

Helen Hirsch Transcript

BETSY FRIEDMAN ABRAMS: —1997. I am Betsy Friedman Abrams, interviewing Helen Goldstein Hirsch in her home—well, in her daughter's home in Falmouth, Massachusetts under the auspices of the Jewish Women's Archive Temple Israel Oral History Project in Boston, Massachusetts. Helen, I have to start out by saying I was fascinated learning that your father founded a synagogue. Tell me a little bit more about it.

HELEN HIRSCH: Well, we moved from the South End of Boston to Dorchester in about 1907. In that area of Dorchester there really were no synagogues or shuls. There was the [unclear] Street Shul and the Blue Hill Avenue synagogue near Grove Hall, but near us—near Talbot Avenue, there really wasn't any institution like a shul or a synagogue or a Hebrew School. My father and a group of men, to raise money, hired a hall at the Dorchester Club on Talbot Avenue where they held High Holiday services and they hired a cantor and a choir.

BA: Now was this an Orthodox—this was—

HH: This was Orthodox. I remember that these people after the services. I remember that these people after the services would come to our house and have a drink, refreshments and sing a few songs and would receive the money that they had agreed on to conduct the services. After a few years, they raised enough money so that they purchased this church on Woodrow Avenue. It was a wooden structure. And they were there quite a few years. Later, another synagogue, a brick—

BA: Did they give it a name, by the way?

HH: I think it was [unclear] Jeshuran.

BA: Jeshuran?

HH: Ya, I think that was the name; I'm not positive. After all, I was very young—didn't remember all that.

BA: [laughs] Definitely.

HH: My brother, Edward Goldstein, did not go to a Hebrew School. He had a private tutor, a doctor, a friend of ours. And he tutored him so that he always remembered his Hebrew into his, you know, adult life. I can't say that he understood like they do today—understood what they were saying, but he knew his Hebrew always, was never at a loss.

BA: Did they ever teach you any Hebrew?

HH: And the only teaching I have, and my sister, was at the knee of my grandmother. We were taught the morning prayers and a few other prayers. She was a—she was quite a woman. She came to this country. I never heard much about her husband, my grandfather. But she was quite a woman. I know when she would go into the shul and pray, so many women would gather around her to hear her. They were not able to do this. And she was quite a lady.

BA: Where was she from?

HH: She was from Melova, Poland. That's where my mother was born.

BA: Mmm-hmm. And so this was your maternal grandmother.

HH: My maternal grandmother, and she lived with us most of the time and sometimes with her other daughter, Aunt Violet. And when she came to this country, she came with Aunt Violet. And Aunt Violet was already married, and she came—she brought with her a six-month-old child—her oldest child. And she—she would go to the other and stay

awhile but mostly at our house. And I remember her crocheting stockings and socks that we wore. And she was really quite something.

BA: You said your—that your grandmother came with your aunt. What about your mother?

HH: My mother came on her own earlier.

BA: I see. So she was here when your grandmother came.

HH: Yes. My mother came when she was 16 years old and she lived with an aunt on the South End of Boston. And as I say, my earliest recollections are moving from the South End of Boston to Dorchester. And—

BA: Do you remember anything about the South End, or you were too young?

HH: I just remember standing at a window and my mother talking to a neighbor across the—across an opening there and I remember there were clotheslines that stretched from our house to their house and then on a pulley you would put the laundry out. And I remember standing at that window. That's really the only recollection I have of South End. And when we lived on Glenway Street, my grandmother, I remember, was with us. And I went to the school up at the top of the street, Driscoll School, and I didn't go to any kindergarten. I went in the first grade and we must have gone about the middle of the school year because I remember being held back in first grade.

BA: Oh, my!

HH: But later on I made that up. In the sixth, seventh and eighth grade, I was chosen as one of the pupils to do the three years work in two years. So at the age of 12 years old I graduated grammar school. That was the Oliver Wendell Holmes School. And then I went to the Dorchester High School, which was then co-ed. And at the age of 16, I

graduated high school with honors. And the other recollections—my father's mother came here. I didn't know her too well. She had come much earlier and then had gone back to Poland. And then she came in her later years. I have pictures of her in albums, you know, of her and my other two grandmothers. And what else can we say about the temples? Later, well, as I went out into the business world, I started work at 16 years old but I continued going to night school. I went to Boston University School of Accounting and Secretarial School. I had a very good business—I studied a business course at high school so I was able to enter the second year of accounting and the second—then after a couple of years, I say, "This is enough of business, and all that." And I discovered I did have a bit of a voice so I started studying at the New England Conservatory and then later private teachers and all. And then—

BA: Why—but you were working while you were doing all this?

