

Transcript of Interview with Judy and Lee Silverman
Small Towns
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Eric Lidji: Today is September 27, 2016. I'm Eric Lidji. This is the Small Towns Jewish History Project for the Rauh Jewish History Program & Archives and I'm talking today to Judy and Lee Silverman in their offices in New Castle at Klafter's. So Judy why don't you start and tell me how your family got to New Castle.

Judy Silverman: Okay. Well I'll start on the paternal side.

EL: Okay.

JS: And Sam Klafter came to the United States in May of 1886. He arrived at the Sandusky, Ohio port.

EL: So he came through the Great Lakes.

JS: Mhm. He had family in Cleveland and he became a naturalized citizen in March of 1895. And according to the record, he was born December 25, 1873. His brother Philip, four years younger, also came, arriving in the same port of entry. But Sam Klafter married Bertha Stern, and he and she had no children. Sam Klafter was the brother of my grandmother, Pearl Klafter Storch. And her husband was Joseph Storch. But they never lived in New Castle. I mean they may have, my grandfather Storch I think came here at some point. They passed away in 1932. I wasn't born until '35.

My father was, finished the gymnasium, his education at the gymnasium in Germany, I'm not sure of the year, and his mother, Pearl Klafter Storch, asked her brother, Sam Klafter, if she could send him to the United States to continue his education. And of course they wanted him to come and he did. He came in the summer I believe and was to start school in the fall, but in the meantime World War I broke out at some point there, and he was not a U.S. citizen and he was called back to fight in the Kaiser's army. He did so and he was an interpreter. He spoke fifteen languages fluently, which is kind of common I think for Europeans, to you know, the states, the countries are as close as our states. So he was an interpreter in the German army. Afterwards he came back. Sam Klafter at that point had tobacco stores in Canton, Ohio, New Castle, Pa., and Youngstown, Ohio. And my dad, I believe, worked, when he came back, at the Canton, Ohio store, and he lived with the Klatfers here in New Castle at 411 North Jefferson Street.

He actually, it's kind of interesting how he met my mother. She actually was born here but lived in eastern Pa. at the time. And in fact she was a secretary to a senator in Harrisburg I think at the time. And she was visiting family who lived down the street on Jefferson Street, and my dad was taking a walk one evening, and she was visiting, and the family she was visiting invited my dad up on the porch to meet her, and of course that's when their romance began. And they were married in 1932. And I was born in 1935 and I have a sister who was born in 1941, she's now deceased.

EL: What's her name?

JS: Priscilla Kay, but we called her Cookie because my dad didn't like her name.

EL: [laughter]

JS: And Cookie Bumstead, from the comic strip, was born the same day so she got the name Cookie.

EL: I want to ask you, you said that they came in through Sandusky.

JS: Yes.

EL: So obviously they were in Ohio. But why, why Canton, Youngstown and New Castle?

JS: Why he opened the stores in those places?

EL: Yeah.

JS: I don't know the answer to that. I don't know.

EL: Okay.

JS: Anyhow, so actually what happened then, my father was here, and—

EL: Your father's name was what?

JS: Morris Storch. M-O-R-R-I-S S-T-O-R-C-H. And my mother and dad, as I mentioned, got married in 1932 and eventually the stores, I guess they were just tobacco stores where you would go in and you'd mix your own tobacco. The best I know. They were just called tobacconists, you know, at that time. And at the time of the war, I think when the war broke out, World War II, or even before that actually, I think the stores, if I'm not right correct me Lee, they went into receivership.

Lee Silverman: Well they got in trouble during the Depression.

JS: During the Depression. And my father was the receiver. My uncle, Sam Klafter was-

EL: What does that mean, he was the receiver?

LS: He sort of took, he sort of took over all the legality of it, but he began to run the stores eventually and became the owner of the particular business.

JS: They lost the Canton, Ohio and Youngstown stores. They closed. And I guess they were only able to keep the one store open which was the one here in New Castle. And

my dad began to run it. A little bit of the background about Sam Klafter, he was very philanthropic, he was very civic minded, but he was an alcoholic.

EL: Huh

JS: Yeah. And so my dad pretty much took over the responsibilities of the business and finally my, my father, my mother didn't work, she came here. I mean she was married. So that was the second generation, my mother and dad, paternal side. Then my uncle Sam passed away, I forget what year, I think it's on those notes there, but anyhow he passed away.

LS: Mid-forties.

JS: And my father took over, you know, they left, my Aunt Bertha passed away a couple years later and they left the business to my father. So he was the sole proprietor at that point. And he ran it for many years and then when I was in college, I went to Carnegie Tech, now Carnegie Mellon, and I met Lee, my husband. And then when I got married, my father, since I just had the one sister, wanted Lee, he wanted Lee to come into the business because at that point he didn't have anybody. He had maybe about six employees I guess or so back then. One of whom was my father and a couple others. Anyhow it turned out that Lee wasn't interested at the time but down the road he became interested and we came back here. And of course we already had one son, Robbie, who's now fifty-eight, and we had two more sons here, Rick and Randy. Rick is now fifty-six and Randy is fifty-three. They all went to school, different colleges, W&J, Dartmouth, Pitt. And none of them were really interested in coming back. Robbie was a stockbroker, Ricky was a doctor, and Randy was an industrial engineer. But after about twelve years of working elsewhere, Randy decided if he was going to work that hard he might as well be working for his own business. At that time Lee had established a new way to go with the business and we opened, we actually went full circle, we opened up as retail stores, and during the war, I started to tell you this and I got waylaid, we went into the wholesale business as well and became distributors. So then I think it was, well twenty-five years ago, whatever that is, we started Smoker Friendly stores, which are retail stores throughout Ohio, eastern Ohio and western Pennsylvania and there's about sixteen or seventeen of those now. So prior to having that many, Randy decided to come back and help Lee, and he's still here! I think he came in 1993 maybe, I'm not real sure of the year he came.

LS: 1990s, early.

JS: Anyhow, I think probably that gives you a little bit of the history of the business. We now have maybe 125 or 135 employees, so the business has certainly changed course. And we're in the tobacco business and I'll tell you a little trivia. If John Rolfe hadn't planted the first tobacco seed the thirteen colonies would not have survived. And the second bit of trivia is Alexander Hamilton, of course Hamilton's the big show on Broadway now, he started the first tobacco tax to fund the first Continental Congress. And we've been taxed to death ever since.

EL: [laughter]

JS: And if they ever quit tobacco then the rest of us, the citizens of the United States, will be heavily taxed to make up for that.

EL: Huh. I want to go back through some of what we've just been talking about to make sure I understand all the pieces.

JS: Okay.

EL: So the two sets of grandparents in your family are the Klaufers and the Storches.

JS: Yes. They're on my paternal side, but not on my maternal. I didn't get into the maternal at all.

EL: Okay, so your father is Morris Storch.

JS: Mhm.

