

Transcript of Interview with Ronald Heiman
Small Town Jewish History Project
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Words not understood or for which the spelling is not known will be marked [unclear].
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Transcription:

Eric Lidji: Today is July 15, 2015. This is the Small Town Project. I'm Eric Lidji and I'm speaking to Ron Heiman. We are in his office in downtown Sharon, and we're going to be talking about Farrell, and we'll probably talk about Sharon a little bit too I think. So why don't you start by telling me how your family got to Farrell.

Ron Heiman: Well, let's see, my grandfather...

EL: This is William?

RH: This is William Feinberg, he was from a little village in, I think it was Austria-Hungary at that time, part of Czechoslovakia. And he came over, he was born in 1888. I don't know, he might have come over when he was seventeen or eighteen, or maybe a little earlier. He had one, two, three brothers, no sisters. He came to New York and eventually went to Farrell, sent for my grandmother.

EL: They were married already.

RH: I think they were already married. And then they, he worked here. He was in World War I, I have some old photographs if I can find them I can send those to you. I used them for, 'cause they said he wasn't registered, he didn't have any discharge papers. But I found these photos that says when he was in World War I. He and another individual, who was part of the Sharon synagogue, Myer Ackerman and another fellow started the Coca-Cola franchise when Coca-Cola came in the twenties or thirties. I forget what year it was.

EL: Do you have any idea why he came to Farrell?

RH: You know they had a lot of relatives. He had first cousins and my grandmother, I think she had, their side of the family was Prizants, Prizants.

EL: The Prizants Presents people? The carpet?

RH: Yeah, yeah, that's my mother's first cousin.

EL: Okay.

RH: Who was from Pittsburgh. I forget was his first name is now, Sammy. I have pictures of him, some various things I have back in the shoebox, I should have brought the whole shoebox, at various reunions, Prizant reunions in Cleveland, Youngstown, various things. And what was the question again?

EL: Why Farrell?

RH: Oh. There were a lot of people in McKeesport, and I think he lived there for a while. But I really, you know, I wish my mother were alive because she passed away in 2002, but I don't know, a lot of the relatives came to Farrell. Of course there was, there was mills here, but a lot of them didn't work in the mills obviously, they, you know they were merchants or whatever they could find. Big families.

EL: So he comes here, he works odd jobs, he's in World War I, then after the war...

RH: You know I really don't know enough history with Coca-Cola, but I remember he told me stories that they used to wash bottles in the bathtub.

EL: Really?

RH: Yeah, before they had the big, you know, machines and stuff like that.

EL: So how does, I don't know if you can answer this, but how does the distributorship work? You're getting product?

RH: Well it's a franchise, I guess you apply for it through national for Coca-Cola and they gave out franchises. And just like any other bottling company, Pepsi, and you probably pay a franchise fee, and you know they supply products basically and then you pay so much money I guess for advertising and things like that. My dad's from Minneapolis, Minnesota. He met my mother, she was going to school in Minneapolis, met her at a fraternity party and they got married in Minneapolis in my dad's parents' house. His grandfather was a, I think, a rabbi or schochet, did everything, travelled all over North and South Dakota as a mohel, and various other things. Came back here, he had already completed two years of law school at the University of Minnesota, was a four year law school at that time. It was the Depression, and my grandfather said you want to try cases? We have plenty of cases for you. He said he came back...

EL: You mean bottling, cases of bottles.

RH: Yeah, loading the cases. Came back and, I don't know, but he came back through Cleveland, coming down the big hill into Farrell, which was a lot of mills at that time, Sharon Steel, Carnegie Steel, and he said, "I've never been there." And he must have loved my mother very much from what his first cousins in Minneapolis tell me a lot of time, because he was a pretty, a ladies' man, and she said, "I'm going home." And I think he just says, "I don't want to lose you." But he says, "When I looked over there, I'm sitting in the car, you know your grandfather's driving this big car, and we're driving back after the wedding, and I said, what am I doing here in this little, you know this little town." As it started, you know the Coca-Cola, we lived with my grandparents for seven or eight years. When I was seven or eight years old, he worked in the Coke plant. Eventually he and the partner's son, you know, expanded it. They originally opened up in Sharon here, I don't know how you came in, probably off of the freeway 376 and then down here, it was on Dock Street. In 1952 they purchased New Castle bottling franchise, Lawrence County, and eventually closed that plant, it was small, and combined

everything out here. And then that's what he's been, that's what he did. My grandfather was sort of semi-retired. He would pick my dad up for work. Everybody only had one car. He would make me breakfast, he would pick us up, he would take off at noon, and he would go home at noon and I don't think he went back to the Coke plant, but he would pick all us up at cheder and pile eight or nine, ten kids in a car, a little Chevy to take everybody home. And he used to come early, he'd let my mother sleep in, he used to make my brother and I breakfast. And, he was something.

EL: Do you remember your grandfather?

RH: Oh sure, they, he died in 1975.

EL: Oh, okay.