HH: Always working, always working.

BA: Ya, was it because you needed to support yourself, to help support your family or—?

HH: Myself. I didn't have to support my family but they were never really rich people, but we went along fairly. When my father established a tailoring establishment, it really was at the corner of Harvard, Talbot Avenue and Blue Hill Avenue. It was a—he made suits for men and also cleaning and altering and such. He was there for many years, probably stayed too long. Then he opened up in Brookline where he did much better. He also was very community-minded and he would rather go to a meeting than stay in his shop. So in those early years, he belonged—I don't know whether he was one of the founders—to what they call the Independent Private Boston Lodge. These were people from Poland—Landsleit, they were called—and they helped each other. And they also had what they called a Lodge doctor. This doctor—the people went in, paid him a fee or a very small fee. He delivered the babies, and he was known as the Lodge doctor. What

else can I say? Oh, later on I became—I had an opportunity to join the choir of the Mishkan Tefilla. There I stayed for about 14 years.

BA: Now when you joined the choir did your family join Mishkan Tefilla too or—?

HH: They didn't join.

BA: I wondered.

HH: But they—

BA: They'd come to hear you once in awhile?

HH: Well, as a choir member, I was entitled to two seats for the High Holidays. So after awhile, after they left the other shul, they came to Mishkan Tefilla. So they were sort of affiliated, you know.

BA: By that time, had Mishkan Tefilla become conservative?

HH: It was a conservative temple.

BA: Ya. Was it—it wasn't founded as conservative?

HH: I don't—that I wouldn't know. I don't remember. It was conservative at the time I was there.

BA: Ya, well I know that—it thinks that it is the descendent of Temple Israel, but I know that there was a congregation Shari Tefilla and Mishkan Israel. And I don't know which was which. And then they joined—

HH: Joined.

BA: —to become Mishkan Tefilla. So you were in the choir. How many people were in the choir?

HH: I would say there were about 14.

BA: Mmm. Seven men and seven women, approximately?

HH: Approximately, and the soprano section, I just remembered two people, Pauline Klarfeld and somebody by the name of Ganz; oh and then Mary Wolfman—Mary Wolfman.

BA: Oh, Mary was in the choir too?

HH: Mary was in the choir, and the alto section was Ann Slovin and Sophie Gilfebaum. And her father was a bass, and myself, and Sophie. Who else? I forget. We had about four people and then one of the tenors, his name was Simon Kandler, he became a cantor at Temple Emeth. And then there was Frank Rubin, and Robert Flowers, and there were about 14 people.

BA: Very interesting.

HH: And what they did was they went on.

BA: Now, this was a paid job for you or was it a volunteer?

HH: Mostly volunteer. Then they gave us a pittance. It didn't amount to anything.

BA: And you did it at every Shabbat and every holiday?

HH: We had rehearsals on Thursday night and then we attended the services on Friday night and Saturday mornings. I couldn't always go Saturday mornings because I was a working girl. Then I remember I always did the solo for the Naomi and Ruth—

BA: Oh.

HH: —song for Shavuot. That was my portion and after—after—well, I stayed there at Temple Mishkan Tefilla. Some of my recollections were—one time we had Eleanor Roosevelt come, and she—we had a museum there and she came to the museum and spoke. She was so charming and I could disassociate her with her pictures where she wasn't so good-looking. But here she was so wonderful.

BA: She was the President's wife when she came?

HH: Yes.

BA: It was at that period, ya.

HH: So it was quite an evening at Temple.

BA: This wasn't—this wasn't a service; this was just a meeting.

HH: This was a different occasion and then I always remember Kol Nidre night. There was something—there was a feeling of awe and emotion through the whole temple. That's something I never felt any place else. That night was awe-inspiring; it was really a holy night. That I'll always remember as one thing. One other—

BA: Did you have to sing in the choir on Kol Nidre night as well?

HH: Oh, yes, yes.

BA: Ya, so that the choirs did participate?

HH: Oh, yes. We had a choir loft and there was an organ and Professor Braslavsky was the music director.

BA: Oh, really?