EL: His parents are Sam Klafter?

JS: Those were his aunt and uncle.

EL: Oh.

JS: Great aunt, yeah, his aunt and uncle and my great aunt and uncle.

EL: Okay, and so his parents were named what?

JS: Joseph Storch and Pearl Klafter Storch.

EL: Oh okay.

JS: They passed away in 1932.

EL: Okay. So Pearl Klafter and Sam Klafter were siblings.

JS: Exactly.

EL: Okay. And everybody ended up in Ohio separately?

JS: No, they ended up here. Oh, well...

EL: Was Joseph born—

JS: Sam Klafter and Philip Klafter, Sam's younger brother, were, came through the Sandusky port as I mentioned and lived briefly in Cuyahoga County and then came here because Sam opened the tobacco shops I mentioned. Philip opened a shoe store.

EL: In New Castle?

JS: Here. New Castle.

EL: What was it called?

JS: I don't remember.

EL: Do you remember the store?

JS: Yeah, I know exactly where it was, but I was a very little girl.

LS: There's a restaurant/bar there.

EL: Where was it?

JS: Down on the south side.

LS: The south side.

EL: On Long?

LS: Yeah.

JS: On the corner of Long and Mill.

LS: Long and Mill.

EL: Okay.

JS: Right across from the New Castle Playhouse. I mean it wasn't there then. Yeah I was a little girl and I went there for my shoes, but I can't remember what the name of it was.

LS: Before my time.

EL: Was Joseph Storch born in this country?

JS: No.

EL: He was also—

JS: They were all from Austria-Hungary.

EL: The Klawfers and the Storches.

JS: Mhm. The whole family.

EL: So when they came were they living on the south side?

JS: I don't know where they lived when they initially came. I know that after, that when my father came, whatever year that was, they lived at 411 North Jefferson Street. That house is going to be a hundred years old next year.

EL: So by that point they had already moved over onto the north hill. Is that right?

JS: Yeah. That's the only house that I remember too. And he lived, my dad lived on the third floor.

EL: Your dad is Morris Storch, what's your mother's name?

JS: Annabelle Prinsky Storch.

EL: Okay. Are you about to get into your mother's side?

JS: If you want me to.

EL: Yeah, let's do that.

JS: Okay.

EL: Okay.

JS: Okay my mom, her parents were Jacob and Jenny Baltimore Prinsky, P-R-I-N-S-K-Y. And they lived here in New Castle also. They were, I think they were in the grocery business with the Marlins. Anyhow they were here for a while and then they moved to eastern, just Avoca, Scranton, that area. And my mother was born here in 1901, so she's the second generation on that side, and then came me and my children and my grandchildren, so that's five of us on that side. They didn't live in New Castle very long, my grandparents, the Prinsky ones. I really don't know how many years they lived here.

EL: Do you know where they were from?

JS: Where they were from?

EL: The Prinsky family.

JS: Where they were from, well, I, one aunt used to tell me from, my grandmother was born in Lithuania, my grandmother, Jenny Baltimore Prinsky. They think their name was Baltimore because they came through the Port of Baltimore, they're from the Baltic area, we really don't know why their name is Baltimore. I think that was Anglicized. But anyhow they came from the Baltic area. I don't know exactly where my grandfather came from.

EL: And you don't know why they ended up in New Castle?

JS: Well they had family here. My grandmother's sister, that's whose house the front porch, where my mother and dad met.

EL: Yeah.

JS: They lived here. And her name was Dora Baltimore Marlin.

EL: Okay.

JS: So that may, family just kind of gravitated to where the other ones were I guess.

EL: Right. One of the things we've been trying to figure out is when immigrants were coming to this area, Pittsburgh would be an obvious place to go, so when they went to the towns, when we can, we want to figure out why, why this town? And why New Castle and not Elwood City? Or Butler.

JS: Well yeah, I don't really know the answer to that other than the fact that, as I said with my mother, her sister, you know they came here and they go back a few generations too. Sam Klafter was a founding member on my father's side of the Temple Israel, the Reform temple.

EL: Yeah.

JS: Jacob Cosel, who would be on the other side, my mother's side, also I believe was a founding member of Temple Israel.

EL: Is that K-O-Z-

JS: C-O-S-E-L.

EL: C-O-S-E-L.

JS: Mhm.

EL: Do you know much about the early days of Temple Israel?

JS: I just know that, I knew the Feuchtwangers, it was Aunt Nell.

EL: You knew them personally?

JS: Well yeah, Aunt Nell and Uncle Marcus.

EL: That's what everyone called them?

JS: Well we all did because the Klaufers, the Fueschwauers, they were all very close friends. And they started the Reform temple, which was built I believe in 1926. And my uncle Sam Klafter was the first treasurer and I just know about, pretty much about it when I went to Sunday School and that sort of thing, you know.

EL: Do you remember them as people?

JS: Oh yes.

EL: What were they like?

JS: Aunt Nell was a very warm and sweet person. Now they had a son but I don't remember their son at all. But I think Marcus Feuchtwanger was a very successful businessman. I just remember her as a very warm and caring person and we always liked to go to her house on Laurel Boulevard.

EL: And what would you do there?

JS: Play. [laughter]

EL: Just all the kids?

JS: We were little, yeah, a lot of kids, a lot of us who were around the same age you know.

[phone rings]

LS: [on phone] Hello?

[tape cuts out]

LS: Sorry about that.

EL: That's alright. So what were you saying just then?

JS: Oh, well I just happened to look at some notes I had. My uncle Sam passed away in 1943 and he was very active in a place called the Margaret Henry Home. I'm getting away from the Feuchtwangers, but these were all friends. The Hoyts, did you ever hear of the Hoyts in New Castle?

EL: No.

JS: Well the Hoyts were very prominent in the banking business, they were not Jewish. But Alex Crawford Hoyt and my uncle Sam were very close friends and Alex Crawford Hoyt had a chauffeur. And the Margaret Henry Home was an orphanage here and every Christmas my uncle Sam and Alex Crawford Hoyt, who, both gentlemen were childless, would come in the limousine and pick me up, I'm all dressed up with my little curls, and take me to a Christmas party at the Margaret Henry Home where I got to see Santa Claus and I was so excited. I did that for several years, but then my mother got pregnant with my sister, I was six, I was not yet in school, I was going to start school. And the one Christmas, the last Christmas I went, I got the cooties. Do you know what the cooties are? My mother forbade my uncle Sam and Mr. Hoyt to ever take me there again.

EL: Wait, you're going to have to elaborate on the cooties.

LS: It's like fleas or something. [laughter]

EL: [laughter] Oh okay. From the Christmas party you got them?