RH: I was going to, I was in Pittsburgh at the time I had a case, I was trying a case eight weeks in Pittsburgh, Federal Court, and he got ill. And I used to see him at the, they sold the house and moved to Florida. My mother, my grandmother died when I was a freshman, sophomore year in college, undergraduate school, I think it was '60 or '61. He remarried a woman he knew was from around here from Pontiac, Michigan, they were very close, a wonderful woman. And they lived here in Sharon, in Farrell at the old house, then they sold the house and went to live in, went to Florida, I think. I think they bought a house in Florida for a while, then they came back. And my mother's sister was retarded but she was an amazing woman, and after my dad, after my grandparents passed away, my mother took care of her all her life until she last year went too, but she was fabulous. Could get along pretty well even though, and went to the Jewish Home for the Aged in Pittsburgh, a nice apartment, you know, assisted living place, and that's when he passed away down there. But I used to see him down there when I had this case and when he was in the hospital, I was there when he passed away.

EL: What was he like?

RH: He was very gregarious. Always got in trouble with, my dad would always say, oh he's promised relatives jobs a lot of the time, got in trouble with some lawsuits. But he was always the center of attention. He was the, as I said, he opened up the synagogue every day because he was only a block away. Every night, during the, at that time it wasn't called the, it might have been called the United Jewish Appeal and he would get in the middle of the bima and you know, for pledge night, and he would just embarrass people if they weren't giving enough money, he says, "You're gonna give this." They did it in shillings, they had a guy recording there, instead of dollars, they would call it shillings, because that's what the Israeli currency was at that time. I don't know if they call it shekels or whatever it was. But he sort of ran the synagogue. He was unbelievable. It was an Orthodox synagogue.

EL: What was it called?

RH: B'nai Zion. I think it's in there, B'nai Zion Synagogue.

EL: Did he help find it, or was it there already?

RH: You know, I would think so. He had, you know, I don't know enough about the history of the synagogue, I feel remiss about that. Alan Nathan might know something about that. But I gotta believe if I was born in '42, and he came, I mean he, I forget when that was built, but then they added on a big social hall and, but I remember we went there starting when I was five or six years old. And we moved up by the high school, we all would walk down from grade school down, about a mile, mile and a half to Hebrew school, to cheder, and about from three thirty to five, or four thirty, quarter to five, then my grandfather would take everybody home.

EL: Was your grandfather religious?

RH: Yeah, he, yeah. Not as much as my grandmother, but no, no he was very Orthodox, he knew all the prayers. When, we usually had a full time rabbi, but they would conduct the first half of the services during the day you know, and he would, he could conduct the whole service. He had a pretty nice high tenor voice. A lot of them could do that.

EL: They kept kosher?

RH: Oh yes. Definitely. When my mother and I moved, when we moved up by the high school we did not keep kosher.

EL: But in their house you did.

RH: But in our house we did, you know, I mean we didn't buy kosher meat or anything, my mother never cooked ham products at home, but when we'd go out, she'd like bacon and pork chops and things like that. But no, no, they kept kosher. My grandmother was very, very, very religious. And my grandfather, you know, they were very observant, all the holidays. We had to take off every holiday, first two days of Passover, last two days of Passover. And then as you get older you know we didn't want to miss school, and I remember an incident where we were at home and we were done with shul. It was Succos or maybe Simchas Torah, and we got home at twelve or one o'clock, and we always got to watch the World Series, at least because they played during the day and during the week and it was great because we never missed that because always the High Holidays seemed to fall around there. A neighbor of ours saw my brother and I playing with some other people, told the school teacher and she gave us hell when we got back, you know you said you [unclear], telling us you know you have a holiday, a Jewish holiday and you're playing and all this stuff, and my mother and Alan Nathan's mother went to the school and literally reamed this teacher up and down. I mean she was a horrible teacher anyway, I'll never forget her name, Miss Maxwell. She was terrible. And that was during the period, also, when we had to go to passion plays at Christmastime. They marched us up to the school.

EL: They had them at the school?

RH: At the high school, a passion play. In fact, I remember one of the kids in my class, Barry Pearlman, he's in California now. He might have a lot of stories, too. He's on the internet, he loves to talk, you know everything you can really, he'll email you or anything else. And we were close and lost contact, but fairly close, I mean I know what he's doing, but not as much as the other people. And he was in the passion play, he was a thespian and was in all the plays and he played a Roman soldier. And he says I really got into it, you know when he was the Roman centurion he's going, "Down!" And they're yelling, "Down with, down the Christ, down with!" And he got into that, he says it was very easy to get into that part, but I remember that during, we always had bible studies, not bible studies, but after you did the Pledge of Allegiance there was a bible reading and they would call students to read a portion. And this was the New Testament also, and I felt so uncomfortable reading this, but you know you didn't, you didn't object or anything, you just wanted to be part, you know, peer pressure. I never felt any anti-Semitism in Farrell at all among other kids, but that was very uncomfortable. And then you're brought up like, you know, with the paranoia about gentiles and you have to watch yourself. And my first wife, my second wife was gentile. And if my grandmother were alive when I married her, she'd be sitting shiva. She probably would not even have talked to me, that's how, my grandfather was very nice, I mean he was just open and nice to everybody.

EL: Did they open the plant on Saturday, your grandfather?

RH: No. No, no. My grandfather would go, but my dad might, did he go to work on Saturday? He might have gone just on Saturday morning to the office 'cause he was a golfer, loved to play golf, my dad. So he'd play Saturday, Sunday, when he got home from work, so no the office was not open on Saturday. I mean the regular routes and everything. I worked there all summers through college and everything, driving truck, or in the bottling plant, you know things like that.