HH: He was the music director and he also composed some numbers. We had Cantor Glickstein at that time. He was a wonderful cantor. And another thing I remember, we also had a choral group there, which Professor Braslavsky directed. One day we were at a rehearsal and I don't know how it was—whether it was prepared or what. But we were there and a man came in who was a member of the temple and he brought his son with him. And he played the piano, and who was it, but Leonard Bernstein.

BA: Oh, my!

HH: At the age of 15.

BA: My!

HH: That was my first contact with him. That was a very interesting thing. What else? After I got married to my husband, who was already a member of Temple Israel, so I transferred my allegiance to Temple Israel, and there, of course, I knew Dr. Aisner and his wife, Ann, who was the Chair of the Women's Choral Group. I joined that and Morey joined a Glee Club and he was—Morey never wanted to hold office but he was always a worker. In those years he belonged to the Brotherhood. He was a life member of Chitakwa and a Glee Club member. And he would always do what he could for our brotherhood.

BA: I remember you did a lot for Sisterhood.

HH: Ya, ya. And what else? My sister joined Temple Israel—Gertrude Goldstein. My brother joined Ohabei Shalom. It seems that in early years he met his wife in there—in their place of meeting in Roxbury. I don't know where the met. Where was the early times of Ohabei Shalom?

BA: They were in Boston.

HH: Ya, well, he met—

BA: They moved to Brookline in 1928.

HH: Ya, well, he met his wife when they were about 16 years old, and at the age of 22, on his birthday, they were married. And they remained members of Temple Ohabei Shalom. What else can I say?

BA: The—well, when you joined the temple after Ann Aisner finished with the choral group, you became—

HH: When she finished I became Chair.

BA: I was going to say, I remember you're a Chair—

HH: Yes, I was Chair. We had Willem Frank. Do you remember the organist? He directed the group for awhile. And then Mary came in and she directed, and we had shows. Do you remember she put on shows? And Doris Levy, she directed shows, and—

BA: Do you remember some of shows that you did or were they ones that people wrote for the temple? Or was it a combination?

HH: Well, they—they wrote it and they—Mary wrote and I think Doris did.

BA: Mmm-hmm.

HH: And we were in the shows and I participated in all that. [chuckles] And what else can we say of the times?

BA: Well, it's—

HH: [unclear]

BA: Singing was one of your favorite things.

HH: Favorite things, ya.

BA: But you were also working, correct?

HH: I worked, ya—

BA: You worked as a—doing—

HH: —until I got married.

BA: How did you meet Morey?

HH: My employer.

BA: Oh! I don't think I knew that.

HH: Morey had lost his wife and he saw her. He was out at one time and my employer saw him out with his cousin and two women. He says, "Well, if he's going out with women," he says, "I'm going to have him meet Helen." So he did, and I thought he was a rather nice person [chuckles] and we got together. And we did get—and we were married. Of course [unclear] was about 14 years old at that time and I knew nothing about how to bring up children. Nor did I know how to cook, because when I lived at home, my mother had my meals ready for me. But I learned. I said, "If you can read, you can cook."

BA: [laughs]

HH: So I read recipes and people gave me recipes. And my employer's wife lived in the same building, and the first Friday we spent the whole day cooking up the chicken and stuffing the neck and sewing it up and chopping the liver—all day Friday. It took us, oh my—this was really something. Then I started out—I became really proficient in cooking

and baking. [chuckles] And what else can I say? I was always the—I was always interested in religion, and anytime there were courses offered, I took part in them. I started Hebrew many times but I couldn't read them—never completely finished. Even when I moved to Florida, I even took a course at Temple Beth El. But I don't know—I never really—I never gave it enough time, I would say. And—

BA: Well, you must have been able to sing Hebrew.

HH: Oh, yes, well, you know, it's written in transliteration

BA: Haggadah, even though you didn't—

HH: And I always enjoyed at Temple Israel the Havdalah, the Havdalah on Saturday afternoons with Rabbi Gittelsohn. Those were very interesting. We had a social hour. Women would bake the cakes and the cookies, and then we had a session with the Bible and the Havdalah hour singing the songs. I always enjoyed that and I always enjoyed him having the—being the leader of that group.

BA: Well—

HH: Shall I finish up? [chuckles]

BA: No, oh, heavens no!

HH: No? Is there anything you want to ask?

BA: Well, your—let's see, you—

HH: Did I mention the names—I didn't mention the names of my parents, Abram and Frannie Goldstein.

BA: Ya.