JS: Well, the kids at the orphanage probably had them and I got them. [laughter] So that was the end of my going to the Christmas parties. But I'd sit, I remember the feeling of sitting between these two men with their tall hats, the chauffeur, and I'm this little girl. I can really feel that, still sitting in the middle. And the Hoyt Mansions, which are still in existence here in New Castle, are used for culture, for arts and so forth. I remember they would take me, because Mrs. Hoyt had no children, they would always take me to show her what I was wearing, I had my hair curled and everything, and I'd walk into these mansions and they were huge. Now I walk into them today, I guess because I'm bigger they're not so huge. They really are mansions but they're not as overwhelming.

LS: You can go there, it's a worthwhile trip. It's right up the hill.

EL: Okay. You were saying that your family was involved in the starting of Temple Israel.

JS: Yes, my uncle Sam was.

EL: Do you have a sense of, so obviously Temple Israel was a Reform congregation. The Feuchtwangers, is that how you pronounce it?

JS: Feuchtwangers.

EL: Feuchtwangers.

JS: Uh huh.

EL: Were German, or came from German stock.

JS: That area, yeah.

EL: Your family was German, Austria-Hungarian. So do you know if that was a style of religion that they were more used to in Europe.

JS: I definitely think so, yeah. I still like the Union Prayer Book.

EL: Yeah. And would, what was the other one called originally?

JS: Well it was called I think Tifereth Israel.

EL: Right, Tifereth Israel, that would have looked like what to them?

JS: Not interested.

EL: Okay.

JS: Not interested. That would have been—

LS: Orthodox Conservative.

JS: It was more Orthodox then, now it's Conservadox, I call it.

EL: Right. But there really was two, I mean there was a Jewish community but there really were two...

JS: Oh absolutely. There were probably a hundred and fifty members of each congregation eventually.

EL: Wow.

JS: Yeah. It was really, we had a nice Jewish community. Today we don't have any Jewish children. I don't think we have any real young children. I mean my grandchildren, Randy is intermarried. So they're not...

LS: Interesting thing is there was a real division you know, I was from outside, there was a real division between the two of them. You know, as an outsider I never paid too much attention but you could see those that had been in the synagogue and those that had been in the temple, you know it was one of these kind of things. Now not so much for the younger ones but the older guys and the families that had been around, they really didn't relate a lot unless it happened and I didn't see it, but I always had that feeling of a certain amount of animosity.

EL: Did you get the sense that the difference was based on meaningful ritual differences or was it something...

LS: I think it was Reform against the more Conservative Orthodox kind of religion.

JS: I think the Temple people felt they were more of a higher, I really do.

LS: I never felt that.

JS: Well not late, not by the time you came, no. But...

EL: Meaning that there was some class differences?

JS: More class, mhm. I think so, maybe I'm wrong, it's just a perception on my part.

EL: Yeah. Where did we leave off?

JS: Well I was going to tell you, well we were talking about Mr. Hoyt, the Feuchtwangers, Klafters, they were all friends. And my uncle Sam, of course the stores were started around 1897, so we're a hundred and nineteen years old, our company. Randy thinks there even existed something before that but I don't know that for sure.

LS: And interesting point, we still have a salesman that's been here seventy-six years. Still works.

EL: Wow.

JS: He started as stock boy at sixteen and he's ninety-three, he still calls on six accounts. [laughter]

LS: Yeah, oh yeah. It keeps them alive, it really does.

JS: He broke his leg a couple years ago and we thought this is the end of Tony. He got fixed up and he was back on the road, isn't that amazing?

EL: Yeah.

JS: Anyhow I wrote down here that, you know once we went into the distributing business around the time of World War II, we had a dark blue truck, I remember that.

EL: By distributing you mean warehouse? I mean wholesale?

JS: We were wholesale. You know the little corner markets that were on the streets? Every area had little corner markets, sort of like the 7-Elevens and things now but much smaller. They were momma-poppa stores. That's who we sold to, we sold candies, cigarettes and all that to these stores. We wholesaled them.

EL: Before that who was the supplier?

JS: I really don't know. Probably competitors, people who we eventually were competitors with.

EL: Okay, because—

JS: Muraski down on the South Side would have been a competitor.

LS: I don't know, I don't know if you ever interviewed her, she just passed away.

EL: No.

LS: There were a family, but they were in the synagogue.

EL: Right.

LS: So there was, not only were they competitors on the business side, it was both sides of the—

JS: They didn't like us.

LS: Well...

JS: They didn't like us.

LS: It was on a competition level, you know, but hey.

EL: So you don't know if the business ever came to Pittsburgh to get supply from wholesalers in Pittsburgh.

JS: Probably did, sure, probably did.

LS: It depended because most of what we sold was available from so many different distributors.

EL: Yeah.

LS: And unless you had, way back when, when there was franchising, if you had the brand of franchise then people had to come and get it from you. And I can remember just after I started, there was a drug chain called Central Drug and there was a brand that we had and I'd come from New Kensington and that was their headquarters and I knew the guys and we made an arrangement and that's the only way that would happen. Otherwise we weren't large enough to distribute in Pittsburgh besides that they had plenty of distributors there too.

EL: Was it unusual, when the company became a distributor, was it unusual for businesses in New Castle to be wholesalers or distributors as opposed to just retail?

LS: That came about—

JS: I'm not sure.

LS: Mostly that came about from the war, the second war. All these little stores, and every corner had just about a store, and being that they had to buy, back to the franchise brand, if you had a brand that was very popular you owned that brand and they began to come to buy that from these, from the wholesale. And during the Second War there was a lot of shortages around so they would ask for other things and that's how they expanded the line. Judy's dad started to get into these other things, candies, this and that, and that was the sort of the onset of the wholesale business.

EL: Huh. Okay, I'm going to ask more about that later but let's continue with where you were.

JS: Well I just...

EL: So they become a distributor.

JS: Yeah, they're a distributor and then, wholesale and retail, we still had a retail store.

EL: Here in New Castle.

JS: Yeah. Mhm.

EL: And that was it.

JS: Well, uhm...

LS: Not far from here, it's gone, there's a little park there it's right on the corner

JS: I have a picture, I have a picture of we think our first store. And if, I don't know what I did with it here, it's here someplace. Maybe it's with the stuff I gave you, is there a picture there?

EL: Yeah.

JS: Okay that's it. It says Sam Klafter. And that, I don't know, can you tell by the edge of the, by the car there, would it be around the 1930s maybe that picture was taken? We were in that location for a number of years and then we moved to the corner of Mill and Washington in a bigger spot.

EL: Where is this located? What's this street here?

JS: Well it was called, this building is still here, this is Washington Street. This was called Water Street but Water Street was...

[phone rings]

LS: Hello? [tape cuts out]

LS: [tape cuts in] I think I get two phone calls a month

JS: [unintelligible]

LS: Yeah, six-thirty we meet him.

EL: So you were saying Water Street.

JS: No, not six-thirty, six. But anyhow, okay, what did you say?

EL: You were saying Water Street, I think?