EL: How many kids did your grandparents have?

RH: My grandparents had two daughters, my mother and my sister, my grandmother and grandfather were first cousins.

EL: Okay.

RH: There were a lot of people that married second and third cousins, a lot. They were first cousins.

EL: Do you know anything about your mother's childhood in Farrell?

RH: In the sense that she was born in a house with a midwife. And she was you know went to high school, was very active. She graduated when she was sixteen, played the violin in the orchestra. I don't really, they had a lot of, they had a big Jewish population.

She told me there were over two hundred, two hundred and twenty, two hundred and fifty in her class.

EL: Jews or people?

RH: People in the class. But they had a pretty good Jewish population. They had to, 'cause there were eight in my class. You know eight Jews, Jewish people in my class, we graduated with a hundred and eight, eight or nine, with Alan and me and a bunch of other people.

EL: How did she end up in Minnesota?

RH: Well let me tell you. My mother went to Ohio State, she knew a lot of people from Youngstown, used to have a streetcar that went to Youngstown. It had a big Jewish population. And she went after one year at Ohio State, didn't like it, and then she was going to a medical technology school, Minneapolis School of Medical Technology. And I think she was looking for a husband, too, and she, and she went there. And she goes, my mother is just unbelievable, she went to the, a fraternity house, the Phi Ep fraternity house and said, "I'd like to meet some, is there any Jewish guys here, do you have a party?" They said, "We have an open house coming in." She was beautiful. I mean, I don't know, I have picture at home. So she goes, and I think meets somebody and she goes on a date. My dad, and then my dad's at the fraternity party, and says, "Why don't you leave here?" My mother says, "No, no. I'm with somebody, if you want to ask me out, ask me out." And he said, "Would you like to go out for dinner next week?" She said, "I'd love to, that's my birthday next week." And my dad, you know, gives her a beautiful flower and everything, he was, she was nineteen at that time. And we have some old, I wish I could find those old DVDs that we had converted into CD disks that had all that stuff, Seders and everything from, from the Army, from Camp Reynolds that was a big Army depot here where they, where they were before they shipped them off. And all the Jewish families would on holiday or Passover, would open their homes up. I, we have pictures of a Seder where from the tables from the front door of the house all the way to the back just, you know, all that stuff. And then we had two Jewish families, four Jewish families across the street, and four on this side of the street. And then you just made a right hand turn, and the rabbi's house was there, and the shul was right there.

EL: Did your, you spoke about this a little bit, but was your father, was it, I mean he was training to be a lawyer and he ends up working at this...

RH: Well, he three years, he got his degree after three years. And you could get your first [unclear], he was training to be a lawyer, right. And but go ahead, finish your question.

EL: Well, just was it, did you get the sense that he was satisfied with the work he was doing, or did he want to be in law?

RH: Well I think, I think he would have been a great lawyer. His best friend was a lawyer. But I think he loved the Coca-Cola business and really brought this plant up very successful. And they sold to Meadville. 1980, they sold to Meadville Bottling Company, which then they retired. I never was a good businessman. I didn't like it, but if I had gone in there I probably would have been retired by now, too. I was in law school at that time. And my dad's neighbor was another lawyer he says, "You know, Ron", I was going to go to graduate business school, and he said, "You know if you want to go into the Coca-Cola business, that's a good background, you know one year of this." No, he would have been an excellent lawyer. And then Meadville was bought out by Quaker Bottling Company out of Pittsburgh. Everything shipped out of Pittsburgh now, or wherever they bottle in Ohio, all this stuff now. I don't even know, it used to be on I think on Craig Street, off of Centre. I don't think it's there anymore, I don't know where the bottling, if there is still, if they still bottle Coca-Cola in Pittsburgh.

EL: Craig and Centre in Pittsburgh?

RH: Well I thought it, I remember, I think we went down Centre Avenue by the old Kennilworth Apartment, I think that's on Centre, I don't...

EL: Yeah.

RH: And then you made a right over a little bridge, like and on the left I think was Quaker Bottling Company, I think that was Craig or somewhere.

EL: I'll have to look.

RH: But it'd be in the phonebook if it was.

EL: Your parents had two kids?

RH: My brother and me, yeah. We were fourteen months apart.

EL: Huh. And so why were you living with your grandparents initially?

RH: Well, we didn't have any money. I mean we lived with my grandparents, I mean it's not a big house, these old houses. It's still there. But you know, we, let's see I had a bedroom, my parents had a bedroom, there were one, two, four little bedrooms upstairs. One bathroom with a hand shower, and then they created a little powder room downstairs for a bathroom. So we lived there, let's see, my dad got married in 19... , let's see my mother was, let's see... 1939, so they came here in '39. I was born in '42, and then we moved up to the high school in 1948, and then we lived there 'til '64, when I was in law school and my brother graduated college, and then they moved to Sharon. And that's where they lived until they, until they both passed away within three months of each other in 2002.

EL: You talked about this a little bit, but what was the religiosity like in your house? Obviously I'd like to know first...

RH: In my house, you mean after we left my grandparents?

EL: Well give me a sense of what it was like with your grandparents, and then ...

