Judy Patkin Transcript

Q: Okay, so we are back recording. So if you could just state for us your name and where we are, that would be great.

Judy Patkin: Yeah. The name is Judy Patkin. We're at Action for Post-Soviet Jewry. Our office is in Waltham [Massachusetts]. 24 Crescent Street, Suite 306. [laughter]

Q: Amazing. Again, thank you so much for sharing with us. So, to open the conversation, I was hoping you could give us a little bit of background on you. So, where you were born, where you were raised, where you've lived since that part of your life – just kind of walking us through that.

JP: Okay. I was born in New Jersey. At the Englewood Hospital, Englewood, New Jersey, lived in Palisades Park, New Jersey, and we moved to Massachusetts when I was five. Grew up mostly in Newton. I don't know if you want more than that. [laughter]

Q: Sure. Have you been living in Newton since?

JP: No, living in Lexington right now. Once I got married – I was living in Newton until I got married, and we moved to Watertown. I guess Brighton first, then Watertown, then Lexington.

Q: Where did you study at both the undergraduate and graduate levels?

JP: I graduated from Bates College in Lewiston, Maine. Then I went to Tufts University, the medical school, where I have a doctorate in physiology.

Q: Why did you decide on physiology?

JP: I was fascinated by the sciences. I majored in science in college. I wanted to do more.

Q: What about the sciences fascinates you?

JP: Just a lot of things. I always read a lot. And I was interested in reading and people who do interesting things in science, so I wanted to see what basic research was like.

Q: So I was wondering if you could start by sharing with us when you were first exposed to Soviet Jewry and the Soviet Jewry movement.

JP: Okay. Early 1970s. Probably the Leningrad Trials is what I noticed first. I was assigned to head a committee at Temple Isaiah, Lexington, on World Jewry and received bulletins about Jews in the Soviet Union. I began to go to demonstrations in the Boston area and then met other people who were interested in it, and discovered the nucleus of the group was in Sudbury, where an émigré from Moscow was living, I think, in Wayland, and he was working with the synagogue, Beth El, in Sudbury. [Editor's Note: The Leningrad Trials revolved around the attempted hijacking of a plane by Refuseniks trying to get to Israel. Two of the accused were sentenced to death, and the others were given prison sentences over ten years. Worldwide outcry resulted in the sentences being lessened. The event is seen as a turning point in the Refusenik movement.] So they were beginning to become active, and I joined them

Q: Was that within the synagogue, or was it—?

JP: It was in Beth El at that point, but the group was really independent. They planned their own things [and] had their own meetings. The fellow – I can't remember his name, sorry, my memory's terrible for names. But he had a group of friends he left behind in Moscow, part of the Jewish intelligentsia who were refuseniks, who were trying to get out. So they began working on their friends' cases, and they did begin coming out, one by one. But there were a lot of prisoners at that point because of the Leningrad trials, so

we began working on behalf of the prisoners. I don't know if you know the situation, where they tried to take a plane to get to Scandinavia, supposedly to attend a wedding. But they were a group – came from mostly Riga, I think Moscow, St. Petersburg, a small group of them. They were all arrested on the tarmac. They never got to the plane. So those were the famous cases. Then I learned of other people who had been imprisoned earlier for trying to leave the country. So you grew out of that.

Q: Is there something about those stories, in particular, that was magnetic for you?

JP: Well, there were sad things going on. We had information coming out with phone calls that people would send to us. There was a critical tie-in from England – Michael Sherbourne, who could speak Russian without an accent. So he was able to call in. As phones were disconnected from people who had left, he would call in, someone would receive the call, and he'd pass the information on to us, so we had very fresh information on what was going on with people. People were losing their jobs, harassed, they were accused of being parasites and arrested. There was a lot going on at that point. Very famous trials going on with the Leningrad people, and then they went after the Jews in every city who were at [inaudible] active, started arresting. So it was hard not to react to this.

