right. Well, he went to Courtenay School here.

SR: The two years—

LL: Yeah, he went to Courtenay School for the two years that he was—or maybe it was a little longer. I really don't know for sure. But I know that he did go to Courtney School.

SR: When your father grew up, what did he do for a living?

LL: My father was a knitter of sweaters on both the hand-knitting machine and the regular power-knitting machine. He was in the garment industry, too.

SR: And your father's name?

LL: Louis Nathaniel Winter.

SR: How did your father and mother get together?

LL: I think they met through mutual friends.

SR: In New York?

LL: In New York, yeah, in New York. You know, in New York then—I mean, you lived in a little area, and it was like a little [ed.: sounds like “shtot,”] and people got to know one another.

SR: And your father and mother married when?

LL: 1927 in February; February 19th, 1927.

SR: And they had how many children?

LL: We had—there's three siblings, the three daughters.

SR: And their names?

LL: The names are Lila—of course, I'm the oldest—Joan, who is six years younger than me; and Marcia, who is fourteen years younger than me.

SR: At some point your father decided to move to Charleston. When did that happen?

LL: Came back to Charleston in 1950.

AL: [Inaudible] me, [ed.: sounds like “that's for me, too”].

LL: Yeah. 1950—well, 1949, December of 1949 my father and Al, whom I married, came to Charleston.

SR: So let's go back to your marriage. Let's go back to you and Al a little bit. How did you

and Al meet?

LL: Through a mutual friend. My girlfriend, my best girlfriend, met this boy from Glen Cove, Long Island, and he decided he wanted me to meet his friend, another best friend, and he took me to Glen Cove for a visit, a so-called visit. When we got there it was Erev Yontif, Erev Rosh Hashanah. We honked the horn outside and this fellow comes out with a [ed.: sounds like “blootikah”] apron, a beard—must have been about five-day growth—and a great big gash on his arm. I looked at him and they introduced me to him, and he asked him if he would like to go to the YFL [ed.: pronounced “yiffel”] meeting, which was the Young Folks League at that time. It was of Nassau County. All the young folks used to go there, and they’d go from one temple to another every weekend and have dances.

SR: And what was the name of the organization?

LL: Young Folks League of Nassau County, but they called it YFL. He came out, and Herbie asked him if he would like to go to the YFL meeting. He said, “Gee, I don’t know. I really have to ask Mom; it’s Erev Yontif.” I looked at him, and I said, “Well, if you go to the meeting tonight with me, you’d better shave, because my skin is very tender.” [Laughter.]

We started dating. With me it was love at first sight. With him I think it took a little longer. [Laughter.]

SR: And you married—

LL: We married in November of 1947.

SR: Al, you were already in the kosher butcher business. I mean that’s what you did.

AL: Yeah.

SR: Tell me a little bit about your family and how they got into the business.

AL: Well, my father, [inaudible], when he came in from Europe—I don’t know when it was; I can tell you that. From what I understand they didn’t know one another even though they came from the same—

LL: Area.

AL: —the same area. I haven’t the faintest idea. But they met in the ghetto, or whatever you call it in downtown New York, and they got married. My mother’s family was lace manufacturers, high society in Lithuania. In fact, we have two or three people here from Charleston who’s acquainted with my mother’s family.

SR: And who are those people?

LL: Surprisingly, Joe Zalkin. [Laughing.]

AL: Joe Zalkin—Knew something about it—and

LL: Mrs. Epstein.

AL: —Mrs. Epstein, Rose Koslow's mother. So it was verification here. I thought that Joe Zalkin was pulling my leg, but it was verification there. It's really a small world [laughs], as you might say. They got married.

My father used to go to the slaughterhouse. I don't know whether I'm supposed to say it or not, but he couldn't drive, but we had a man working for us that could drive. After he'd come out of the slaughterhouse, the going thing was you had to hit a—he was so cold in the slaughterhouse that he always went across the street for a drink. Well, it was Prohibition so you couldn't get a drink; there's no place. But they had places, you know, the Prohibitionists, to go wherever you wanted to go. So on the way home they stopped in Jamaica, where they always would go, and they each had a shot or two. I haven't the faintest idea.

LL: Bathtub gin.

AL: I was only one year old. This has been related to me. Within twenty-four hours when they got home, they came down with paralysis. My father was supposed to live for about six months. That was what they gave us. He lived for thirty-one years, one sanitarium to the other.

LL: Paralyzed.

SR: Paralyzed the whole time?

AL: The other guy came out of it in about something like a month or something like that.

SR: And when you say he was paralyzed—

AL: He was paralyzed in one side and his legs.

SR: His legs and one side?

AL: Yeah, one side. He had a stroke or whatever you might call it.

SR: I see.

LL: He was *very* strong from the hips up.

SR: So he lived in sanitariums then for the rest of his life?

AL: No, we had to take him out. Then we'd get him and we'd have to get rid of him [laughs]—not rid of him; I mean we had to give him care that we couldn't give him.

SR: I see, because you couldn't take care of him.

AL: Mm-hmm.

SR: And was he a butcher in Europe? Or was his family—

AL: I don't know. He might have not, but I think—I know within the family structure, we go back about four or five generations, somewhere around there.

LL: That they said they were butchers there, so he might have learned from them.

SR: So your family tradition, almost, was kosher butchers?

AL: Oh, yeah, definitely.

SR: For generations.

AL: Once we picked up the knife, that was it. [Laughter.] We had to be Jewish.

SR: So you and Lila met, and you married. How long were you married before you came to Charleston?

AL: About four—

LL: Two years.

AL: A little over two—no, November—that's right, two years.

SR: What brought you all to Charleston? Why did you decide to come?