RH: Okay. My grandparents, my grandparents, I could read Hebrew before I could read English.

EL: Wow.

RH: He would, they talked Yiddish all the time even though they spoke good English. My mother and my dad understood it because their parents spoke it. And my dad could speak a little, my mother could speak pretty well. Had the Jewish newspaper. My grandfather, on Friday nights we'd have a dinner, we'd have a Shabbos dinner, it was a short service. I wouldn't go to the service on Friday, I didn't have to go, but they would go, I don't think I went Friday nights. Then we had a big Shabbos dinner. And then Saturday my dad would go to the office. Well after the Shabbos dinner, right up the street about a block is Idaho Street where a lot of the businesses and two movie theaters. And he would take me and my brother and Aunt Goldie, walk up to the show and they always had a double feature. And then on Saturday we'd go home, you know we'd go to services, and those were three-hour services, two and a half to three hours. My dad wouldn't go. My brother and I went. And then we would come back and have a little, light lunch. And they had leftovers because they wouldn't cook. Warm it up. And then either he would take us again to the other theater on a Saturday, and we saw double features, but we listened to the radio a lot I remember at night. There was the fifteen-minute shows, either Jack Smith, the singing shows, Perry Como. And then we'd listen to the radio on Saturday morning when we came home, I remember Buster Brown, after shul, we'd listen to Buster Brown on the radio. And then when we moved up to the, all the holidays, of course, my grandmother, his wife was tough, she was the one that ran the, she ran the whole show, I mean everybody jumped when she said something. We had a coal stove, every morning my grandfather and my dad would get down in the coal chute and shovel the coal into the, into the furnace. You know, the coalman. I remember the iceman we had, we had an old icebox out in the back, too, before the old fridges came out. And these were homes, I mean I could show you the geographically where it's five minutes, ten minutes from here. Later if you want to just drive the car, show you where the shul was and everything else. It's very interesting and the homes...

EL: The shul's still there?

RH: They tore it down. A florist bought it, then they tore the building down. And now it's a vacant lot, but it's a community garden now in the city of Farrell.

EL: Okay. Was there a Jewish part of town, or was the town too small?

RH: No, I, no, well Farrell's only four square miles, there wasn't, no, they were scattered all over. You know, people lived next to you, but they were all over Farrell. And then as people got more affluent, they moved up toward the high school. It's more of a suburban area and the park, the high school, and everything. The high school was built in 1942. It used to be the old junior high was the, I went to the old junior high. Junior high, my mother, that was the old high school, and she went there and I think she went one year at the new high school. No, it wasn't built then. And then you had people then that started moving to Sharon and Hermitage after the mills closed and everything else.

EL: What do you remember of the synagogue?

RH: I remember it vividly. You walked down, and it was fabulous. You walked up the steps, downstairs where they had the services in the daytime, during the week, old, I mean it was just a little stage and some pews and a table, where they would, on Sundays they would have what's called Shalosh Suedos. They would talk about the Talmud and argue. Then they'd have a little lunch, or people would bring food, herring and stuff like that. And they had an ark that they would, they kept some of the scrolls down there. But it wasn't, it wasn't... And bathrooms were downstairs, just terrible bathrooms, old, and you know. And then they built the social hall and they had a, that was really nice, a kitchen and a stage and everything else. But upstairs, I can remember when you walked upstairs, and there was an entrance way and you looked straight east naturally, that's where the, and when the sun was shining it was beautiful lights, you know you had stained glass, and it was really, really pretty nice. And they had a little cloakroom, a room where the kids could go on the side, and then upstairs again is where the women sat, in the back.

EL: The service was all Hebrew?

RH: All Hebrew. No sermon.

EL: No sermon.

RH: No sermon at all.

EL: But a full time rabbi.

RH: We always had a full time rabbi. Always had a full time rabbi, and he was pretty good from what I remember.

EL: What was his name?

RH: In fact, his son was from Pittsburgh. His son moved to Pittsburgh, went to Duquesne Law School, his name was Beshkin. And I think Sid passed away, I don't know. He'd be about, he'd be about, let's see, Sid would probably be in his eighties now. And, but we always had a choir and we were pretty good. And we would sit on the side, stand on the side where you conduct the service and the ark was up here, and then

actually in the middle was the bima where you would bring the Torah, and you know, call out the aliyas and everything else. And I was a pretty good student. I didn't go to Sunday school. They had it, but I didn't go, not too many people went. And I wish I had because in Hebrew school, cheder we called it, I mean you could read and you could sing, but you didn't know what the words meant at all. Didn't know the history of the Judaism, you didn't know what these prayers were for, there was no translation. You translated a little in classical Hebrew, you learned how to translate a little, like the Shema and things like that. My wife, who's not Jewish, my second wife who's not Jewish, but she knows more about, I don't know if you know these little, these lectures they put on all over the state, the Jewish Federation, called the Melton lectures, and she went for a whole year and a second year. I mean it's unbelievable, I should have gone too, I mean she knows more than I, which always seems the case. So I learned, going to the Reform synagogue you learn a little more, they explain a little more, and the Conservatives brought the sermon into the, into the synagogue, and the women sit together. Apart from that the Conservative service is just as long, I've been to a couple bar mitzvahs and things like that.

EL: Was the cheder every day?