Q: Did it feel at all scary being hypothetically removed here, in this part, geographically speaking at all?

JP: Well, I felt safe here. I didn't feel as though I was in danger at all.

Q: So I was curious if you were involved in any protests and what that experience was like if you were?

JP: Oh, yeah. Whenever something was happening – the Russian ballet came to Boston, we would protest outside. You'd meet other people who were interested in Soviet Jewry at the time. We began to form a group. So the Soviet Jewry group grew

out of the people in Sudbury, but it became larger. At one point, [Robert] Bob Gordon and Morey Schapira were co-chairs of the group. We actually became a nonprofit corporation in 1975 – had meetings, put out a newsletter. Used to have a telegram bank, so when there was a crisis going on, we would reach out and send cables. Very actively involved with our legislators, our congressmen, our senators.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit – or tell the people that are eventually listening to this a little bit about that protest with the Russian Ballet coming and anecdotally, what was going on, what the experience was like viscerally?

JP: Well, we were holding signs outside. Some of the press was there watching what was going on. The signs would have pictures of people who we knew were under arrest, had been sent away, asking them to free Soviet Jews. They weren't violent at all; they were fairly quiet things.

Q: When and why did you first become involved with the Action for Soviet Jewry? What's happening here, what it used to be, what it is now.

JP: It was very hard to ignore what was going on in the Soviet Union. So I was fascinated with that and wanted to see what I could do to help. There were things that you could do at the time. I was involved with writing the newsletter that would go out. It was a monthly newsletter at that point. Now, I get one out three times a year. [laughter] But then there were all kinds of breaking news of people who had been recently refused, people who had been arrested, people who had been beaten up. I forgot what you originally asked. [laughter]

Q: That's okay. The question was when and why did you first become involved with this specific group, which I think you answered?

JP: Yes.

Q: Rewinding, when we were talking about science, did you ever think that this is where you were going to be or what you would be doing?

JP: No. Well, my problem with going to science – I did get my degree, but I began to have children, and I couldn't afford daycare. There wasn't any organized daycare; you had to do it on your own. I couldn't afford hiring someone to come into the house. So I would set up experiments, and I would have someone coming in at seven o'clock in the morning to help with the children, and I'd get a call at the last minute that she was sick and couldn't come. So a whole week of setting up an experiment was down the tubes. [laughter] So it became impossible to do it, so I stopped at that point. So I did other things.

Q: Did you turn to something else?

JP: Yeah, I did things in education. I worked with an alternative high school in Watertown for a few years. I worked with the school system, my children's school, trying to get open education into the school to get a little more variety in their teaching methods. So that kept me busy for a while. I was active in my synagogue, Temple Isaiah in Lexington.

Q: Can you talk a little bit more about your interest in – I don't remember exactly the words, but – open education?

JP: Yeah.

Q: Is that what you said? Can you talk a little bit about that?

JP: Yeah. There were books written about it. We began meeting with a couple of the principals, mainly the principal of the school where my children were just starting out in the early grades. We talked about sending teachers to workshops. School was very conservative and very staid, and I felt there are a lot more exciting ways to educate kids

than what they were doing. So we brought in a fair to the school of educational materials. We worked with a business – I guess it was Newton Corner [a neighborhood of Newton, Massachusetts], a workshop that did education workshops and provided materials. So we found substitutes to be able to send a large group of teachers from all across the town to workshops for three days at a time. It did shake things up a lot. We were able to get them to combine some of the classes so that they could have a combination kindergarten/first grade or first grade/second grade. So schools were bursting at the seams with more kids than they could accommodate, so they were very happy to be able to be more flexible on the number of kids in a classroom. So a lot went on for probably about four or five years. Watched how they were hiring teachers. All their teachers were coming out of one school, and we told them that they need to branch out and look further afield to hire [laughter], that type of thing.

Q: Do you find any connection [between] the work that you were doing in the school system or in education with the work that you were doing sort of in this other part of your life with Soviet Jewry?