JS: Yeah I think that was called Water Street. It's not there anymore because they built that whole plaza, that Cascade, that was where that area. And it was, we had a fountain, because I said to somebody I'd have to cook.

EL: You mean a soda fountain?

JS: A soda fountain and sandwiches, there's an ad somewhere here that says we have, we advertised sandwiches and so forth.

EL: Huh.

JS: See? I said I'd have to make sandwiches if we were still in that location.

EL: When did they leave that location?

JS: I'm not sure of the year.

EL: But do you remember that location?

JS: Mhm. No, I remember that it existed but no, not in my day.

EL: So the second one is the one that you...

JS: The third.

EL: The third one.

JS: The third location, they moved up to 11 North Mill and I remember that location very well.

EL: Can you describe it?

JS: Yeah it was like a cigar store, not real wide, these are all the cabinets, we have all the cabinets and out front we have the gas lighters that the men used to come in and light their cigars on. We have the original Meerschaum pipe case and we have more of these cabinets, but they were all made by a refrigeration company in Pittsburgh.

EL: The cabinets were?

JS: Mhm. They were all humidified to keep the cigars the proper humidity and so forth.

LS: They're zinc lined.

JS: They were all zinc lined.

EL: Huh.

LS: I don't know if it's still in there.

JS: The ones in my office I think are, but we took them out and made glass, you know, replaced the glass and made less shelves.

EL: So were there two counters running...

JS: There were more than two. Do we have a picture of that original store? I think out in the showroom we do. Anyhow, I mean out in the lobby there we do. Anyhow we had the cigar store and the interesting thing is and the reason they moved there is they had all the sellers from that East Washington Street's location up to the alleyway, which was a whole block of wholesale which we had shelves and so forth, no bathroom though.

EL: Wait, you mean the size of the building was that big.

[intercom: "Jenny you have a call on line one."]

LS: [unintelligible]

JS: The cellars, the cellars.

EL: S-E-L or C-E-L?

JS: C-E-L-LA-R-S.

EL: Oh okay.

JS: Basements.

EL: They owned all the basements for the whole block?

JS: They didn't own, we rented them.

EL: Okay.

JS: We rented. Rented the storeroom which wasn't that big, but the basement we had all those basements under all those other storerooms for, that's where our, and you had, the trucks would come in and deliver, they'd open up, did you ever see one of those sidewalk delivery things?

LS: They'd throw the stuff down in the room.

JS: They'd slide the stuff down.

EL: Yeah.

JS: We were there for sixty-some years. My father, they had no bathroom. My father wanted out of there.

LS: No, your father wasn't going to move. I wanted out of there.

JS: You wanted out of there, and my father passed away in 1963 and we really wanted out of there because we had to go across the street to the drugstore to go to the bathroom.

LS: [laughter]

JS: And so guess how we got out there. The fact was the cellar was not paved, it was all gravel the whole way, the basement. And there was no bathroom and finally the guy who owned the bank who ran the trust who owned the building wouldn't let us out until we went to another attorney.

LS: We went to the family attorney and I said we want to get out of there, you know, I got to move. And the guy said, and I said, "After all we don't even have a bathroom." He said, "You don't have a bathroom? You're out." [laughter]

EL: Because you're not allowed to not have a bathroom?

LS: Well you've got to have a facility inside of a business so...

JS: And so we did, but before my dad died, and when I was about twelve years old he had a bookkeeper named Helen Malloy, she passed away. My dad never hired another bookkeeper, he did all the books and he was brilliant. He could look at a line of figures and he could tell you, in the blink of an eye, could tell you the answer. I'm horrible at math, horrible. And I don't know where that, our boys are pretty good at math and maybe they must have gotten that gene. But anyhow he ran that business. And then finally, what year did you come? 1959?

LS: '58 or '59.

JS: Lee came. And we were married in '56 and then he came, we moved here in '59.

EL: And so after that incident with the bathroom in '63 is when you moved to this?

JS: No, no, no. We moved up the street on Mill Street to 114 N. Mill Street, that was the fourth location. Then they were going through redevelopment in our town, which a lot of small towns were doing, and we bought this property over here, but we couldn't get title of the land or something right away, there was a delay.

LS: It was a redevelopment property and it worked out pretty good for us. In fact it was sort of interesting, I passed this property how many times and thought, gee that'd be a nice place to have a building, and when I got the notice of redevelopment and we had no option, we had to move. We went to redevelopment and said listen we can put up a building and they sort of helped finance the whole thing and that's how we got here. And it's been pretty positive since.

JS: Anyway, well we moved to a temporary location. We had electrical problems, we had a fire, the floor fell through, just one horrible thing after another, finally we got this building built. I think we moved here in 1978.

LS: '77.

JS: '77, '78.

EL: Okay.

JS: And so we've been here ever since. So this is our, our kind of like our fifth location if you don't count the interlude building.

EL: What, did you grow up in the house on Jefferson Street?

JS: No, no. My parents lived in a duplex on Sheridan Avenue until my sister was born and then we bought a house up on Clen Moore and I lived there all my, from six years old on.

EL: What was your childhood like?

JS: I think I just played. [laughter] I used to draw and make my own paper dolls and stuff like that, I always liked art. I had a lot of friends, I had mostly boy, friend boys, not boyfriends, but because I didn't have a lot of girls on my street but I always teased the local judge, I taught him how to play Red Rover Come Over and Hide-And-Go-Seek and we had, I had a good childhood.

EL: Did most people make friends with people on their street rather than people in their school?

JS: Well we made friends with people in our school too. We lived within a certain, most families only had one car and we rode our bicycles or we walked places you know, and probably by the time, I played tennis, there were tennis courts at the school behind where I lived and I walked through the woods and I'd play a lot of tennis with friends that'd come to the tennis court. And I worked on the playgrounds during my college years. That convinced me I did not want to be a school teacher, which my father wanted me to be. And I had a good childhood. I remember we had about six kids in our confirmation class, I mean we had some nice Jewish kids, but in a town like New Castle you mix. We were friendly no matter what one's background or ethnicity it was.

EL: Did everyone get along?

JS: Yeah. Yeah I don't ever remember having anybody, you know, refer to me in a bad way. I never felt badly, ashamed that I was Jewish or anything like that. I never, I don't think I ever had that. Even as adults and I don't think our children ever did as far as I know.

EL: What, how involved was the family with Temple Israel?

JS: Well uncle Sam, as I said, is a founding member. My mother was president of Sisterhood. I don't think my father—

[door opens] Unknown: Oh I'm sorry.

JS: I don't think my father was ever that active. In fact on Friday nights when mother wanted to go to Temple, he came from I assume, I am told he came from a pretty kosher home and all that but he said you don't have to be in a particular building to say your prayers. And he didn't believe in necessarily being in a temple or a synagogue. He would go on the High Holidays, particularly a yahrzeit.

LS: Yahrzeit.

EL: Why was it important for your mother?