RH: Four days a week, Monday through Thursday.

EL: After school.

RH: After school and I went from age five, six to thirteen.

EL: Wow.

RH: So that's seven, eight years.

EL: And this was with the rabbi?

RH: Yeah the rabbi, he was the only one. And then they'd have people, well no he taught the maftir for people, the aliyah when they were getting bar mitzvahed, and he would go over your part unless somebody, you know if we didn't have one that was doing it, yeah he was, yeah.

EL: So you had your bar mitzvah there.

RH: Oh yeah. In fact, at that time the bar mitzvah, the rabbi wanted, I was a pretty good student, and I had a good voice, the rabbi wanted me, like they do today, to conduct the second half of the service which is after the Torah is put back into the ark and you go through a couple kiddushes and all that. But I didn't want to do it, I just didn't want to do it. But I had, my maftir was the longest aliyah in the Chumash. I mean it was so long. But once you learn the trope, I mean I'm a musician, I played in bands. I still play in bands. It's so easy. Like, I mean I could read any maftir and read a Chumash and lein if there were those vowels after I learned that, I don't know it now. But, yeah, so I was up

there. You know you get up there and everything and then they call your name up after they call the relatives and then everybody leaves. And I'm all alone on that bima. Of course my back is facing most of the people behind me even though there's sides to the ark. And they, I think they had one man up there who sits there in case you make a mistake, you know, they correct you. And the rabbi is [unclear] to lein, everybody is reading from the scroll. We didn't read from the scroll, we read from the Chumash. Today the kids, it's unbelievable they read right, they learn the part right from the Torah without the vowels, you know, with the, what do you call the pointer, what's the name of that I forget what they're called.

EL: The yad.

RH: The yad. So, I'm up there forty-five minutes. My grandparents, I mean everybody came in from Minneapolis, cousins and everything. And you didn't have these gigantic, ostentatious bar mitzvah receptions. I mean we had it at the house, my parents' house, and it was packed. And my brother was there and he was checking coats, and then my mother found out he was getting tips, asking for tips, and he would check the coats in upstairs and everything and she just gave... but it was, I remember the bar mitzvah vividly. Yeah, and then I continued going afterward for a while. I learned to put on tefillin and everything, and you sort of you know, it was pretty cool. You would continue to learn and then you'd just get away from it, you know with basketball and school and all that stuff.

EL: So, why did they build a social hall? There were that many people?

RH: Oh yeah. I mean you had, oh sure, you had a lot of families and you had banquets and dances, on stage we put on plays and things. Oh yeah.

EL: How many, do you have a sense of how many Jews there were?

RH: In Farrell?

EL: Yeah.

RH: I've gotta believe there would be close to at least a hundred families, I imagine.

EL: Wow.

RH: I would think.

EL: Was there a, were there other Jewish organizations? Was there a B'nai B'rith?

RH: Oh yeah, we had a B'nai B'rith. In fact, Alan Nathan's dad was very active. He was, the lodge was named after him for this whole area. And he was, I think, a national vice president, I mean very active, the Will Nathan Chapter. B'nai B'rith. AZA, where I was, was very active. The Sharon one was mainly a B'nai B'rith youth organization,

BBY, but we were the AZAs and we used to go, used to have conclaves, used to love to go to Beaver Falls, Monongahela, New Castle, where else, and we used to love to go to those things. You would go on a Friday, or early, and then they'd have a dance and you'd have basketball games on Saturday and you'd have a dance. Meet a lot of nice girls, pretty girls, you know. Ellwood City, but I think the farthest place we went, I think we had 'em in Monongahela, had a synagogue at that time.

EL: It seems like those were really important for the small towns.

RH: Definitely.

EL: Because it was the only time you got to meet people.

RH: Right.

EL: Outside of...

RH: Outside of, outside of, definitely, yeah.

EL: So, was there a Hadassah?

RH: Oh sure.

EL: What else was there?

RH: Oh they had [unclear] Hadassah because my mother was president of both of those at one time and they went to national conventions and stuff, oh yeah, definitely.

EL: So you were born in '42, do you remember anything with Israel, the founding of Israel, anything like that?

RH: I don't remember the founding, vaguely. But my grandfather had a brother who lived in Israel. Two brothers that lived in Israel. One of them came over here, he worked at the Coke plant for a while, and then he one who lived in New York City, a brother. And I remember when I went to Israel with the Youngstown group, but it was with the Pittsburgh Federation in 1986, and I went to Israel and called my cousins over there and we met over there. And then when I went to, I studied abroad my junior year in college, undergrad school and I went to, travelled during, I was in England and travelled, and stopped in Hanover, Germany, with a cousin, mother's first cousin or second. And they lived in Hanover, which at that time, I think they only had ten thousand, five thousand Jews now, but he had a big store there and it was very interesting. But Israel was always, yeah, after I became aware of it everybody was very proud of Israel and active and things like that. Because I remember going to those Federation, raising money, you know down at the synagogue. But I don't remember the exact, during '48 when independence was declared, I don't remember anything in school about that. But I don't know why, you know, I remember going home and watching the queen's coronation, they sent us out of

school, and I remember going home and watching. They sent us home when McArthur gave his famous speech when Truman fired him, you know, old soldiers never die, they just fade away, when he wanted to go in and bomb China or whatever, it was during the Korean War. They sent us home to watch that. But I don't remember, in '48 I would have been home though, let's see, '46, second grade, I should have been still at my grandparents, but I'm sure it was a joyous occasion, but I don't specifically remember any festivities going on, but I'm sure there were.