LL: We got a call from Charleston. My uncle Jack called and said that the new nephew in the family is a kosher butcher. He heard from Mr. Zalkin—Mr. Zalkin was the kosher butcher here—not from Mr. Zalkin direct, but from *Mrs.* Zalkin. Annie Zalkin called and said, "I hear you have a new nephew that's a kosher butcher. I want him to come and visit us. I want to sell the store." So instead of going on our honeymoon to Florida, we honeymooned in Charleston at the Fort Sumter Hotel. We came here, and every day Al went to the store, trekked and watched and all that. When we got through—we were here for about ten days—she said that she had to talk to us, and before she could put her two cents in, Mr. Zalkin said, "Ich bin nicht krank genug. I'm not sick enough to sell the store. I don't want to sell the store." And that was the end of it.

So we went back to New York, and Al started working. And because—right after we got married Al sold his kosher market because his mother had to get out. She was a butcher lady.

AL: Oh, yeah.

LL: She was a butcher lady and her sisters.

AL: And my sisters, too, working for [inaudible], but after they got through work, they came right out to the store.

LL: Because his father was in the sanitarium.

SR: Your mother and sisters all did the work, as well as you?

AL: Yeah.

LL: He was in service, you know, so then he couldn't do anything. But his sisters had taken over with his mother during the war.

SR: So, the three women ran the butcher shop in New York?

LL: [Ed.: sounds like "That's right".]

AL: Actually, my mother ran it.

LL: And sister, Sarah.

AL: Yeah, well, Sarah, but I mean actually, it was [inaudible].

LL: But they all worked in the butcher shop.

AL: I was given a knife about five and a half or six years old, a little flexible knife to cut lamb in between the bone. [Laughs.] I was a small person, so they put me on a soda box, and I stood on that, you know, just kidding around.

LL: I don't know how kidding [inaudible]; you were working. [Laughs.]

SR: But you started learning very young.

AL: Oh, yeah. The knife was put in my hand about six years old, five and a half years old, something like that.

SR: You were in the service. How long were you in the service, and where were you?

AL: Let's see. I know I came home in 1946. Let's see, I was in China, Burma, and India; that was CBI. I was there for thirty-eight months, thirty-nine months.

LL: How long were you before you went over? You weren't in the States very long, were you?

AL: Just basic training, practically. I think it was the thirteen weeks, and then shipped right out.

SR: I see. So you weren't in Europe; you were in the Pacific.

AL: No, I wasn't in the Pacific. I was in China—the CBI, China, Burma, and India operation.

SR: Okay, I see. So you came back; you went back into the business. You and Lila met. We're at the point now where you came to Charleston, and then Mr. Zalkin decided he didn't want to sell the business, and you went back.

LL: Right.

[Interview interrupted.]

LL: He sold the business under his mother. She could not stay in the store anymore. She was very upset and she didn't want to talk to him, but the doctor had said that she had to get out. Well, the result was that once he sold the business, what was he going do? He only knew the butcher business.

AL: The *kosher* butcher business.

LL: The *kosher* business, right. But he went to work with, first, an oilman; he was delivering oil, which they said he couldn't do; it was not his forte. Then we went to work for a millionaire dry cleaner; they called them millionaire dry cleaner. So he used to pick up all the millionaires' clothes and all their rugs when they used to go away because they lived on the Gold Coast.

AL: The richest section in the world at that time.

LL: They used to send in their Persian rugs to be cleaned, Oriental rugs, and all their gorgeous furs. He stayed with them for a long while, and then I said, "This is not for us." I says, "This is ridiculous." He was making a lot of money at that time, he really was, but I says, "I think you ought to go back to school." So he says, "Well, what am I going do?" I said, "Go back for the non-kosher." They had two schoo—

AL: Four schools.

LL: —*four* schools in the United States; two were in our area, and two, I think, were on the west coast. He went to New York, and he got in under the G.I. Bill of Rights.

He was there and doing work when one of the professors called him in and he said, "Mr. Lash, I think you tried to pull something over on us, but we know that you're an accomplished butcher." He says, "What do you mean?" He says, "Well, you just didn't realize it, but when you were sharpening your knife on the steel, we could see that you knew what you were doing." Al explained to him that he knew the kosher end of it; he never knew about the non-kosher end, and he *really* needed the job because they sold the business. So he let him stay, and was it a—two-year course?

AL: A year course.

LL: A year course.

AL: Six days a week.

LL: He stayed with them and he graduated. There were only two boys in the class that graduated for interior decorating of meat. That was the highest honor they could give them. He did work for the Queen Mary at that time and all the select hotels.

Then he decided, "Well, I don't know. I don't like the non-kosher." He couldn't stand the smell of pork. He used to come home at night, take off his clothes *outside* the apartment and say, "Send this to Schiffman," which was our dry cleaner. "I can't stand the smell." He got a call one day, and Sid Schiffman, the owner of the dry cleaners, says, "You're ruining your clothes. You're not letting me clean it or wash it before you're sending it back to me telling me it smells." He says, "You've just got to get out of there. You can't stand it because I know it's got pork smell on it." So that's what he did.

Then we got a call from my uncle in Charleston. Uncle Jack Winter said that, "I hear you got a new nephew that's going to be a kosher butcher." That's when Annie Zalkin contacted him to say, "Please come down and visit with us, and let's see if we can sell the store." We went to Charleston on our honeymoon.

SR: Now, that you had told me already, about the honeymoon, and then you went back.

LL: Yeah.

AL: Then they got in touch with us again.

SR: They got in touch with you again?

LL: Right.

SR: This time they meant it.

LL: That's right. This time they meant it. Joe was more sicker than he was, and Annie Zalkin said that she couldn't do it anymore. They sold the store to us, and Dad and Al came down in December of 1949.

AL: December, and you came down in February of '50.

LL: That's how we got in.

SR: Now, at that point, had any of your children—

LL: No.

SR: You didn't have any children.

LL: No, we were just married two years when we came down. We had the store on 605 King Street, right near the Lincoln Theater.