HH: My sister was Gertrude Goldstein, my brother, Edward Goldstein.

BA: And of course you've been involved with your grandchildren.

HH: Oh, then my daughter, Irma—Irma, and marriage. She gave birth to two sons and twin daughters and three of these four were married and each of the three have three children so I am blessed with nine great-grandchildren.

BA: When you said that you were really brought up in an Orthodox family—

HH: Right.

BA: —the—were they very observant or just—?

HH: They were not fanatically so.

BA: Yes, yes.

HH: But they were observant. We had a kosher home and one thing I marveled at was, my mother was not really a very strong woman, but I always marveled at on a Friday she was able to do the cooking and baking all in one day. She would bake her own kugel, you know—slice the noodles. She'd make challah. She'd make an apple pie, and the chicken and the chopped liver. I always marveled, how did she do it all in one day? If I was to do that, I would make maybe the challah or the apple pie the day before and do the rest the next day, but she did all this in one day. It was really—

BA: But she never taught you how to cook?

HH: Never. Never had time to. You see, I'd come home like six, seven o'clock at night. The meal was all done and ready. Of course, after I was married I would help with the gefilte fish on the holidays. Then I would do it at her home and then later, at my home. We would have the seders and services at my home and have the family, always have

about 22 people. We'd always observe the holidays, and as I think Irma tries to do the same, Passover and Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kipper.

BA: But you didn't feel that it had to be strictly Orthodox or—what about kosher?

HH: I didn't. My husband was not—

BA: Kosher. [chuckles]

HH: He didn't care whether I did or I didn't. So we did not keep a strictly kosher home, no.

BA: Now, when you were married, you moved into Cambridge.

HH: No, we lived in Brookline.

BA: Brookline. You were already living in Brookline.

HH: I always lived in Brookline. I never even went to Newton, just remained in Brookline—Sewell Avenue, Harvard Avenue, Chestnut Hill. We lived—we had the house there.

BA: Did you consider going to college at all?

HH: Did I what?

BA: Consider going to college? Or you weren't really interested in—

HH: I don't think my parents could afford that. As I say, I went at night.

BA: No, I know you—

HH: On my own. On my own

BA: I knew you went to school but I wondered if you—

HH: And my brother, he went to the High School of Commerce and that was just for boys. And he won—he and a friend of his won a scholarship to the Bentley School of Accounting. So he became a graduate accountant. Then of course he went into business later. He worked for someone and then he went into business himself.

BA: When you were working, what were you doing?

HH: Oh, I was a—I said I was a bookkeeper and—at \$10 a week, six days a week. After I was there a month, gave me a dollar raise.

BA: [chuckles] Oh, that was nice!

HH: And then, I was just out of high school and I wanted to have a vacation so I took a week off. I went into some—some camp. Oh what was it? I don't remember what camp, sort of a Campfire—what kind of a thing did we have at those years? And I came back and the head bookkeeper in that place, it was the family of Dana's, if you want to know—the relatives of Norma's. And—

BA: Coincidence.

HH: Ya. Oh, the head bookkeeper got married in November and I became the head bookkeeper. [chuckles]

BA: Oh, my!

HH: At the age of 16.

BA: My!

HH: At that time I was given another raise, three dollars—\$14 a week.

BA: They must have thought you were very capable.

HH: Oh, I was there a long time, until the Depression and these—now, this was a Dana Clothing Company, and there was a Dana Furniture Company in Taunton, related. And the fourth person was Julius Glazer, Lester Glazer's father. Yep, Lester Glazer's father. So I knew that family quite well. There was Depression and they went out of business. But we continued—it was a credit business so there was an overlap of people owing money. So I would go to Moses Dana's house and I would continue—they would go collecting the money and bring it and I would record it and all that, until that ended. And then this friend of mine—we had these dear friends, Esther and Selma Levenberg. And Selma became the secretary of the Ford Hall Forum. And they were our neighbors and friends. And she said, "I know somebody who wants a bookkeeper." So I did go—this was to the Siegel Shoe Company—Siegel Shoe and Arlace Company. And there too, I remained for a number of years until Lou Siegel, anyway, introduced me to Morey. That's [chuckles] how I—