JS: I don't know. I really don't know. She did find it to be important and I was never bas mitzvahed, they didn't do that with girls back then, here. I was confirmed. And...

EL: Did you go every week to services?

JS: I didn't, no. My mother did I think.

EL: Really?

JS: Yeah.

EL: So by herself?

JS: She would go with friends I think, she would go, yeah.

EL: Was this when Rabbi Gruen was there?

JS: Oh yeah, Rabbi Gruen, well see Hannah, did you interview Hannah?

EL: I'm close with Hannah, I did interview her.

JS: Hannah and I are a month apart to the day.

EL: Really?

JS: They brought her here when she was ten years old.

EL: Right.

JS: So we were friends from that point on and we still are.

EL: What was Rabbi Gruen like?

JS: Rabbi Gruen was, I thought he was brilliant, my boys thought he was brilliant. He married us. He, well, I grew up of course in the Sunday School I went to Hebrew School, confirmation school, a confirmation class, and everything with him and he was, I liked Rabbi Gruen. A lot of people he turned off.

EL: Oh really.

JS: Uh huh. Well, I think because—

LS: I think it was his European demeanor.

JS: Yeah. But I always had a good relationship with both he and Mrs. Gruen. And I, I can't say anything. We felt bad when he passed away.

LS: I think we got closer to him. First of all, Anne was gone and he didn't have any other family and thought the kids, he liked our kids and our kids liked him too, especially our older one. And you know, we socialized with him, we'd go into Pittsburgh.

JS: Yeah we'd go to dinner with him.

LS: Yeah I mean you know, it was a nice relationship.

JS: He didn't drive.

EL: He didn't know how? Or he just didn't.

JS: I don't think either one of them. They never had a car.

LS: Neither of them drive.

JS: I don't think they ever had a car.

LS: I think they had a driver.

JS: Yeah we'd take them places, you know.

LS: He was called the Hitchhiking Rabbi. [laughter] People would pick him up and drop him off because it was right on the way up the hill.

JS: Yeah everybody, non-Jews as well. He'd stand in front of what was the Danish Pastry over on Mill Street at the bus stop, they'd all pick him up.

LS: He was really a bright guy.

JS: He was funny, I mean he had good jokes. He was a nice guy.

LS: Very sociable.

JS: Yeah, very. And of course you know being a good friend of Hannah's, and then of course then Lee became president of the temple for two years. I was president, I'm the only one I think who was president of the Sisterhood for two years and president of the temple for two years when they ran out of men. [laughter]

EL: That's the only reason they were willing to elect a woman?

JS: Probably.

EL: Was it seen as a big deal at the time?

JS: Gene Lasday was the first, she just passed away, she was the first president, she was only able to do it for a year, she wasn't well. But then I did it for two years. Yeah probably because we ran out of guys.

EL: Getting back to Rabbi Gruen, was it, was it unusual for a congregation, a small town congregation to have a rabbi who lasted that long?

JS: I really don't know. The synagogue never had anybody that lasted that long. He, he really became a part of the community and a part of the non-Jewish community as well, I think.

LS: Yeah.

JS: He was asked to speak at various functions and so forth and so on and he was very well respected all above by everybody in the community.

EL: Was it meaningful to have somebody who confirmed you and married you and...

JS: And bar mitzvahed my, yeah, I thought so. Did he confirm all three of the kids? I can't remember now.

LS: I think, yeah.

JS: I can't remember, you'd have to ask Randy, he's the youngest. But he did bar mitzvah all three of them. And Robbie we never knew, because Robbie, he's a wild Indian.

LS: The rabbi liked him.

JS: The rabbi loved him and we didn't know what to expect at his bar mitzvah and afterwards Rabbi Gruen came out of the sanctuary, he said, "He was wonderful!" But Robbie, he should have been an attorney because he has that kind of charisma. [laughter] But anyhow that goes back to that.

EL: What was, what was your social life like when you were younger? Was there like a BBYO or a AZA?

JS: I belonged, I think there was AZA.

EL: Or BBG I guess it would...

JS: Yeah. I didn't have that, I had Youth Group. And I even went to Haverford to a, I don't know if it was statewide or what, to a youth group camp.

EL: This is through Temple Israel?

JS: Mhm. Temple Israel Youth Group. But it was not just here, it was at least statewide, maybe national, I don't remember. But I did that. I went there. There was one other girl, Susie Blau, my age, Susie Blau, she lives in Michigan now. Hannah's a year younger than I am, a month younger, but she was a year behind me in school. Actually I should have been in her grade. My birthday is March and I had to wait, back then February was the cutoff date and I had to go to school as older, you know the following year, but then I skipped second grade so I got ahead. But Hannah was a year behind me in school. So Susie and I were in the same grade and we had a couple boys but we really didn't date, you know. I don't think small town people did back then, in high school. I think we just went in groups to places to parties and to each other's houses and so forth.

EL: Did you have to take off school for the holidays or anything like that?

JS: Mhm. Yeah because there weren't enough of us to close down the school. Yeah we took off. And in most cases it wasn't a problem. Some teachers were not so kind, would give a test or something, but you could make it up.

EL: Was the store open on Saturday?

JS: Uh huh. My dad worked seven days a week.

LS: On Sunday too. I mean that was the nature.

JS: I even have, in my notes, my dad was married to the business, he was.

EL: Did you work at the business when you were younger?

JS: I stamped cigarettes with the, I'd have a race with the stock boys, they'd put me up on an orange crate and we used to stamp cigarettes by hand.

EL: You mean put the labels on?

JS: Uh huh.

LS: Little decal, there was tax decals and there was ten on a strip and you wet them and then put them on.

JS: I used to do that when I was about five years old, so I've worked the longest in the business so I've been here longer than Tony. Tony and I are the only ones who have worked for all four generations.

EL: [laughter] When you came to Carnegie Tech, did you expect to come back to New Castle? Did you want to?

JS: I don't think I did.

EL: You don't think you expected to or wanted to?

JS: I probably thought I wanted to be, I loved Pittsburgh, and I probably didn't want to come back to a small town, no. In fact I always tell Lee I married him because he was from Pittsburgh and I thought I was going to live in Pittsburgh. [laughter]

LS: Surprise.

JS: We didn't do that. But when we came back as a married couple it was nice, we enjoyed it.

EL: You said you were married in '56?

JS: Mhm.

EL: And what year did you graduate?

JS: '56. In fact when I, the Syrian Mosque was still up and that's where we had our graduation, and when I walked across the stage they said I was Miss Judy Storch, and if any relatives or spouses are here please stand up, and he stood and said, "She's Judy Silverman." Because we had gotten married. My finals were over and he was still in school so we went to New York for the weekend, we got married that, right after I graduated and we went to New York for the weekend and when I came back I had my graduation ceremony.

EL: [laughter] What did you study?

JS: Fine Arts, painting and design.