SR: That's where Mr. Zalkin had had—

LL: That's where Mr. Zalkin had his store, right. We stayed there for a little while. It was terrible because Joe Zalkin had put a—what would you say? I said it was a hex. [Laughing.] He used to ring up rent, and we thought that he was ringing up bills that were being paid.

AL: Don't go there. That has nothing to do with it.

LL: Why? They have to know.

SR: So you were renting from Mr. Zalkin.

LL: No, we bought the business from Mr. Zalkin, but the owner of the place, I think, was a Mr. Patrick. Mr. Banov's helper owned the property.

AL: His worker.

SR: And Mr. Banov had the store on the corner there.

LL: That's right, that's right.

AL: [Inaudible.]

LL: He was our neighbor, but we weren't there very long before we moved to 617 King, which was right next door to Conaway Drug.

AL: Yeah, that was Sokol's place, Morris Sokol.

LL: Yeah, Mr. Morris Sokol owned the property, and he was wonderful. I mean, he fixed up everything that we needed to, and everything. But it was very difficult for us, because people still were leery about—

AL: Coming next to Rodgers Alley, coming down that section.

LL: It was a very bad section. And the fact that they—we were from New York and people kept on saying, "Well, he's going to be here, make a killing, and run off," which wasn't so because we were there, and we stayed in that store for—I don't know how many years, because—

AL: I would say about ten, fifteen years, something like that.

LL: Yeah. That was right across from the Post [&] Courier building, and then . . . they decided that they wanted that property across the street, so we had—

AL: [Inaudible] a parking area.

LL: —we had to look for a place. The fire chief, Mr. Heidel something or other, I remember he was one of the—his children had had polio, and he used to go around collecting for polio, that's how I remember it. We took Harry Truere's place. He had a linoleum store on the corner of King and Simons. That's where we moved, and we stayed there until we retired.

SR: Do you remember about what year you moved to King and Simons?

LL: Yeah, in 1965. January 1st, 1965 we moved there. I still have the slip.

SR: So by then you had had all of your children.

LL: Oh, yeah.

SR: Tell me your children's names and when they were born.

LL: Okay. Barry was born in 1951 of August. Ira was born June 1954. Lori was born January 1960.

SR: Your business, we obviously know, was successful at that location.

LL: Yeah.

SR: How many years were you in the business?

LL: Forty-three years.

SR: Forty-three years. Now, at some point there was another kosher butcher in Charleston.

LL: Yes.

SR: Tell me about that.

LL: Baker's Kosher Market, which was downtown, a little bit further down than we were on King Street. They were closer to where the Altman store is—Morris Street. They were closer to Morris Street, yeah. They had it.

AL: Not Morris Street—

SR: It's Cannon.

AL: —Cannon Street.

LL: *Cannon* Street, correct. Right, *Cannon* Street. We had a very difficult time. First of all, when we came to Charleston, there was what they called the vaad hakashrus, the vaad hakashrus. They checked into you to see if you were kosher and if you knew what you were doing. Louis Karesh, Louie Rabinowitz—

AL: Alav ha-shalom.

LL: —all of these are alav ha-shalom—and Mosey Prystowsky, they were on that board, you see? The two butchers were sanctioned by two different shuls. At that time you had Brith Sholom and you had Beth Israel. The Bakers were sanctioned by Beth Israel, and we were sanctioned by Brith Sholom. Well, for a while there, there was a terrible time because they kept on saying that we weren't kosher.

SR: Who said that?

LL: The people in town.

AL: The people in town. The ones affiliated with this shul, the ones affiliated—they couldn't get over [inaudible], naturally, which you know.

LL: They called one day, and they said that they heard that we sold bacon. That got Al *really* upset. So he says, "I want to have a meeting of the shuls and the people that are talking bad about me and passing rumors."

AL: Because we knew who was talking bad about us, but that was beside the point.

SR: How long had you been in business when this happened?

LL: Well over a year or so, more than that.

AL: Oh, much, much more than a year.

LL: You see, we were battling back and forth. People would buy meat from us, buy meat from Baker, and they would come to us and say, "This meat's no good." Al says, "Every butcher knows his own cut. You did not buy it from me. You bought it from Baker." Then we used to have the—farmers used to come into town, the ones that sold us the live chickens would stay right in front of our store, and sell the chickens. They would come into our store for the shochet to kill the chickens, and they would want the chickens to be plucked with our chickens laying on the floor. It was *very*, *very* hard.

AL: It was very hard, *really* hard. This town made it very hard for a person to exist at the beginning—very, very hard.

SR: With the chickens, you had people you bought chickens from. But then other people would sell chickens in front of the store—

LL: Right.

SR: —and they would come in and want you to—

AL: Take care of them.

LL: —to shochet it and to pluck it for them before we even got—and we had the shochet there killing our chickens. Before we even had a chance to do ours, they wanted us to help clean theirs. It was very difficult. Then we had the business of getting the meat here. At the beginning, they delivered the meat to us on a truck from Shapiro in Augusta, and that was for a number of years, right?

AL: A good number of years.

LL: But then they had a problem there with a new shochet, and they said we have to come and get the meat. So my father, alav ha-shalom, used to get up three o'clock in the morning and go down to Augusta, get the meat with one of the boys that worked with us, and come back to Charleston. By the time he got here, then we would first have to unload the truck, break down the meat, kasher the meat, because we did all the koshering ourselves in the store. We would work from . . . Tuesdays and Wednesdays and Thursdays was like—three o'clock in the morning and we would get up, and leave like eleven o'clock at night. It was unreal.

AL: How many times that we didn't sleep. Made it very hard.

LL: It was really very difficult. It was. And of course, the kashering of the meat made it very difficult, too. We didn't kasher—later on we learned, but when you don't think about it, we used to kasher to order.