BA: And then you stopped working after you—

HH: I stopped working. I worked for my husband once in a while without pay. [chuckles] It was—I retired from working about in October. I was going to get married—I got engaged in November and in January I got married. But Christmastime we were very busy. Irma worked and I worked and I even had—my father would come in and my brother and my sister and my sister-in-law. We all came in to help Christmas time. And my father was quite a—[unclear] very much. He would stand at the door and greet the people, and my brother would do the wrapping of the packages. My sister and sister-in-law, they were good sales people. I was never a good salesperson. I was in the office and doing the office work. And the salary continued for many Christmases until my mother passed away, of course, at the age of 75, and my father and sister remained together. And he died at the age of 83, and she continued on. She was not too well but

she was bright—very bright. And she came to work for Daniel Mordecai. So that was in Natick. We used to worry about her driving from—she was living in Brighton at that time—drive from there to Natick. But she made it and she loved that job and had a very good relationship with the company and their families. And I understand he passed away recently. I saw it in the bulletin. I felt compelled to write to the son but I said, “Well, he wouldn’t know me or remember me,” but I didn’t. What else would you want to know? Bring up thoughts. [chuckles]

BA: [chuckles] Well, that’s the fun part of the interviewing.

HH: Ya.

BA: Now I know you were involved in other community activities besides the temple and the Sisterhood.

HH: Yes, this brings me to B’nai B’rith. There was a founding of the Women’s Group of B’nai B’rith; it was called the King Solomon Lodge. And one of the founders was Bessie Berman.

BA: Oh, she didn’t admit that when I interviewed her. [laughs]

HH: Oh, ya, maybe she forgot about it. So we had what we call a “Degree Team.” We dressed up in costume, and I was a soloist for the Degree Team in the organization. And we were very active for quite awhile. Then I don’t know what happened. B’nai Brith sort of went down in the area, or what happened, I don’t know.

BA: Well, it still exists but—

HH: It was—we did have it back. And then I—when—then I did quite a bit for Hadassah. At that time—it was just after I married—and a woman in the building had called together a group of women, and asked if I would have it in my house. I said,

“Yes.” [chuckles] But she had all these women. She wanted me to take it over. So we really worked for the Youth Aliyah section of it. And I don’t know if she called it minyan but it had about 30 people. That’s like three minyans in one. And I became the treasurer of it, of our minyan. And we had a study group. We met in women’s houses. Later I became the treasurer of Boston Youth Aliyah Movement. It was quite a job to do. I always remained interested in Hadassah, became a life member and made Irma a life member and Audrey a life member.

BA: Faith too?

HH: Hmm?

BA: And Faith?

HH: No.

BA: Oh. [chuckles]

HH: Only those who are interested in it.

BA: Oh, I see.

HH: So Audrey, where she moved to, in Eastern—there was a Hadassah group. And she was interested, so I made her a life member.

BA: Was your family Zionistic?

HH: They were in thought. I doubt if they were members of it, you know.

BA: Well, I—you know, I wondered, in those days, you know—

HH: Those days, I don’t know. I only knew of it in later years. So B’nai B’rith, Hadassah, Temple Israel and other organizations as we went along. [chuckles] I became a life

member in at least 20 organizations, and of course then we became interested in Brandeis. I shouldn't forget that. That was one of the important things in our life. There was a meeting at the Hotel Kenmore and I received a notification in the mail. I said, "Morey, let's go." We went and they raised money. I know it was \$100 and they asked, you know, for people to give more. People were giving large sums—thousands of dollars but my dear Morey, he gave what he could. He got up and he said, "I will give \$2,000." Well, that was the beginning and as time went on you could pay that out in installments. Then they called a meeting. They really needed the money—you could pay it right away. So that was okay. But then he was—became very active. He knew quite a few people there that were active and became the foster alumni, and they really—the beginners of the, really, the nuts and bolts. He gave clocks for all the rooms. He gave a TV. And as time went on, they used to have summer outings. They were really fund-raising events but they were enjoyable weekends. We'd go many places—Mount Washington, the Griswald. There were many places, and then he became Chairman of the Gift Committee at these outings. He worked very hard gathering the gifts and stamping the Brandeis insignia on everything and wrapping—

BA: And you were assisting him?

HH: Hmm?

BA: You were assisting him?