EL: Were there a lot of Jewish businesses in Farrell when you were growing up?

RH: Yeah.

EL: Do you remember them?

RH: There was a couple restaurants. There was two or three clothing stores. I'm trying to think of Idaho Street.

EL: Idaho was the main...

RH: Was the main street and then that went down on Broadway which took you from Sharon into Farrell, past the mills. And Idaho Street, Broadway, there was a couple furniture stores. I'm trying to think on Idaho... Yeah basically clothing stores, a shoe store, and let's see, Schreiber's, Neltberger's (?) Shoe Store, another shoe store. A grocery store, Victory Market, Moss Furniture. And a lot of them eventually moved up, either in Hermitage, Hickory, you know when the mills closed, it got a little bad, rough down there.

EL: So when you graduated from high school was there an expectation that you would leave and go to college?

RH: Oh, definitely.

EL: Yeah?

RH: Oh sure, I mean there, brought up, I'm sure that's, I would definitely go to school. And my dad said go wherever you want to go because it'll be the best four years of your life so pick whatever school you want to go to. And you know my brother, both of us, as I said we were two years apart, oh sure.

EL: And so you went to Pitt?

RH: Went to Pitt Law School. Undergrad I went to Tulane University in New Orleans.

EL: Really? How'd you...?

RH: Well, you didn't visit school at that time. You just looked at a catalog and I wanted to be in a big city, not real big. I wanted to...

EL: Why did you want to be in a big city?

RH: I just loved a big city, just to expose myself. Because we used to go to, they used to take us to Pittsburgh and you know basketball games when Farrell was at their height. And we used to go to Philly to see the state playoffs. And we used to go to Minneapolis, drive every summer, things like that. And my dad's brother lived in Washington, D.C., so you know, I just wanted to be in a city. My brother went to Penn State, a lot of kids went to Penn State. And I wanted to be in a Jewish population, not real big, and I didn't know a soul, never visited the school. Got off the airplane, Capital Airlines, on the tarmac, didn't have pull up, four engine plane. And I opened the door and it was like I was in a conservatory, Phipps Conservatory, everything just, all the humidity [makes sounds] like this. What am I, I'm sweating before I even walk down, I said what am I doing here? You know, no air conditioning in the dorms at that time. And we were pre-rushed in fraternity, I was a ZBT, and as it turned out it was, my closest friends, we still communicate. We've gone to twenty-three [unclear] in New Orleans and fiftieth, and just our, yeah we just had a fortieth and fiftieth, our fifty-fifth will be in, '63, I guess it'll be in three more years.

EL: How did you end up back in Farrell/Sharon?

RH: Well, as I said I was going to go to graduate business school.

EL: Yeah.

RH: And thinking about maybe coming into the Coke plant. And the attorney that lived next to my dad, not his real good friend, but another, talked me into it, and I got accepted into graduate business school. And so I went to law school, you know it's a good background. Applied to Pitt and which they didn't even have a law school building at that point, they just had the Cathedral of Learning, we had two floors. There were eighty-five in my class, and fifty-seven graduated. And then, you know, it used to be out in the Cathedral and you used to watch the, you could see Forbes Field, but you couldn't see the third baseman or the center or the right fielder. And you used to go about the seventh inning and get into the game for nothing. And I enjoyed the law, the first year was just hell, but I enjoyed a lot of close friends there, too. And then my dad's neighbor said, "Would you like to practice law here?" Even though I had a chance to work in Pittsburgh and clerk with a federal judge, if I had to do it over again, I think I would have gone with the U.S. government for twenty years, because there were a lot of jobs at that time in '67, tax department, labor, you'd come out twenty years and retire and then be a, work for a firm at that point. Because small town lawyer, I mean, you do everything. It was fun, and you did your own investigation, you did your interviews, you wrote your own briefs. You had mentors, but it was, people couldn't believe in Pittsburgh, you do what? You mean you don't have an assistant? You don't do this, this, or this? No, no. And then that changed, it became a big business. It wasn't fun anymore.

EL: Was it unusual for someone of your generation to come back?

RH: Yes. Still was unusual. I'm trying to think of how many came back. I would say, no a lot of them whose parents had businesses came back, but that next generation, definitely not.

EL: How come?

RH: There wasn't anything here. If you weren't, I don't think if you were in a profession or get into an established firm, or were in the medical profession, you know even though there was a fairly decent Jewish population, people say, "How can you live in a town like that, in an area...?" I says, "Well first of all, I'm not gonna commute. If I lived in Pittsburgh, I would live in the city. I would not live..." "Well you say that now, but the schools are this and that." I mean when they tell me they get up at five in the morning, five-thirty and have to go here and then don't get home until seven o'clock at night, I don't want any part of that. I'm seven minutes, ten minutes from the courthouse, ten minutes from downtown. And I, this a good place to go, I mean it's an hour and five minutes to Pittsburgh. An hour and a half to Cleveland.

EL: Yeah.