EL: Did you study under Sam Rosenberg?

JS: I sure did.

EL: What was he like?

JS: Wonderful. Warm and fuzzy. We even went to his house, he was just the kindest man. Most recent time I went to Westmoreland Museum in Greensburg and he had an exhibit going on a few years ago.

EL: Yeah, yeah. Do you remember any of the lessons or how he ran his classroom, or anything like that?

JS: I don't know that I can verbalize, it was just...

LS: It's interesting, back to the Greensburg thing, you were standing there looking at the picture of a young girl.

JS: A mother, a young girl.

LS: And in the door walks the girl.

JS: She's a woman.

LS: She wasn't a kid now.

EL: You mean a painting?

LS: Yeah it was her picture!

JS: A painting Sam Rosenberg painted of this young girl, and I happened to be standing admiring it, and the woman who was the young girl came in. That was kind of fun. I just remember Sam Rosenberg as just, he's like a grandfather type of, he was kind to everyone and I really liked him.

EL: Who were your other professors?

JS: Howard Warner who did industrial painting.

EL: Was Robert Lepper one?

JS: Oh, yes.

EL: What was, you got a look on your face.

JS: He always, you always wanted to brush his teeth or something, I think he chewed tobacco or something, you know. But we liked him.

EL: Was he a character?

JS: Very much so, yeah he was. Did you know him?

EL: No, just know of him. He has a reputation, I mean he's very well known.

JS: And Bill Libby, L-I-B-B-Y.

EL: Yeah, he was a painter, right?

JS: Mhm, mhm. He was very nice. And then we had the archivist, Twiggy, Mr. Twiggs, did you know...?

EL: Russell Twiggs?

JS: Yeah.

EL: What was he like?

JS: He was just like some guy you'd expect to see walking across the roof of the fine arts building, you know, just a kind of interesting guy.

EL: Huh, fascinating.

JS: Yeah.

EL: So what did you do in the three years between your marriage and when you'd come back, you said you came back in '59, right?

JS: Yeah, yes. Well, during, Lee was still in school so we were living in New Kensington at that point.

EL: Why New Kensington?

JS: Well my father-in-law had one of his drugstores in New Kensington, Silverman's Drugstore, and so he thought we should come back. And at that time, you're probably too young to remember Wilkens Amateur Hour was, Wilkens was a jewelry store in Pittsburgh, and they took areas beside their jewelry store, long, skinny store rooms and opened card shops. And my father-in-law was friendly with people by the name of Zinoman in New Kensington who had a jewelry store, and they had this long, narrow place between their jewelry store and Isaly's on Fifth Avenue in New Kensington. My father-in-law's gift to us as a wedding gift was to open a card shop for me while Lee was going to school. 953 Fifth Avenue. So I worked in the card shop, I made all, I copied cards and made all the decorations on my wall were big greeting cards and so forth so I did my little bit of painting and did the window displays.

EL: But you were running the business?

JS: Mhm. I ran it from when we, from that point to Robbie was due to be born January 7, 19- what year was Robbie born? '57.

LS: Somewhere around there.

JS: Yeah, January 1957 and the new people, I sold the store and the new people were taking over January 1st and I remember thinking, "I'm going to have six days off." Because I had gone through Christmas. I even fell off the ladder putting up displays at Christmas and stuff, but I didn't get hurt that bad, anyhow Robbie was born New Year's Eve so I didn't get a day off.

EL: [laughter] Were you involved with Beth Jacob at all when you were in New Kensington?

JS: We were members. And we were in the Mr. and Mrs. Club, and— What else did we do? We did a lot of stuff.

EL: What's the Mr. And Mrs. Club?

JS: It was young couples, a social thing.

EL: Okay. Through the congregation?

JS: Mhm.

EL: Like a junior congregation sort of thing?

JS: No. It was all ages. It was a social...

LS: They put this show on, and Judy and I were in it, what was the guy?

JS: Don Brockett.

LS: I remember the name Don Brockett and his wife- [phone rings]

JS: Don Brockett was, he's no longer living but he was a [unintelligible] in Pittsburgh, he was the TV guy, his wife is still living her name is Leslie Brockett. Does that ring a bell?

EL: No.

JS: She's still alive. I think she's married to Marshall Kahn, who lived here in New Castle.

LS: I've got more phone calls today than I had all month. I hardly ever get a phone call.

JS: Who was that?

LS: Jerry [unintelligible]

EL: What was, how does New Castle compare to New Kensington or New Kensington compare to New Castle?

JS: We had a good time in New Kensington in the early years of our marriage. We were in two or three shows, do you know who Bobby Myers is?

EL: Yeah, Bob Myers, yeah.

JS: Yeah he directed us in a couple shows. We did "Damn Yankees," I was Lola and Lee was Joe three months after Robbie was born.

LS: It was not a very good show. [laughter]

EL: New Kensington was a smaller community than New Castle.

JS: Uh huh. But actually New Kensington was a smaller community, but I think it was more cohesive, yeah and there was only the only synagogue, you know, there wasn't that friction between. So in a way, I think it was kind of more fun, huh? We had a lot of fun.

LS: Well yeah, but there wasn't as much to do either. Not like today.

EL: You mean in New Kensington?

LS: Anywhere.

EL: Oh.

LS: I mean today you know with all the activities going on and the Internet people spend more time either by themselves with this stuff.

EL: Yeah.

LS: But then you had, you had to socialize more if you wanted to have any kind of life, and the synagogue was sort of the central locating point for those of us that were members because we became friends with most of the people, the young ones anyway.

EL: That's interesting. Was there a culture shock at all for you coming to a small town after growing up in Squirrel Hill?

LS: No because we had the drugstore in New Kensington and I used to, you know, we all, my brothers and I, we all worked there. It was that close. It was sort of like a suburb.

EL: Would you take the train out there?

LS: When I lived there I used to take the train to work in Pittsburgh because I worked in Pittsburgh.

EL: Huh.

LS: Dirtiest train you ever saw.

EL: Why, it was just covered in coal dust?

LS: Well dirt, you know you open the window, the blind to let some air in the room and there was no window there. You know I mean it was just, because trains were not really taken care of you know, there was no Amtrak back then, so you got the local trains.

EL: Did you ever drive?

LS: Yeah, I would drive on occasion. But it was easier to take that kind of transportation because I worked in East Liberty, and the train stopped right there so it was easy to get off and just go where I had to go.

EL: So in '59 you guys leave New Kensington and come back to New Castle.

LS: Yeah.

EL: And what was the precipitating factor for all of that.

JS: Well my dad asked Lee if he could come and try it out here to see if he liked it.

EL: What were you doing before that?

LS: I worked for a company called RPC Electronics, and they were distributors of electronics, and I sort of always liked that area, an electronic, I went to technical school and did some of that.

EL: What did that look like in the late fifties? Transistors and things like that?
Electronic.