HH: I was assisting him and we had some very nice times at those affairs. But he really worked hard. So at one point they honored him. I have in my apartment three—three, like black and white photographs. It was a new media at the time and he was presented these three framed pictures of the three chapels, of the castle and some student administration building—things of that sort. And recently—well, let me say here that at one of these outings, he didn't say anything to me, but somebody came over to congratulate me that he had promised \$25,000 for a science laboratory. But we were

going to get a larger laboratory, one worth \$50,000, [chuckles] because of his work in labor interests at Brandeis. Well, we—that was in 1966 we dedicated that laboratory, which is still there in the Gerstenstein Building. Then after awhile that was paid up and Dr. Sacher invited us to come for lunch. He wants to talk over something. Well, Morey was not one to go for the lunches or anything like that but we'll meet with him and see what he wants. He would like to do something more for the Hirsch family, something that will be remembered and this and that. Well, we talked it over and this and that, and I say, "Well, we'll establish music scholarships." His eyes lit up. You know, we weren't asking for a building or anything that was tangible. His eyes lit up and he was very happy. We said so for many years, we assisted the scholarship in music. And we got a letter saying this one was the recipient of the scholarship, and over the years, then he became a President's counselor and then they honored him. He became a Fellow of the university. And as far as I was concerned, I was always at the side for all these things, but then when the Women's Group started, there were eight women who were prominent in many organizations, like for instance Gussy Katz, who was prominent in B'nai B'rith and others. But I was right behind them. So I was—

BA: I was going to ask you if you were

HH: —a charter member of the Women's Group. And of course there I gave too to the libraries. I have at home a thing they gave me, framed. And my name is supposed to be here, there, and every year we would—I would give, and more or less I would give now only to the women's—I don't give to the main group. And this year I received a letter. This man, this Paul Rosenstein, wanted to visit with me. So I said, "Well, I don't want him to come and feel that I have to give a lot of money." He says, no, he just wants to visit. He's going to visit a few people in Florida. So he came to my house and I have many things in my apartment that are Brandeis things that show that we've given, you know, and I have this man that came to my house. And as he saw that all over the apartment I have evidences of our interest in Brandeis, so he was interested in talking to me and I

showed him around and showed photographs of Morey in the processional, in the graduations and all that sort of thing. So he was very interested and he said if I—he would love to have me come to Brandeis this summer and he would be happy to have—to be my host for the day. But how can I get to Brandeis? [chuckles] So anyway, that's bringing it up pretty well to date, I think. If there's anything you want to ask—

BA: Well, I think you certainly have given us a very interesting description of all the things that you and Morey did. [unclear] just said that—

HH: His association with different things.

BA: Did you—you obviously did not have discrimination when you were looking for a job in—

HH: No, I worked for Jewish people and I never felt any discrimination anytime. No.

BA: Did you have any experiences with antisemitism at all?

HH: No, I really didn't.

BA: You were lucky from that point of view.

HH: Ya. After all, I was affiliated with Ford Hall Forum. We used to go Sunday nights for lectures. There's where you would really hear people talk. Now there's—you can hear them everywhere—every organization. Everybody has speakers but there's where you really heard the main people in the world who came.

BA: I noticed that one of the things you had written about was living near Franklin Park—

HH: Oh.

BA: And how it was perfectly safe to walk around and to do things.

HH: I would walk to Temple Mishkan Tefilla for rehearsals and services from my house on Caulder or Esmont Street. There was no thought of any fear. And we always walked. The only time we ever took a streetcar was if it rained, either there or even to go to the high school, which was quite a walk up to Carpon Square. And only if it rained, I don't know, five cents on the streetcar.

BA: But you also walked at night too.

HH: And at night.

BA: So you'd walk home from services by yourself occasionally?

HH: Ya, occasionally we would get a—one person there had an automobile. [laughs]
So we could get a—

BA: And they allowed conservative Jews to drive in those days?

HH: Ya, they did.

BA: Ya.

HH: Well, there's this more important to drive and be there than not to drive.

BA: That's true.

HH: That's the thing.

BA: Of course it's a—I guess life was a little safer in those days than what you would like to see your great-grandchildren doing now.

HH: Right, and another thing—of course we lived on Talbot Avenue and [unclear] Street. And in winter, the Field—Franklin Field was just across the street—they would flood it and we would do our ice-skating. And we would have guests. All we'd do, put the

skates on in the house, just walk across the car tracks, and we would do our ice-skating. Wonderful, in the winter. I played tennis on the Field and that was our recreation when I was young.

BA: Well, you've kept busy and—

HH: Ya, always a—we were friends—had friends in school and friends.

BA: Did you have any hobbies?

HH: Well, singing was really my hobby. [chuckles]

BA: How long did you continue with the New England Conservatory. You started talking about it and then we went on to another tangent.