JP: Soviet Jewry? Not really connected, no. It was different. [laughter]

Q: Were they happening at the same time?

JP: I don't think so. I think the school business was earlier.

Q: Were your children also –?

JP: Probably in the ’60. My children were born in the early ’60s, so that was going on in the ’60s.

Q: Were your children also involved in the Soviet Jewry movement as well?

JP: Little bit. We would write letters to people, and sometimes they would participate in that. But only marginally involved.

Q: So, rewinding us again, back to talking about beginning this work with the Action for Soviet Jewry and then the addition of the "Post" in recent years, did your personal Jewish values or Jewish values overarchingly play a role in the decision to be active in this work?

JP: Well, I think I was really enriched by what was going on, seeing what was going on in the Soviet Union and comparing it to life here. We have such an easy life here in terms of choices compared to what these people were going through. So it was very much instructive to me. So I think I became a better Jew because of the activity. I don't know if that makes sense to you. [laughter]

Q: I was just going to ask if maybe you could talk a little bit further about what it means to you to become a better Jew. What does that mean to you?

JP: Well, to appreciate what goes into being Jewish, to family, to holidays, to everything, to have the freedom to do all these things. Very conscious that my grandparents left "Russia" at the time, in the late 1800s. So "there but for the grace of God," I would have been there. Though I doubt if I would have survived the Holocaust. There were a lot of people lost at that point.

Q: Did you feel that sort of emotional connection with the family history there?

JP: Yeah, because I visited there. The first visit was in the late '70s. And the people look like us. [laughter] Three-fourths of the Jews living in America at the time came from Eastern Europe, so seeing a lot of familiar-looking faces.

Q: Is that jarring in any way?

JP: Well, you hear about their life stories and how many family members they lost in the war and all; it's very different lifestyles. The struggle.

Q: I'm sort of wondering also, when you first went to that geographic area, what do you remember the most about that experience beyond seeing people that look familiar? What were some highs and some lows?

JP: Well, I visited with refuseniks; [that] was the purpose of going. So, being able to meet with them in their apartment and hear the stories, collect new information. Brought things in to help them survive; could bring in dungarees for them to sell on the black market or cameras, things, because these people had all lost their jobs. So used to bring in medicine for people. We had certain contacts for different things.

Q: Can you talk about that, the contacts? Were those contacts in the United States, or were they abroad?

JP: Yeah, were abroad. We were part of the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, so we would have meetings in the States of other activists. At one point, there were fifty grassroots groups part of the Union of Councils. We're the last one [laughter] that's left. Yeah, those have all closed down. Most of them closed when the refusenik era stopped. We kept going.

Q: Can you talk a little bit about that, about other people closing and you continuing to push forward?

JP: Well, the Boston Federation [Combined Jewish Philanthropies] was looking for a sister city relationship, a Jewish relationship. So there is, with the national conferences, the [Dnipro] *Kehillah* [congregation, community] Project. And they were looking for a city to link with in the former Soviet Union. I was trying to think, was – yeah, I guess it was the former Soviet Union at that point. So we finally decided on Dnepropetrovsk [now Dnipro], Ukraine. So I went on a trip – I think '93 was my first trip there – to see whether

there was anything that we could do with this relationship. It slowly developed out of that. It grew year by year.

Q: Does it feel isolating to be the only group that's left? Are you alone in it?