RH: You know and it's, we have a lot of schools and colleges, there's plenty of culture and things around here. And I live out in the country, and it's just very nice. So you know...

EL: Was it a hard decision to make to come back?

RH: Not at all. Well, no, because in law school I met my wife and she was from Mercer. And so she was teaching school in Mt. Lebanon, and she happened to be from Mercer and I had this job offer and I sort of, yeah...

EL: So it wasn't like you were coming back as a young, single guy to a small town.

RH: No, no, no. If you're a young, single guy that's got to be a little difficult.

EL: Yeah.

RH: Because as you get older then you become geographical undesirables, you don't want to drive even, Youngstown is far enough. But you didn't even want to go, I mean when I got divorced, and people are saying why don't you call this person in Pittsburgh or Cleveland, and I just don't want to, I tried that a couple times but...

EL: You said that the fourth generation....

RH: Well my brother's, my son's generation.

EL: So what did, was there a precipitating event? Was there a mill that closed or...?

RH: A lot of the mills, every, all the mills closed. It was tough having businesses. All, the Westinghouse had the largest transformer division in world. They had five thousand employees here. And they had a strike in '55 or '56, they closed down, went to Jefferson City, Missouri, and Athens, Georgia. And then you had the steel mills, all of them, all the way up the Monongahela and Allegheny, you know from Ambridge to Aliquippa, and then they closed. And then the Steel Car closed in Greenville, they had Bessemer-Lake Erie Railroad. You had the [unclear], you had National Castings, you had Sharon Steel.

EL: These were in the eighties that these closed?

RH: Yeah, early eighties, it was bad middle eighties. It was bad. I just, it's pretty bad, it still is very bad around here. You don't even see the underclass in this area. My mother was so naïve, I did a lot of bankruptcy work and [unclear] disability and you can't believe the people who were homeless and that, I mean there's a lot of panhandling around here. People don't see that here.

EL: When did the Farrell synagogue start to decline?

RH: I would say, probably, I looked at the, because I was involved in the merger, I think we made the deed, I want to say in the seventies, early seventies, I think.

EL: To merge it.

RH: To merge it.

EL: With Sharon.

RH: And then we sold the building, with Sharon, because we just were dying, just didn't have enough. It's just like what Sharon did with Youngstown. And it turned out very well. We had a lot of families together, it was a win-win for both of them.

EL: Was it a concern originally? Was there a difference in culture originally?

RH: A difference in the sense of ideology, certain, as far as Reform Judaism, I mean, I didn't realize.

EL: Sharon was Reform.

RH: Sharon I think, when, Al and I couldn't believe this, Marlene said Sharon was originally Orthodox or Conservative, I wasn't aware. Then they had the big Reform movement and built the temple up on the Highland Avenue. But it was a win-win, because we had a nice chapel downstairs where they had the minyans.

EL: Yeah.

RH: And then for the High Holy Days we had the whole social hall downstairs just for the Orthodox, it would bring in benches and they had, we'd bring a rabbi in or one of the guys who really knew how to daven.

EL: So they way that they did the merger was essentially they had two congregations in one building.

RH: Yes. But eventually some of the Farrell would go to the services on High Holy Days. I would start downstairs, because they'd go all day, on Yom Kippur, of course, they would go all day, various breaks, but I would start downstairs. I missed the, the mystery, I still like the Orthodox minyans a little. On Friday nights, they would call up on the phone, the Orthodox, the old guys would say we need ten guys, but we can count the Torah as one and this is one, so they call me and I looked forward to it. It was about five thirty, I'd leave the office and it was a good way to start the weekend. They'd call Carl Moses whose office is next to here, he was from Sharon though, and we would go in and I would, they'd be done in a half an hour. Once and a while I'd go Saturday morning and one of the rabbis would come down there and give a sermon, or we had a lay rabbi.

EL: There was one rabbi for both congregations?

RH: They just had one rabbi. Well, they didn't really have a rabbi, but he would come down on a Saturday and help out if they needed a minyan. They were very, you know, people were very nice, just like the Youngstown. And then I got sort of bored with the services here, they were sort of just the same things until they changed the book, and I guess the rabbi, it was just a little I don't know. And then it was getting less and less you'd see, on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, there still weren't a lot of people, because a lot of people came home for the holidays, there weren't even, then you realized we were in bad shape here.

EL: When did that start to happen?

RH: Five, probably about five years ago. Five or six years ago.

EL: Did the two different congregations decline in tandem or did the B'nai Zion part start to decline before the Sharon part?

RH: Oh, B'nai Zion, I think, declined before the Sharon. But I think if they didn't have the Farrell people, because there weren't that many Farrell families left who lived in Farrell, I mean who would still go to the Farrell synagogue. But I would say that Farrell probably, yeah, because Sharon was more populous. I would say that Farrell declined first and then they just couldn't afford to keep it up.

EL: Were people starting to go to Youngstown before Sharon closed?