AL: We actually had to build up our trade. We had to do things that nobody in town was doing. That was the whole influx of our minds, the way we operated. We wanted to get the customer to tell *us* what they wanted. That's why most of my customers knew that the cuts of meat—we wanted it on the telephone. We knew we couldn't handle it if people were going to shop all the time. Even though we knew we could do at least a third more business. But again, where are you going to get help? That was the biggest problem. At the beginning we lost a fortune here. Really, that's the God's honest truth; we lost everything we had. From week to week to week to week, we stopped fooling around and started building it up and getting the confidence of the person.

LL: God was good to us.

AL: And what helped us, after about three or four years—it was a long time here—it rained, and it rained and it rained so the people wouldn't come into the store. They had to call us. A person would order, say, give us a nice order for the week, would only give us one or two items. She was afraid to get the whole order without her picking it out. That's what helped us, the good Lord helped us. Right from there on it was easy street.

LL: Yeah, then they saw that they could trust us and we weren't—

AL: I think it rained for about eight or nine [inaudible].

LL: —and we weren't leaving Charleston so fast.

SR: I just want to back up just a little bit. When you came to Charleston, was Baker already here?

LL: Mm-hmm.

SR: So Baker and Zalkin co-existed.

LL: Mm-hmm.

SR: Do you know how many years they co-existed—about?

LL: Well, when we moved to our shop in 1965 on Simmons, they were still in business . . . Let's see—I don't know. No, I don't know.

AL: Yeah, Baker was in [inaudible].

LL: Baker was in business in 1965? No. I don't think so because Sam came to us—the black man that used to help butcher their meat at Baker's spoke Yiddish; he was with the Jewish people from the time he was seventeen years old—and he came to us when we had already moved. So I think it was around 1960 or so, or before that, *before* that—1958, about, because he was with us for two years before Lori was born. So then he came and stayed with us and worked with us.

SR: When Baker left, at that point, did you already have a lot of customers from Brith Sholom?

LL: Yes. But let's backtrack one more time. When we had that big to-do with them when they said that we were trayf and Al had called a meeting of the shuls, the one thing that they said was that we weren't kosher was one of the women that had a store near them, a deli—

AL: [Inaudible] telling stories [inaudible].

LL: —a deli said that she got some meat that she didn't think was kosher. And that's what prompted us to—with the rumors that they had—that prompted us to call and have a meeting. Then we went on from there.

SR: So you had a meeting. You called a meeting of both synagogues. Who came to the meeting?

AL: I couldn't tell you that. I don't [inaudible].

LL: I remember. Well, I know who it was. I mean, Reverend Kirshtein—

AL: We know it, but you're telling stories that you're not supposed to [inaudible].

LL: It's—

SR: [Inaudible] a minute.

[Tape paused.]

SR: Al and Lila, how did this meeting resolve itself? What was the outcome of the meeting?

LL: The outcome of the meeting was that they agreed that Reverend Kirshtein could not be the owner of the shop and sell his own shechita.

AL: [Inaudible.]

LL: That is a din. That is the law.

SR: So that was one of the problems—

LL: One of the problems.

SR: —that he was selling his own chickens.

LL: Right, and his own meat, [inaudible], but they were killing local cattle. And of course, we could not compete with them, because they sold it much, much less than we did, and that was another thing that we had a problem with. They agreed that they were going try—that no rumors would be going around saying that we were trayf because it was not true, and that's how it resolved itself. As far as I can remember, I mean, try as you may, rumors don't always go away, but they did their best. That's the way it was.

But we did have tremendous hardships to procure merchandise. That was one of the big things. Shapiro, which was in Augusta, wouldn't deliver meat to us after a while. They wanted us to pay extra for delivery, in addition to paying part of the shochet fee for killing the meat. [Ed.: it now sounds as if LL is reading the information.] We couldn't afford to do it because we had to compete with Baker, so the solution was to go to Augusta and pick up the meat. Dad, Louis Winter, alav ha-shalom, of blessed memory, took along a driver, left at three A.M. for Augusta, picked up the meat, and drove back to Charleston.

Then the work began. We had to break down the meat, kasher it, soaking and salting, and at the same time the shochet, Reverend Feinberg, was killing chickens. The chickens had to be plucked, eviscerated, and koshered. And the koshering—no extra fee. It was a service we had to offer in order to get the customers, as many of them were buying frozen koshered meat and poultry from Al Spikler. Our hours, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday were from three A.M. till ten to eleven P.M. at night.

After changing suppliers, we started getting our meat from Cross Brothers in Philadelphia. This was shipped via railway express in barrels and dry ice, and we prayed that we receive it in time for it to maintain its kashrus. From the time the meat is killed, within seventy-one hours, it has to be washed off, and if it isn't, soaked and salted. This can be done three times

before kashering.

After the railway express, we were able to ship via refrigerated truck. We always had to wait for a phone call to let us know when to expect the meat, as the trucker didn't always have room. A few times the meat was delayed, and a rabbi in Charlotte washed the meat for a fee.

Several times it was too late, over the time for kashrus, and the meat had to be sent back to Philly. We stayed without meat and the supplier lost money, too. There was a big difference between non-kosher and kosher, and this meat had to be sent to the non-kosher plant. We were warned; if it happened too often, we would not be able to get shipments from Philly. Most of our customers had taken the liberty of throwing away their [ed.: sounds like "vake shoft"] and salz board—that's the soaking bucket and the salt board—because we kashered for them.

[Recording interrupted.]

LL: [Ed.: it sounds as if LL is still reading.] We used the Southern Ice freezer on Woolfe Street to freeze chickens. For the holidays and Pesach, we started to kill poultry six weeks in advance. There was no time to prepare orders unless we received them in advance and had to cut the order and freeze it.

Prior to Southern Ice freezer on Wolfe Street, we used a freezer on St. Andrews Boulevard where the ABC Awning Company is located. God looked out for us. We had just taken out almost all our turkeys for Thanksgiving when the freezer on St. Andrews had a huge fire, which destroyed it completely. We had ducks and turkeys still in the freezer plant, but not the total inventory as we would have had if the fire occurred earlier. We also wrapped and packed them and sent it all to the freezer.