JP: No, no, I think it's the opposite of isolating; it's like it opened up a lot. [laughter] When you were able to go in after the Soviet Union collapsed, you could visit a whole Jewish community. Before, you could only see someone who was a refusenik, who was fairly well known, who had gone through – lost their job, been imprisoned, whatever – [and] was willing to risk anything to get out. You couldn't visit just any old person. Now you can go in and see a whole community, and people were willing to come and talk and tell you what was going on. So it was a very different time. It was fascinating, I felt, and we saw things develop very slowly compared to what they're like now. Cities were very drab when we first went in. Totally gray, no color signs. People lived in apartment houses, mostly. Some people in single homes that were falling apart. First thing I saw was a Coca-Cola sign. Then I saw them selling bananas on the street. Someone had a crate of bananas they were selling on the street, which is absolutely new for these people; they had never seen bananas. I mean, never. [laughter] Not just that they were missing for a couple of months, but they had never had them. Slowly color came up to the streets, and stores were opened that put color in their windows. So it's a tremendous change [from] what it was and what it is now. But the needs are still there, especially now in Ukraine; people are desperately poor. Their currency lost two-thirds of its value after Putin invaded in 2014. So the pensions have lost two-thirds of their value. So people are having trouble putting food on the table. Many of them cannot afford medicine at all. So, try and do what we can.

Q: Where are the different places that this organization goes to or brings items to for people in need? Is it wherever the need arises?

JP: No. We reached out slowly from Dnepropetrovsk. Dnepropetrovsk has a very active rabbi who was very successful in bringing money into the Jewish community. So it became obvious that they didn't really need our help as much as other communities. Our main contact was Yan Sidelkovsky, who had been trained by the Joint – he used to run the Joint's Hesed; they opened up Heseds. [Editor's Note: The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC)'s network of social service centers in the former Soviet Union is named "Hesed," from the Hebrew word for "kindness, generosity."] I don't know if that's a term you know. But the Joint was told to keep the elderly in place, not to let them emigrate. So they opened up a Jewish Community Center, and Yan was trained to be head of one of these centers, and he eventually began to train other people for centers and had contacts in other cities. So we slowly began to move out from Dnepropetrovsk to see what we could provide. We built a series of coordinators and what we call our "Adopt-a-Bubbe [grandmother]" program. We're in about a dozen cities in eastern Ukraine now. I had a relationship going way back to Babruysk in Belarus, and I've held on to that relationship with an Orthodox community there. And in Chi?in?u, Moldova, we send aid in there. There's a progressive Hebrew school in Vinnytsia that we've had a relationship [with] in western Ukraine. So we send things. You can see the boxes that are being packed; these are going to be going out.

Q: Can you tell us, just because we only have an audio recording, a little bit about –

JP: What's in them?

Q: – what we're seeing, yeah.

JP: We get donated clothing, and so these boxes are full of clothing. Lately, I've been buying, in Costco, soap and toothpaste and [telling] them to make sure every box gets some bars of soap and some toothpaste in it. We get some donations of medicine – not a lot. I hope to start a new program of doing something with blood pressure medications. We'll probably start a small pilot operation, see how that goes, and if we

can increase it. There's a box here of T-shirts. A man came up to me a couple of weeks ago, a workman from the building, saying that they were closing out a place in the basement of the building, and they found this box full of T-shirts. He brought up a couple of samples. He said, “They look brand new.” He said, “Are you interested?” I said, “Sure.” So we have a box of brand-new T-shirts. They all have the same label on them, whatever it is [laughter], but they’re fine. I mean, people need things desperately. We're trying to collect warm clothing. We try to collect winter coats this time of year [and] get them in before the winter starts. We go to synagogue rummage sales to see if we can get clothing there. We don't purchase the clothing; it gets donated. Different synagogues will collect for us. There's a synagogue in New York – there’s an old Soviet Jewry activist, Glenn Richter, in New York, and he goes to the Lincoln Square Synagogue, and they have a collection in the spring. So he and a friend rent a van, and they load up with the bags from their collection, and they usually bring like sixty to seventy bags of clothing, very high-quality things – men's, women's, and children's. We’re bursting at the seams; they’re piled up in every room. That'll last us quite a while now. We get clothing from Newbridge [on the Charles], the assisted living or independent living place in Dedham [Massachusetts]. They have a bin that gets filled up, so once a week, we go and empty the bin. Someone passes away from there, we get all of their clothing. I just picked up twenty bags of something last week from someone who had passed away. Keeps us going. Shoes, especially; shoes are very costly now. We have a fairly good collection right now because we've got the word out that we need shoes badly. Costs about fifty dollars a pair of shoes in Ukraine, and people have no money for that. The cities that we go [to], some of them have Jewish day schools or Sunday schools, and we’ll send things directly to the school. We have a special shipping company that, whatever address we put on it, they deliver it right to that address. So our coordinators in cities get the boxes, or a synagogue will get the box, and they distribute [them]. The school will get the box. So that's part of what we do. But the main thing we're getting in there is money, though, so coordinators go into Dnepropetrovsk. They