LS: Transistors were at the beginning. Everything was vacuum tubes, and industrial, that's what they had.

EL: So this was for industrial application.

LS: It was everything because they were a distribution house to, there used to be a lot of television repair places and things like that and that's who they sold to.

EL: Huh.

LS: And had lines of RCA and this, that, and the other thing and they would distribute to other stores and businesses.

EL: Were you in the business side or the technical side?

LS: I was in the business side of it.

EL: Okay. So you were just transitioning from one business to another business.

LS: That was a long time ago.

EL: What were the differences when you came back to New Castle in the late fifties, early sixties, compared to when you were growing up?

JS: Well most of the people I had been friendly with and grew up with, many of them were gone, so we almost had to start from scratch with friends, you know as far as you know, some of them— Well we became friends with some of the older couples, not old, old, but a little older than us, who, when you were in high school, two years older and they're not going to look at you, you know what I mean?

EL: Yeah.

JS: But we had no problem transitioning. We built a house and at that point we had Robbie and then I got pregnant with the second child, and life was good. We worked, he worked hard and you know, we had the normal young couple struggles financially, we worked at it. I used to do some architectural renderings you know to kind of make a couple bucks. And that's about it.

EL: Was the way that your children grew up very different from the way you grew up?

JS: I don't think so. Do you Lee?

LS: For me because I grew up in the city.

EL: Right, it was very different. What were the differences?

LS: Well I went to a high school with thousands of kids.

EL: Allderdice?

LS: Where ninety percent of them were Jewish, ninety-five percent of them were Jewish. And they went to school here were they were a great minority. And even us as Jews living in the community-

[intercom interrupts: "Mac line one, Mac"]

JS: How come Mac comes in here?

LS: This is a brand new phone system I don't know how to work it. Anyway.

EL: Do you think that your children see Judaism-

[shuffling]

JS: Do you think any of your children what?

EL: Do they see it, I mean you grew up here and they grew up here.

JS: Yeah.

EL: But I'm curious if you feel like they see being Jewish differently than you did because they grew up as more of a minority than you did in Squirrel Hill.

LS: Well actually I'm not sure they noticed a difference because don't forget they were just part of the group that was here. So they just happened to be the Jewish kids, now did they have a problem? I'm sure they had their incidents but you know, nothing ever serious that you had to do anything about it. And you know, they always knew they were Jewish and they went to temple and they, like most of us, had to go, didn't want to go.

EL: Right.

LS: But I think that their childhood here was pretty good and better than those of us who had grown up in a predominantly Jewish area.

EL: How come?

LS: We didn't know what gentiles were. We grew up in Squirrel Hill, and we had a sales rep who was also not Jewish and he lived in and went to Taylor Allderdice and said, "I love that, we always had two holidays. I had yours and I had mine." And I think that was sort of just being in a small town, you were accepted but a lot of it had to depend on you. I mean you had to be part of the community, you just couldn't been all Jewish.

EL: That's very interesting. When you guys came back, by that point Tifereth Israel had moved over to this side of, to the end, they had built that big building.

LS: I think they were still down, yeah, it was new to us.

EL: And there was also, wasn't there an addition on Temple Israel around that time?

JS: Well we did put that Sunday School building up, I forget what year that was.

LS: I was, it was there when I came.

JS: Was it? I can't remember what year that was.

EL: And that's a lot of building.

JS: We both taught Sunday School.

EL: Was there a point where you could feel that the momentum in the Jewish community was starting to change?

JS: I didn't feel that until probably when I was president of the temple, actually a little before that. They did try to do a merger prior to when I was president of the temple.

EL: When were you president again?

JS: I don't remember.

EL: Okay. There was a merger attempt in the eighties, right?

JS: That's, well yeah.

EL: In the early eighties.

JS: And there was a class action lawsuit, Muraski, the competitor and the others, who was, well that's who was...

LS: Okay, I know, you can't name them first.

JS: Lee doesn't like to talk bad about anybody.

EL: It's all part of the public records.

JS: Yeah there was and then Neil Chessin was president of the temple before I was and I followed Neil and there was talk during Neil's presidency about merging and...

EL: What was motivating it? Was it a lack of members?

JS: Exactly, yeah. Money and members.

EL: It was money and members.

JS: I think so, yeah.

LS: I think it was more members, you know money, if you really needed to do it you could probably raise the money. We just started to run out of members, we didn't have a lot of members anymore and I think the synagogue had the same situation.

JS: I think they had more money than we did though, more capital. But the years, the two years I was president I had fundraisers almost every month.

EL: What kinds?

JS: Oh we had a casino night or you know, I'm a party person, not anymore I'm too old, but I used to love parties and we would do different kinds of fundraisers. Maybe have speakers in, do you know about our interfaith? Our Oneness?

EL: No.

JS: Prior to Rabbi Gruen's death he always did a pulpit exchange with the reverend of Northminster Church.

LS: John Sloat.

JS: Well before John Sloat it was the other minister, then John Sloat the minister continued it. Well from that pulpit exchange became what we called "Oneness".

LS: Well no, interfaith. So we would have a seder up at Northminster and Agape or seder, whatever you want to call it. And they would come to Temple Israel for High Holiday observance and we would just do things like that with our interfaith and we'd have meetings that ultimately developed into what's called "Oneness" and Oneness we would get speakers from various places, the guy in McKeesport, you know with the cute accent.

EL: Schiff?

JS: Yeah, we had him a couple times. We had a fellow from Youngstown College, Youngstown University, Bache. Was his name Bache?

LS: Bache, he's uh...

JS: A philo-

LS: Which was really interesting.

JS: Oneness was not...

LS: It was different.

JS: It was a little surreal but it was real, it was really interesting. It really, actually what had happened when we became Oneness, we have a lot of friends, Asian friends, and of course they believe in reincarnation, and Reverend Sloat sort of does too, his daughter is married to a Jewish guy from Philadelphia. But anyhow, Rabbi Gruen at this point was gone, but we would have different speakers speak on various things and this Chris Bache from Youngstown University, I don't know if he was a philosophy professor or what, but he really had some unusual-

LS: Some far out stuff, but it was really interesting.

JS: It was interesting and somewhat believable.

EL: Huh.

JS: Yeah.

EL: So the idea was just to reach out and learn about...

JS: Every faith. We had members of the Bahai faith, members of Christians, Catholics, Methodists, Jewish, all... Hindu, we had Hindu.

LS: It wasn't a religious thing per say.

JS: And we had, what's, Tao is Buddhist. It was really interesting.

EL: So that was something you organized as president?

JS: I didn't organize it, no. Actually it grew out of this pulpit exchange that Rabbi Gruen and Northminster had.

EL: So the merger happens in 1995, right?

JS: Mhm.

EL: Were you guys in favor of that?

JS: I think we, I was never in favor of it.

EL: Of the merger?

JS: I was never.

EL: How come?