SR: Let me back up and see where we were.

LL: Okay.

[Recording interrupted.]

LL: . . . [ed.: still reading] Syrian Jews, who moved to Myrtle Beach, would come to our store and order meat. Some would take it back with them and others told us to ship it. We had to get dry ice and put it on the Greyhound bus. When we had to ship the orders, we were asked to make sure we didn't put kosher meat on the invoice, as those were the days of the KKK.

Before Yom Kippur, we had to wait until they closed their stores and all the families would get to Charleston about ten to twelve P.M. to shlug kapores. They would make a prayer and sling the live poultry over their heads. They made the children hold the leg because they were too little to hold the chicken. The shochet would then kill the chickens, roosters for male, pullets for female and they would not eat the fowl; they gave it for charity.

SR: Excuse me, let me interject right here. About what year was this that you would do all this?

LL: All the time. Till 19—let me see—till we moved into the other store. [Inaudible] after that.

AL: It was after '65.

LL: It was up until about 1970.

AL: Oh, I think it's further than that.

LL: You think so? Well, maybe up till the '80s.

SR: And they were Syrian Jews in Myrtle Beach.

LL: They were the original ones that came. Now they're all Israelis there.

SR: I see. But when you came—when you started your business in Charleston—

LL: They came about the same time we did.

SR: I see. That's what I wanted.

AL: [Ed.: sounds like "Before then."]

LL: Yes, they came—

AL: If it wasn't for Myrtle Beach, I wouldn't be here talking to you today.

LL: Wouldn't have existed.

AL: They're the ones who kept me in business.

SR: Because their business was constant—

LL: Right.

AL: Oh, yeah.

SR: —and they'd pay their bills and you.

AL: Yeah, they'd pay their bills and they took care of me. In fact, I used to go the bank every winter and borrow money to hold them over.

LL: That's right. We held them over during the winter because there was no—today it's almost a year-round thing.

AL: [Inaudible], but then it was only from Pesach to Rosh Hashanah that they came.

SR: I see, that they made money.

LL: Right. [Inaudible] they made money, yeah.

AL: [Inaudible.]

SR: But they were only making money in the summertime [inaudible] season.

LL: That's right. Now it's all year round.

AL: Yeah, now they're getting it all year, but—

LL: It's amazing.

AL: They made a fortune though.

LL: Ready?

SR: Okay, yeah.

. . . . [Ed.: LL resumes reading.]

LL: To shlug kapores means transferring the punishment, which would ordinarily be for your sins, to the chicken to arouse you to repent. If it was too late, the shochet would come the next day to slaughter them. We would put name bands around the leg so it wouldn't get mixed up. The shochet who slaughtered our chickens were Reverend Feinberg first, then Reverend Alter Kirshstein, then Reverend Aaron Lieber came and Reverend Jacobson from Savannah—Savannah would pinch-hit when Reverend Lieber wasn't in town. Reverend Lieber and Reverend Jacobson were the mohels.

[Recording interrupted.]

LL: . . . too late, the shochet would come the next day to slaughter them. We would put name bands around the leg so it wouldn't get mixed up. The shochets—Oh, I'm repeating myself. . . . When Reverend Jacobson came from Savannah, he stayed over Shabbos, and after the Sabbath, Al and the crew worked all night to pluck and eviscerate the chickens. Then Monday we wrapped and packed them and put them into the freezer.

[Recording interrupted.]

LL: If we were to be without power—we had to make preparations for Hurricane Gracie in September 1959. To be sure our meat and poultry got refrigerated and not spoiled, we went to Industrial Carbonics on Morrison Drive. We bought close to one thousand pounds of dry ice and put it into our station wagon. People were yelling that the car was on fire, but actually it was the fumes from the dry ice. We put big blocks of ice in the refrigerator, freezer chest, and upright freezer, and thank God, we saved all the meat and poultry.

We were like the hairdresser. The [inaudible] confided in us and had someone to share their trouble, happiness, and sorrow. There are lots of incidents that occurred and we have

enjoyed telling them.

[Recording interrupted.]

LL: We recall receiving a call from Mrs. Bielsky, of blessed memory, Sammy Bielsky's mother. She spoke Yiddish and wanted to speak to *Al*, not me. We had sent her an order of twelve squabs and she had only eleven. [Laughing.] Mrs. Bielsky kashered her own meats and poultry and she complained that she was missing one pigeon. Al knew that twelve were delivered, so he said, "Mrs. Bielsky, look under the *salz* board." After holding the phone for several minutes, Mrs. Bielsky came back and was laughing, all apologetic. "You were right Al. One slipped off the board into the sink."

Another time a mother from New York, who was visiting her daughter who resided in Walterboro, came into the store. Whatever Al took from the refrigerator to show her, she touched. Al asked her nicely to please not touch the merchandise; he would show it to her. She did this repeatedly. Finally Al said, "Mrs. Cobb, you touch, you take." And whenever she handled something, Al put it aside and told her she had to take it. This went on for quite some time. She was upset and said she didn't want all that meat. Meanwhile, the patrolman that walked the beat came in to say hello. Mrs. Cobb saw the policeman and she quickly said, "Okay, I'll take the meat! You didn't have to call the police." [Laughing.]

[Recording interrupted.]

LL: . . . customer came into the store and would immediately go to the walk-in refrigerator, hold the door wide open and look in. She always carried her handbag around her arm and bent her head into the refrigerator. Al warned her she was letting the warm air into the cooler and asked, "Would you please let me know and we'll get you want you want?" She never paid mind and did it whenever she came into the store.

One day she walked in, went to the refrigerator, and opened the door wide. Al said, "Watch me"—he was going to do and I shouldn't say a word. Well, she held her purse in her arm and Al lifted it off her arm, took it to the counter and opened it, spilling the contents onto the counter. Of course, she got very angry and demanded to know why he did that. He told her, "You always open the refrigerator, which is my purse, so I'm doing the same to you." She was very indignant and walked out in a huff. She called her daughters; they came in to protest. But when Al explained the situation, she never again went to the refrigerator to open it.