HH: I went for a few years, and then an uncle of mine worked for the singing teacher on Newbury Street, and he recommended me to go to see him. I studied with him. And then there were times—oh, yes—there was this Cantor Hochberg and he got the group together. We sang on the radio Jewish songs and so forth. So in that group, Sophie Gilfebaum and Mary Wolfman, myself, Frank Rubin, several from the choir that were in that—that were dressed in evening gowns. I have a picture somewhat of all of us.

BA: What radio station was this? Do you remember?

HH: What?

BA: What radio program was this, do you remember?

HH: I don't know.

BA: Oh.

HH: I don't remember. But we sang on the Jewish programs, sang these Hebrew songs, Jewish songs—used to do that.

BA: Do you still sing?

HH: Not now.

BA: Well, if you go to temple, I'll bet you do sing.

HH: Well, I sing along—

BA: Ya.

HH: —as best I can. Once in awhile somebody next to me will say, “Well, you have a nice voice.” [laughs] But I don't do any singing. I used to, but in the [unclear] I—and another thing, in those days every family I knew had a piano. We all took—everybody took piano lessons.

BA: Did you?

HH: Huh?

BA: Did you take piano lessons?

HH: And I played quite well. My sister and brother took lessons. My brother took the least lessons and even into like popular music. And he played—he entertained more than any of us with his piano and his singing. He was a—he sang well too and was in the Glee Club at Ohabei Shalom. And he would like lead his area, you know, the tenors.
[tape turned off/on]

BA: One question. I wanted to ask you whether you ever tried to teach your children or grandchildren—your grandchildren or great-grandchildren any music.

HH: No, I don't really—

BA: Or show them how to sing?

HH: No, I really didn't. Of course Ashley studies the piano and she always wants to play for me. In fact, the other night, she said, "I'm going to play for you over the telephone." And she played a piece [chuckles] on the piano for me. So that's it. Of course Steven's oldest girl, Tarryn, is studying the flute and she's doing very nicely with that.

BA: Did you learn any other instrument other than the piano?

HH: No.

BA: Just [unclear]

HH: But when I started to sing, more or less I accompanied myself and I really stopped any piano playing anywhere. It was just to accompany myself, actually.

BA: Do you think that if you could have, you'd have liked to have been a professional singer?

HH: No, I don't think so.

BA: Or you liked to more as a hobby?

HH: I was just happy with what I was doing and—

BA: It certainly was a very interesting—

HH: I was very good at—in those days they had elocution lessons and I was very good at that.

BA: Did you take elocution?

HH: In school.

BA: Oh, it was in school. I didn't know that. Ya.

HH: And—

BA: Did they do plays in school?

HH: I think it was very good for diction and speaking. I think it was excellent and I really feel that they should have more of that in the schools today because many of the children do not talk distinctly.

BA: Did you—I forgot what I was going to ask. Oh, I know. In the schools, did they put on plays or things like that?

HH: Ya.

BA: So they did that as part—and you were in them?

HH: Yes, I was.

BA: So that was your experience before getting into the ones in the Temple Israel.

HH: Temple Israel. [laughs] Probably.

BA: Well, it sounds like—

HH: There—

BA: Go ahead.

HH: There were many times, you know, working—

[End of Side 1, Tape 1]

HH: —who became MC in the White Mountains, the Catskills. And on my vacations, a few of my vacations, I would go there and she too would put on—

BA: Right.

HH: —plays and singing and so I would take part in that. We had—

BA: Up in the White Mountains?

HH: White Mountains. The Catskills, I guess it was.

BA: Ya.

HH: No, the White Mountains wouldn't be the Catskills.

BA: No.

HH: No.

BA: New Hampshire.

HH: But in the White Mountains, New Hampshire. We would put on the shows. She would do that as part of her work. But when I was there on my vacation I would take part.

BA: You—did you have other dates? I mean, Morey wasn't your first date, I'm sure.

HH: Oh, I had a few dates.

BA: But it wasn't something—

HH: Nothing come of it. There was one person I liked a lot but there was nothing—nothing to it.

BA: And you survived the Depression, obviously.

HH: We did.

BA: Well, I think you had a very, very fascinating life and I appreciate your letting me interview you. It's always fun to see you but I've learned a lot about you that I never knew. And I think we'll find it very interesting to have and we appreciate it.

HH: Well, thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]