get a stipend about every three months to buy food for people or whatever they need; they're supposed to go out and ask people what they need and then purchase it. So right now, the packages are about seventeen dollars a package. We're feeding over a thousand pensioners right now. Not every day, maybe once a month, once every six months, depending on the need. But they can buy a whole chicken for someone that will last them quite a while; they can buy frozen fish. Fresh fruit – people can't afford any of the fresh things.

Q: Do you have a lot of folks that work on this side of things? It sounds like a pretty complicated mission.

JP: Well, there are like four of us at the office, and some people work one day a week. I work three days a week now. I have someone that works two days a week. So it's a pretty small operation going.

Q: How often do you or have you been able to travel?

JP: I usually have been going every year. We visit as many cities as I can fit in in a two-week period. Can't visit them all anymore. I had my knees replaced a few years ago, so I took about three years off. But I went in last May for the first time in a while, and hopefully, I'll go next spring again.

Q: How was that going back?

JP: Oh, it's great. I was so glad to be back and see people and see what's going on. It's good to see the coordinators working with their clients. We usually visit a couple of clients in each city just to know whether the client really knows who the coordinator is, how friendly they are together, and gives you a good sense of what's going on. We've had to replace some of our coordinators because people get too old to do the work. These people don't have cars; they're usually younger retirees themselves. So they have to shop, and they *schlep* [haul] heavy bags of things and walk up many flights of stairs to

get to apartments, so it's not easy for them.

Q: So, can you talk a little bit about the coordinators? You talked a little about who these people are.

JP: They're a wonderful group. Yeah. Yan Sidelkovsky in Dnepropetrovsk and his wife, Tanya, have really connected with these people. It's something I couldn't do myself because I don't know them. And they're great people. I mean, we have some that have been with us for like eighteen years now doing this work, so they have really stuck with it, and they know their communities well. We need people who know who the needy are in their community; can't be just anyone. We also have the Warm House program that the Joint had started. It's to give people money to prepare a group meal. They'll meet in an apartment, and maybe a dozen people will attend. But they can't afford to feed guests, so we give them – it's now fifty dollars we allow them. They shop, they cook, and they gather people together. It becomes like a chavurah after a while, with the same people coming time after time and [to] celebrate the Jewish holidays. They celebrate birthdays. They celebrate some secular holidays. That's been very successful. The Joint dropped it in 2008 when we had the financial crisis here, but they've never reinstated it in our area. Some of the cities we're in, it's the only really Jewish event taking place in the city. There isn't much else going on.

Q: I was wondering if you could flash us back a little bit to your first experience in person with a refusenik, and what was that like, painting that picture for us.

JP: Yeah. It's awe-inspiring because when I went in, I went in with Bailey Barron. We were co-chairs of this group in the early days. We were meeting people who, to me, were very famous as refuseniks. The people that we would hear about a lot and were in the press. We were at the Slepaks' apartment in Moscow because he had an apartment that was easy to get to. Just incredible people to meet. I didn't see Sharansky until he got out because he had already been arrested at the point I was traveling. But I met his

mother, heard the stories about the other prisoners. We used to work with a group at MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] to get scientific material into a group of scientists in Moscow. The group at MIT was called "SEEF," "S-E-E-F," "Scientists and Engineers" for something. [Editor's Note: Likely the Scientists and Engineers Emigrant Fund.] They would get copies of scientific papers in for these people, and they would give seminars, trying to keep themselves up to date on what was going on in the world, because they had lost their positions. It was a joke that a lot of them were elevator operators; it was the only job they could get. But if they didn't get a job, they could be open to arrest. So they would do anything. I found the people I met there were absolutely amazing because they risked everything. It wasn't really a risk for me at all, but for them, it was life-threatening to them.