In 1972, January 22nd, Dad, Louis Winter, died suddenly. It was a difficult adjustment and we were all part of a team, each doing their own job. Dad was our outside man; he went to the bank, delivered orders with or without a beeper, made collections, and most important, Dad and Mom, Faye Winter—Zayde and Nana to our children—were our caregivers at home. Our hours were so late and unpredictable.

[Recording interrupted.]

LL: . . . being the caregivers at our home, they were also there to discipline our children because we used to keep such odd hours. Whoever disciplined the children had to *undiscipline* them—no punishment, yeah punishment, whatever. Well, one day we came home—it must have been about eight-thirty; that was an early night—and Ira's sitting on the couch. "What are you

doing here, Ira?” “Well”— I says, “Did you do your homework? Did you eat?” “No.” “What are you doing here, Ira?” “Zayde put me here. I was punished.” I said, “All right. So get up and do your work.” “Well, you know, Mom, anybody who punishes you has to unpunish you.” I says, “Well, then tell Zayde to take you off punishment.” “I can’t. He left for his card game and he forgot about me.” [Laughing.]

AL: And the kid was punished from about three o’clock! [Laughter.]

LL: We had to call Zayde up at his card game so that Ira could get off the couch and eat and do his homework. [Laughter.]

[Recording interrupted.]

LL: . . . had problems besides the getting of the meat to us and other things, like all businesses have problems. But to us, it was big. Well, Piggly Wiggly, Mr. Brabham, who was a wonderful man, decided he wanted to get into the kosher business, too. He got kosher poultry and he was selling it for practically cost. He would put a *big* ad in the Sunday paper and was selling caseloads and it was murdering us. I didn’t know what to do. Called the rabbis. I remember Rabbi Cohen and Rabbi Galinsky were here. They came and had a meeting with us and they sent out a letter to entire congregation, to the whole Charleston Jewish population telling them—

End Side A
Begin Side B

LL: . . .to have a kosher market in Charleston, the people had to support them. So the rabbis said that they should definitely—even though it might cost them a little bit more; and he [Piggly Wiggly] was underselling us so much—they should support us and not rush in and buy for weeks and months at a time and then leave us stranded.

[Recording interrupted.]

SR: Lila, did the letter help? Did people continue to support you?

LL: Yes, those who believed in having the kosher meat market in town and were afraid that they would be without one, as many, many communities are today, they did start coming back to us. But a lot of them had already bought so much stuff that it took a while before they replenished their supply. It went like that for a while. But it was rough. It was rough.

Now I’m going to go to the business with [Hurricane] Hugo, which is fairly current. We got up at five o’clock in the morning, went down to our store. We got all the help—all my sons came, and all the people that helped us in the store. We wrapped and packed everything that we had in the store, all the meats, all the poultry, whatever we sold, and hired a van. It took about five trips. We sent it down to the Southern Ice Company, which is Taylor’s Frozen Foods, on Woolfe Street and they took it. They waited for us before they closed up and that was how we saved our store, literally saved our profession or whatever you want to say, our occupation.

SR: And that was September—

LL: That was Hugo.

SR: —1989.

LL: Yes, September 1989.

AL: We didn't have one ounce of spoilage.

SR: And that was also right before Rosh Hashanah, if I remember correctly.

LL: That's right. . . .

AL: It *was* Rosh Hashanah.

LL: It was just Erev Rosh Hashanah. So what happened was that I didn't know what to do and my kids were all here. I remember Teri [ed.: Ira's wife] calling me and saying, "Mom, the fireman are around the corner and they're blasting, saying we should leave. What should we do?" I says, "Teri darling, where are you going to go? You came from your house to mine; you've got to stay here." All right, so we stayed, and of course we had a lot of damage and all that—

AL: Just like everybody else.

LL: —like everyone else did. But the biggest thing was that when the adjusters went around, they said that they knew the Lashes because everybody had their meat in their freezers from the Lashes.

AL: And we had to give them a bill on it.

LL: We had to give them a bill. But I was not going to stay in Charleston. The kids told us we couldn't; there was no water, there was no electricity, no nothing. So I had to wait till after Shabbos to call the rabbi and tell him that we were going to Florida. I took all my wet towels, whatever, and I went to Florida. In the interim I left all my phone numbers where I could be reached and my neighbor took care of my house. The contractor came to the house. He was going to fix the roof temporarily, but there were no stores open for him to get shingles.

AL: [Inaudible.] I don't know how he got down here. I still don't know.

LL: Everything was still closed and he did that. Then they called me from Taylor's freezer, telling me what happened. I said, "What do you mean what happened? How much more could happen?" Well, part of the roof came off at the freezer plant. "But don't worry, Mr. Lash," she says, "We called Mr. Freudenberg and we told him that we have all the kosher meat here and he better get to fix our roof real fast. [Laughter.]

AL: And then he did, but then they put—they had him on the—what do you call it?

LL: They have auxiliary that they go on the line right away.

AL: Let's see, the hospitals are number one and they were number two, so they were never without it more than eighteen, twenty hours, even twenty-four hours. You see, a freezer right today, if it's in working condition, if the power goes off, the meat won't start spoiling—this is not on tape yet, is it?

LL: Yes it is. What's wrong? [Inaudible.]

AL: The meat won't start spoiling, according to the government in our day, forty-eight, seventy-two hours.

LL: If you don't open—

AL: And we proved it.

LL: If you don't open it.

AL: It will not spoil. It'll soften up but it won't spoil.

LL: So we had—we saved our business, because if we had lost everything, I don't know whether we would have—

AL: Well, we learned from Gracie. That's where it was.

LL: And e were very fortunate.

[Recording interrupted.]