RH: No, not too many, no. Not at all. Not at all. There weren't that many that, I mean you're lucky if you got ten or fifteen people at the end, for a service, or twenty people at the most on a Friday night, you know. Or, if there was a bar mitzvah or something, or a wedding, but it wasn't too good. And a lot of people were against it and you know, I sort of just, and then you realized that this is the way to go, you have to do it. And as it turns out, I just, I just really enjoy going to services in Youngstown. This rabbi is very approachable. Out of all the rabbis I've seen, and I've seen plenty of them, he is the best rabbi, except for the lay rabbi that we had, that just needed one more year and she could have been a rabbi, but she came back, divorced her husband and she was with us three or four years and then married a, married a nice guy. A gentile, and he was a doctor at the funeral home here, Sample and O'Donnell, which was the Jewish funeral home, not anymore, they used to do all the Jewish funerals. And then he went to doctor of chiropractic medicine and now he's in, they're in Holland, and doing very well. But she would have been a great, she was fabulous. She was a woman and she was just so good.

EL: But she just didn't want to pursue it?

RH: Well I guess it, well first of all she should have got the rabbinical job first, then married a gentile, because I think they would have, even in the Reform Judaism, I don't think they would have, unless he would have converted, but he might have converted, too, I think he did convert eventually, but she was excellent. She was superb. She handled my parents' funeral and my mother's funeral and just the whole family, just fabulous, so she was number one, and this guy's pretty close, he's fabulous.

EL: Let's go over these photos.

RH: Yeah.

EL: I'd just like to get on tape, just so that we can identify them.

RH: I'll, yeah I should have brought the others down, I had a whole box but...

EL: This is a photo of you and your brother.

RH: My brother, across from the Farrell High School.

EL: And you don't know what the occasion of that was?

RH: No, I have no idea. That's my dad.

EL: And he's in front of the plant?

RH: He's in front of the Coca-Cola plant. There's a truck, Coca-Cola truck.

EL: And so they actually would go and deliver.

RH: We had truck drivers, yeah.

EL: And you, you drove that one summer.

RH: Well I helped the route men, yeah, I would help the route men deliver stuff. They had various routes, so you know, and you'd go in the...

EL: How many employees did they have?

RH: I think they had about eight routes. So they had eight truck drivers at least, they had a bottler who knows the machinery, and they had two or three inside people, two inside who would do all the maintenance and bottles and stuff like that, and then they had my dad upstairs and Dick Ackerman, who would fill in for the route men when they'd go on vacation, and we had a secretary upstairs.

EL: Were these Jewish employees?

RH: No. No. I mean some of them happen to be relatives, which was, that's another story. Not at all, no. Whoever wanted to apply for the job, you know. In fact, my secretary, administrative assistant, who's been with me since 1981 or '82 worked for my dad for a year out of high school, or two years out of high school, and he said it was the best employee he's ever had. And at the end of the year she would, when the truck drivers come in you have to take your cash out and you have to, and he said she balanced to the dollar, she's the best, I mean she's unbelievable. She should have, I mean she's fantastic. She should have gone to college, she'd be, she's brilliant, in fact I couldn't practice law without her, if she quit I'd say I'm out of here.

EL: And this is a child with a baseball bat.

RH: That's my brother.

EL: Okay.

RH: And it's on Idaho, Union Street and the temple is right down behind him.

EL: The temple is this building with the dome here.

RH: This dome here and that's the, that's a little steeple of the Serbian church, Orthodox church.

EL: Okay, we've got you and your brother...

RH: That's my brother and I on Wallace Avenue in front of another, in fact, that house is, no, no, that's right on the corner, our house is the second house, that's Union, this is Wallace.

EL: What's the occasion of this?

RH: Oh this guy came around and took pictures, you'd see him everywhere, yeah and he had ponies. But my grandfather used to take us to the park, the old park up here, and they had pony rides, and you used to ride on the little ponies. Well, that was my grandfather.

EL: This is your grandfather?

RH: And that's, yeah. And that's my brother and I, I don't know what the occasion was, it had to be, I don't know if that's a yarmulke I'm holding or a tallis, but I wasn't thirteen then. And that's the side of the shul on Idaho Street, and the rabbi lived across. And then there around the corner where this pole goes around was the entrance to the shul. And that's our house where we lived with my grandfather, and that's where he lived after we moved. And I don't know if we had already moved, I see 903, that's Wallace Avenue, even the obit says 901. And that's my mother and my grandmother and my aunt and my grandfather.

EL: Great. Thank you so much, is there anything else we should talk about?

RH: Geeze, I can't think of anything. I don't know if you want, I probably should have brought the other pictures, but they, they did not show anything except, you know I tried to get something with the families, there were a lot of pictures with, that doesn't have anything to do, where I lived up by the high school.

EL: Yeah.

RH: I wish I could find the, that video, my dad always took pictures, then we had them put on an eight millimeter with the camera and then we put them on DVDs and then we had them CDs and I'm sure there were a lot of things, receptions and something at the synagogue. There were some reunions with Jerry, with the Prizants, Jerry Bostocky's mother was a Zolten, Fannie Zolten, and the Zoltens and the Prizants were first cousins. So that's on my mother's side.

EL: Okay.

RH: But Sammy Herskowitz can give you a lot of information. Jerry is very, they're both, Jerry is very animated, great guy. And he, that's his cell phone.

EL: Okay, alright. Well thank you very much.

RH: Yeah, thank you, you know if you need anything, if I find something, you know, I can mail it to you.

EL: Okay.

RH: I'm still gonna be looking for that tape.

END OF TRANSCRIPT