Q: To come and meet with you?

JP: Yeah. They were risking everything to act against the government there. I mean, you know what the communist government was like; it was all-powerful. KGB was everywhere. They were followed everywhere. As an American, we felt pretty protected. We didn't feel as though we were really risking anything.

Q: When you would come home to the United States afterward –

JP: [laughter] I would come home exhausted. Totally exhausted. [laughter]

Q: Did that change your opinion on national government, the federal government, and what was going on with Nixon and Ford and Kissinger?

JP: No, we were in close touch with our representatives in Washington. Not with Nixon. With our senators and congressmen. They were amazing. Senator [Ted] Kennedy [from Massachusetts, 1962-2009] was very active at that point, and he was interested in health issues, and the Soviets thought he might become president. I used to go in with a letter from his office that he would sign, saying, "Extend every courtesy to my constituent" or

whatever. Their eyes would pop, going through customs, looking at the letter. He was extremely helpful. Also, Barney Frank [U.S. Representative from Massachusetts from 1981-2013] was very, very helpful, [and] did a lot for us. The aids that were here locally. So we didn't have any complaints. We didn't work so much with presidents as the people that we had direct [connections] with. And we also covered most of New England, so we had other contacts with the other representatives and senators.

Q: So, a question from someone else that I don't have a lot of background in was about the failure of the Jackson amendment?

JP: Failure?

Q: That's what they say.

JP: Did not fail at all. It was wonderful.

Q: Can you talk about that a little bit?

JP: Yeah. It came because they were charging an education tax for people in refusal. They would have to pay back their education costs, which were free at the time, exorbitant sums of money. Plus, they were stripping people of their degrees, people who had PhDs and very high degrees. So that was one of the things. But it was a human rights package, and it was one of the best things that ever happened. It favored trade agreement, so Soviets could buy wheat from us at cheaper prices. That was a big thing at the time because their harvests were failing one after another. It's a very corrupt setup in the Soviet Union. Things would rot in the fields; they'd store grain, and it would rot before it ever got anywhere, or rodents would be into it. So they never had enough. This is a place that used to be the breadbasket for all of Europe, but they never had enough for themselves. So they were importing a lot from us and from Canada and wanted the favorable pricing of it. So this was the legislation that said, "You cannot have that unless you do something about what's going on with human rights." It was amazingly effective.

Q: So I just want to be mindful of our time and give you a time check.

JP: Okay. We're already overtime?

Q: We're already at 3:30. I'm fine. I have a few more questions for you, but only if you have time to be mindful of your time.

JP: Yeah, I have time.

Q: So, thinking about that period of time in your life, how did your experience with this activism in the Soviet Jewry movement influence you moving forwards in all that life brings to us?

JP: Well, I guess it's never left me, really. [laughter] I've had contacts in the former Soviet Union going on continuously. I have wonderful friends there now, people I'm so happy to go and see when I go and visit. I think it's made me a better person, a better Jew, to have some feeling of what these governments are like. A sense of what Putin is like now, just how evil a person he is. I don't know if that answers – [laughter]

Q: [laughter] all answers are valid. Do you ever feel frustration –? Maybe a better question is, what sort of emotional state when you travel and then come back to the United States and juxtaposing these two situations back to back?