LL: In 1980 Al had to have a leg bypass and he had nobody working with him, so we were really in a pickle. Well, Judy Appel and Bertha Breibart had heard that a new man moved into town, and he had been a kosher butcher. Would he contact us? So he did. He contacted us and he went to work for us, and he worked during the period of time that Al needed while he was in the hospital. But the funniest thing is that he knew nobody here in Charleston. How he came down here, his daughter had visited a friend of hers whose mother was a master bridge player in Charleston. She said, "Dad, instead of retiring to Florida, go to Charleston. You'll like it there." She says, "You fish and it's beautiful there."

AL: Small.

LL: "Small, not like Florida. Try it." So he came to Charleston and that's how he got to live here. He bought a house right away. But the oddest thing is whenever anybody says, "Well, who do you have here? Do you have relatives here?" I says, "Murray, you tell them God directed you to Lash." That was true because we needed somebody here to help him and Murray stayed with

us until he died.

SR: So he worked with you until he died?

LL: Yes, y—

[Recording interrupted.]

LL: In March of 1993, I was called from Rabbi Radinsky if I will be available on a certain date in March because the congregation was honoring us with a kiddush for forty-three years of service to the community. I says, “Yeah, fine.” I was pleased and I started to cry. But then I hung up and I says, “Oh my goodness, I can’t. That week we’re going to be in Columbia; we have a bar mitzvah.” [Laughing.] So he says, “Okay, make it another day.” So we were honored with the Kiddush, and it was a very pleasant surprise and it was very nice.

And of course there’s a lot of things that went on and we miss everybody.

SR: And you closed your doors on what—oh, you passed the torch on [inaudible].

LL: Yes, but actually, we closed our doors—

AL: Actually, the third week in January, the fourth week in January, 1994.

LL: Third or fourth week in January, yeah.

SR: 1994.

AL: ’94 or ’93?

LL: ’93.

SR: 1993.

AL: 1993. We were supposed to close the doors December 31st because that’s when our tax finished, the tax year, but he wasn’t ready yet, so we stayed for another three weeks. Because he told me to take meat and he would pay for what wasn’t sold. So I had to take some meat in for three weeks. I mean, every week we’d get the truck come in.

SR: And are you enjoying retirement?

AL: Very much so. I really am.

LL: I don’t know where the time goes.

AL: I miss seeing the customers, that’s the only thing.

LL: Yeah, yeah.

AL: I miss the hullabaloo. I can't work those hours but—

LL: [Inaudible.]

AL: I tell you, the first four or five years, six years, was mighty rough. We averaged about maybe twenty, twenty-five, thirty hours a week, sleep. Because we used to kosher by the piece instead of, you know, [inaudible]—

LL: Instead of by the primal parts.

AL: —by the primal part.

LL: We had a big bathtub. That's what we used, one of those—what do you call it?
Galvanized tub.

AL: We had five tubs and two round ones. We had six salt boards, big ones, in the back room. And all you can do in that room is kosher.

SR: So you never took any pictures of the inside of your—

LL: No, but you know, we had the kids from the . . . I don't know whether it was Addlestone [Hebrew Academy] or CHI [Charleston Hebrew Institute] at the time—

AL: Oh, they've come in [inaudible] a few times.

LL: —they came in with some of the rabbis to see how we kashered the meat. But actually, we couldn't show them anything because, first of all, it was an off time, or that we were no longer koshering. The slaughterhouses took over for us. Because when Al took sick and he no longer could do the work like that, they started to do it.

SR: I see.

LL: Believe me, if we had it all those years it would have been very much easier.

AL: Oh God, it would have been [inaudible].

LL: That's why I say we paved the way, we really did, we—

AL: During the summer, when Dad brought the turkeys in, we couldn't kill them until after Shabbos. I'd get my crew together, whether it was eight, nine, ten pickers, and we'd sit from—

LL: After Shabbos.

AL: —from, I'd say, nine o'clock and get through about eleven or twelve Sunday morning. That's with the koshering, you open it and eviscerate it, cleaning up and everything else. Sunday morning, twelve o'clock, I used to go home, brush my teeth, come back to the store. And one Pesach—the longest I've ever stayed in the store was seventy-three hours without going home. All I had was a toothbrush in the store. I'd work Lila and I'd work Joanie.

LL: Joanie.

AL: I'd work Dad, Marcia, when she got a little older [inaudible].

LL: Yeah, a little bit because she left.

AL: Around the clock I used to [inaudible].

SR: Tough business.

AL: And I had one man there who stayed the *whole* time with me—one schwartzter.

SR: What was his name?

LL: Joe Campbell, he used to deliver to your mother and dad, alav ha-shalom.

SR: Yeah.

AL: But it was a lot of fun.

LL: Yeah.

SR: I want to ask you a couple of questions; it's just I want to clear up a few things. You mentioned Al Spikler and he got in the frozen meat and that was a problem for a little while.

LL: Oh, yes.

SR: Al Spikler had a delicatessen on—

LL: He had Mazo's Delicatessen on King Street. He sold all the kosher groceries and the appetizers, and, you know, lox and all that stuff.

SR: He had a kosher-style delicatessen.

LL: Yes, right.

SR: I also wanted to ask you, Lila, did you spend any time in Charleston as a child?

LL: Yes. I lived here. I came to Charleston in 1938 and left in 1940. We left because—my father had a grocery store on the corner of Bogard and Percy. On Coming and Bogard was Mr.

Harry Goldberg's grocery store. But we left because we didn't have the money to pay our creditors. If we had stayed a little longer, then the war came and we would have been able to go on. But it was rough and we left. They say once you taste Goose Creek water, you always come back, so we came back.

But like I said, my father's parents were here in 1918. As a matter of fact, I found my father's Courtney School diploma or certificate of something. I have it; 1919 it's dated; I found it. So he never graduated, so it's just a certificate of merit of some kind. He didn't graduate the high school because he was angry at the teacher. I think she failed him by one point or something in Latin or something like that. But I have it.

SR: You have an uncle who lived here the whole time.

LL: Well, he was the one that was contacted when Al and I just got married, when Mrs. Zalkin heard that the new nephew was coming, was a kosher butcher.

SR: And what did he do in Charleston?

LL: My uncle?

SR: Mm-hmm.

LL: My uncle had the family shoe store where Nossokoff had their—right next to Condon's. He was there, right. And he left. He left in 1955, I think.

SR: And his name was?

LL: Jack Winter.

SR: He had a son, Leonard.

LL: Leonard, right.

SR: Leonard was a friend of mine. When you moved to Charleston, where did you live?

LL: On Bogard and Percy, upstairs from the store.

SR: When you and Al moved back to Charleston, after you got married, where did you live?

LL: 12-F Mary Ellen Drive, across from all the—who was there? I remember Helen Lipsky and Irv Lipsky lived there—

AL: Ernie Goer

LL: —Ernie Goer and Mimi; Fisher, Doris Fisher and her husband—I forgot his name—and Levinson, Jerome Levinson.

SR: So there was a whole group of young Jewish couples.

LL: Yeah, we were a whole gang—that's right. We lived there and that's how we got to know everybody.

AL: In a hurry.

LL: Yes, in a hurry, right.

SR: Okay, can you think of any other incidents that you want to relate?

LL: Right now, I can't think of anything. If I come across it, I'll yell at you.

SR: Okay. Well, thank you.

[Tape interrupted.]

SR: This is a continuation of the Al and Lila Lash tape October 3rd, 1996 at their home in South Windermere. The interviewer is Sandra Rosenblum. Lila, we wanted to talk a little bit more about Murray, the man who helped you when Al got sick. What was his last name?

LL: His last name was Tannenbaum. He came here. I said—it was a peculiar story—I told him that God directed him to Lash because Bertha Breibart and Judy Appel had heard that Al had to undergo major surgery, and they heard that he [Murray] was a kosher butcher in New Jersey. So they told him to come to us and give us some feedback on what he did. Right then and there, we hired him. He was with us for a *number* of years, but I don't remember how long. I'll have to find out. He really was wonderful. All I could say is that God directed him to us.

SR: I know there are some other things you want to add to the tape, so I think we can just continue with the things that you feel are important.

LL: Okay. [Ed.: the following sounds as if LL is reading the information.] I did say that we were given a kiddush to honor the forty-three years of service to the community. But I feel we did something that was just as meaningful. We supported the soup kitchen for many years, giving fresh bones every week for their soup. We were honored with a plaque. We couldn't be there for the little ceremony because it was during Pesach holidays and we were in Florida with my daughter and her family. We sent Jimmy Haynes, who worked with us for over ten years. He received a carnation and praise for us helping the needy and homeless with their meals.

[Tape interrupted.]

I would be remiss if I failed to mention Al's love for the sport of bowling. He was an avid bowler when we met and I always said bowling was his first love. When I first met Al I worked as a secretary for a chain of shoe stores, National Shoes. The owners were Jewish, Seigel and Fried, a father and two or three sons. I've forgotten how many. It was six or seven months after Al was discharged from service. He served in the China, India, Burma Theatre and that was

when General Chennault—was it?—

AL: Mm-mmm. [Ed.: sounds negative.]

LL: —and his Flying Tigers were over there.

AL: Mm-hmm. [Ed.: sounds positive.]

LL: He was with the military police, guarded Mahatma Gandhi, and he was in the brothel district in India.

[Tape interrupted.]

LL: Al is left-handed and if you are unaware, there were, at that time, left-handed bowling shoes. You slide on the opposite foot. Today the synthetics allow you to slide on either foot just as well. I had ordered a pair of left-handed bowling shoes for Al, and shortly thereafter we became engaged. My bosses, Henry Berman and Morty [ed.: sounds like “Disks”], attributed my engagement to the fact that I was able to obtain the bowling shoes for him.

When we came to Charleston, Al and Dad came December 1949. Mom, my sisters, Joan and Marcia, and I arrived February 1950. Al was not able to participate in the sport he loved so much due to the work hours we kept. After several years he decided to renew the game. We found his bowling ball and the same shoes that I had sent—that *got my man* in a corner of our store. The carrying case was covered with some greenish stuff I called moss. Actually, I think it was mold. The dampness in Charleston does things like that and the shoes also had that greenish look all over it, plus the fact that it was curled up in the toes like Charlie Chaplin’s shoes. We wiped both the ball and shoes. The ball was useable and the shoes, well, we stuffed them with tissue paper to get a normal shape to it, but we had to get others.

Al started bowling with the B’nai B’rith league. They bowled at The Citadel lanes for a while, then the old M & M lanes located on George Street, and then the newer lanes that were built. He was bowling instructor for many years for the JCC. There’s a photo of him in the JCC twenty-five year booklet with a few of the children on the team. After the B’nai B’rith, he joined an all left-handed bowling team, the South Paws. The team made quite a name for themselves winning trophies, setting records, and then bowling only in money leagues.

He was secretary-treasurer for about thirty years, president of the Greater Charleston Bowling Association, and first representative of the Southern Bowling Association, and then director of the Southeastern Bowling Association. We traveled all over the South for tournaments. Even remember when the bowlers were integrated and had a few blacks bowl in the white lanes. They had their own bowling lanes at first. He was initiated in the Charleston Bowling Hall of Fame with a plaque in 1976. He wrote a bowling column for *Charleston Evening Post* for a few years, highlighting the scores and interesting events in the bowling area. Due to arthritis in his hands, he gave up the much-loved sport.

[Tape interrupted.]

SR: Lila, is there anything you’d like to add?

LL: Well, we could write a book. We were told many intimate secrets and were part of a great family, the Jewish community.

SR: Thank you, Al and Lila.

END OF TAPE