JP: Well, I always wish I could do more. I once visited a couple – trying to think, I think, in Pavlograd, which is not too far from Dnepropetrovsk – and the wife was sick in bed with cancer. I think she was close to death at that point, in horrible pain. Probably was in her bones. The poor husband is in tears there because there's nothing he can do for her – couldn't move her at all; she was in such pain. They were trying to get pain relievers, but the government wouldn't release them, their local city government. They kept on applying, and they kept on going through some kind of procedure, and it just wasn't working. So ever since, I've always traveled with oxycodone. Some people send me

their medications. If a relative passed away from cancer, I get their medication. So I always have it with me now, if I ever find someone else like that, to be able to do something immediately to put them out of their misery. Our coordinator on that trip was [inaudible], and her husband had died of cancer. She knows exactly what they're going through because she tried to get painkillers for him, and the permission came through the month after he died. It's just such a bankrupt, corrupt system. It's terrible. I'm not sure it's any better now than it was years ago. So I'll see if we could do something with blood pressure medication, and maybe we can prevent a few strokes with people. But we'll see how it goes.

Q: Are you able to connect with people that have those resources in large quantities?

JP: Well, I'm going to try. Work with a few physicians and see what they can do to help out. I'm willing to purchase it. Let's see if we can get some kind of bulk arrangement with it.

Q: I think you've sort of touched upon this as we've been chatting, but I'm wondering if you can articulate how you went from having these experiences and then piecing these experiences together to turn it into your life's work if you consider it such?

JP: Well, I guess it happened slowly over the years. Every time I traveled, I wrote trip reports, which I would send out to people, and people would say they loved reading about the experience there, so grows bit by bit.

Q: What kinds of issues do you see in the community of émigrés that you work with now? I mean, if I can reflect back a little, it sounds like health care seems to be an issue.

JP: Yeah, I don't work with the émigrés here, though very much at all. There are other organizations that do that. So I'm totally involved with people who are there. Unless it's someone I knew there who came here who I kept some kind of a contact with.

Q: Does that happen often?

JP: Yeah, it's happened. Our famous case was with the Katz family. Boris and Natasha Katz had a daughter who was very, very ill. The grandmother had emigrated to Cambridge [Massachusetts], so she called our office. We got involved with their case, trying to figure out what was going on with the child. We found a pediatrician who spoke Russian who could talk to them. We're getting a special formula for her, at one point, that I got from Children's Hospital through my own pediatrician with my kids at no cost. Found travelers all across the country that would take it in when they went. So we discovered what was going on is that she had an allergy to heavy-fatted milk products, which was standard baby fare, like heavy yogurt. So she probably could have gotten by on a soy product, but we didn't do that; we had the special formula that was partially digested. So she thrived on that. They came here, and Boris is still on our board to this day. They had three daughters, all with the same thing going on with them. It's nice to see them thrive and do well here. We've had wonderful people come to the Boston area because of the schools here, and also musicians came for the Boston Symphony. We had incredible people that came and settled here. Did very well. A lot of people in science did well, finally got on their feet, and got good jobs, which is nice to see.

Q: I can imagine. I don't know if it would be personally gratifying, but in line with the mission – the mission is working. You've talked a lot about helping people and making them happy. Then, to transcend from that to leading –

JP: Life is ordinary compared to that. [laughter] But I can remember going to an event at Temple Israel in Boston where they were very actively working with émigrés because the rabbi had traveled and were bringing people to Boston as a result of his traveling. They had a get-together with people. A number of these people I had known for a few years. And to see them five years after they got here, the older people look young. [laughter] They changed their whole appearance. They were alive and thriving. They were terribly

depressed where they had lived before. So it's good to see.

Q: I can imagine. [laughter] To wrap us up, I was wondering if there's anything else that you'd like to add, either about your own story or things that have surfaced for you over this time we've chatted?

JP: Yeah. Well, I've met some wonderful people, both in this country and there. Really great people who worked with Soviet Jews. It's been a privilege. I'm really lucky to have had the experience. So we still have good friendships. A lot of the people I've worked with have passed away as they get older, but [I] still keep going. [laughter]

Q: Amazing. Is there anything else you'd like to share with us?

JP: No, I think that's probably enough.

Q: Amazing.

[END OF INTERVIEW]