LS: She's too Reformed. [laughter]

EL: [laughter]

JS: I was just never in favor of it. I can't say why.

EL: Okay, that's fine.

LS: Now I didn't have a problem.

JS: He didn't, well he came from-

LS: Because if you don't do it, you're out of business.

JS: He was, he was thinking of it from the business end of it, but you also came from a Conservative congregation. We're really intermarried. [laughter]

LS: Yeah but I didn't go there anymore and I go here.

JS: We're really intermarried. No, I wasn't in favor, but we already weren't using the Union Prayer Book which was my, was a disappointment to me, but I didn't want to merge, no, but I realized it had to happen. And so I only go on the High Holidays, I rarely go. We had, a couple times, we had that Howard Jaffee come in, is that who it was? No, what was the guy?

LS: The guy went to Chicago.

JS: He moved, the rabbi that went to Chicago, do you know who I mean?

LS: Oh, I can't think of his name.

JS: He was excellent. I would come, I would go when he was there. But nobody else has inspired me.

EL: You have three children, is that right?

JS: Mhm.

EL: And where did they go to school?

JS: Rob went to W&J, Rick went to Dartmouth and Hershey Medical Center, whatever it is, and Randy went to Pitt School of Engineering.

EL: And one came back to New Castle.

LS: Randy.

EL: Randy.

JS: He got a masters in business and came back.

EL: Was there ever an expectation that the others would or was...

LS: Yeah the older one was here.

JS: For a little bit, yeah.

LS: His avocation was fireworks. He worked for Zambelli.

EL: Oh yeah.

LS: And yeah was really instrumental in reestablishing pyrotechnics, he and Steven were good friends and he was there when they got their start and he was a shooter for them. Licensed and everything. And he was, in 1994, I think, in Annapolis, Maryland, he got blown up in a defective fireworks incident and has really been limited since then. And he and his wife, he married a non-Jewish woman, and down the line they decided to move to Israel and that's where they live.

EL: Huh.

LS: She is so religious.

JS: We're not even Jewish in her eyes. [laughter]

LS: I mean she really, really is into-

EL: Wait, she converted and then became very religious.

LS: Oh absolutely, the whole McCoy you know.

JS: Oh she did, she loves it.

LS: And you know they live there and she works and he's limited to what he can do, but he does the best he can.

EL: Did any of the kids in New Castle of your kids' generation come back? Does that make sense?

JS: I don't think so. Bretons, no.

LS: Marlin, they're older.

JS: They're older.

LS: The Breton boys, no, I don't think any of them are here.

EL: Was it because there was a lack of opportunity here or because they could-?

LS: Well most of the people came from either professionals or family businesses.

JS: If that had a family business some of them came back, but I don't think any in...

LS: Sidney's here. Sid Shenkan is here.

JS: And his son Marcus.

LS: But there weren't...

JS: They're younger.

LS: They weren't contemporaries of our kids. You know, they're kids are gone.

EL: And when I spoke to Sid he said that his kids and their classmates could go anywhere and do anything so there was no reason for them to stay.

JS: Well ours could as well. Rick happened to do his, he went to Hershey Medical Center but then he did his five years of general surgery at Maine Medical in Portland and did three years of trauma plastics at Worcester, UMass at Worcester. And he liked the New England area, he loved Maine, but then he decided to settle in Boston and that's where he is.

EL: Well is there anything else we didn't discuss?

JS: Well I don't know if this means anything, I went back to, when before my dad passed away...

LS: Do you want current or old?

EL: Both.

LS: I'll give you a current interesting.

JS: Oh I know what you're going to tell him.

LS: We go to Florida, you know spend some time in Florida, and have met over the years a family where the guy's name is Sam Klafter, so through a lot of cajoling Judy finally called him on the phone and she says you know I'm from the Klafter family and my great-uncle was Sam Klafter and of course you want to see if there is any relationship, which there was not. They came from the same area of Europe, but it was not. A year or so later, and we made friends, you know we'd visit, and then we got an email, Judy got an email from [unintelligible] says, you know we met a guy whose name is Klafter, and when we met him he came to get some kind of reward, he looks up people with the same name too to see if there's a relationship, and he said his father told him their family came to eastern Ohio, western Pennsylvania way back when and opened these tobacco stores and she said I know exactly who that is. Put Judy in touch with the guy and here they are cousins, but the more interesting this is he's the president of Tel Aviv University, his name is Joseph Klafter has a relation-

JS: His grandfather was a brother to my grandmother and Sam Klafter and Philip Klafter.

EL: Small world.

JS: My father would be rolling over because he thought they were all killed, my father's sister and family all were killed as far as he knew.

LS: In the war.

JS: During the war in the concentration camps. And he tried through the war to keep in touch through the Red Cross but he would have thought this whole family was gone too, and here Joseph Klafter's father, who would be my father's cousin, in fact, Joseph Klafter sent us a letter that my dad had written in German to his father in 1941. July 4, 1941.

LS: On company letterhead.

JS: It had Sam Klafter, 11 North Mill Street, New Castle, Pa. He sent me a copy of this letter. And my father had written because his father, whose name was Baruch, was coming to New Castle to visit the family, and my father wrote in German, you know, looking forward to it and so forth and so on and so his, Baruch's father was Abraham Klafter, who was the brother of the other Klaufers.

EL: Huh. Do you have any idea how that side of the family survived?

JS: Yes, he told me his father, I started to tell you this and I got sidetracked. His father, his grandfather told his father, he wasn't born yet, he wasn't born until 1945, his father, grandfather said I want you out of here, out of Austria, I want you to go to the Palestine territory and so they did and that's the only reason they survived.

EL: Wow.

JS: The grandfather was going to join them but he never made it. But the father, who lived to be ninety-one, Joseph, who is now seventy-one and his wife Lorette, and they have two children.

LS: Now, as an addendum, we met Joseph, Yossi they call him, in New York. He had to go there for whatever so Judy and I went up there and spent time and we were invited to family, Klafter family that live in Brooklyn, from the real...

EL: Crown Heights.

LS: Yeah, real religious, the black suits and everything. Anyways we went to the house and met, there must have been about thirty kids and the adults and it was really interesting because you talked to the woman that lived under the floorboards.

JS: The one cousin, that's who Joseph, she would have been a cousin to my dad, to Joseph, she lived under the floorboards during the war. She came here, I forget what year she said she came here, she's about seventy-some now, but she came here I think she was about nine years old, she couldn't stand up straight. You should see her, she's beautiful,

nice and straight, and she had five children, five girls, and they all have five or more children, and these are all the kids. We were there during Sukkos last year.

LS: You know we sat in the sukkah, we just didn't do it.

JS: He thinks we're their project. [laughter]

LS: [laughter] I think we're the project, they're trying to get us to be more religious. I mean a really funny thing, they were all in their black suits and clothes and here Yossi and I are in a pair of khakis and striped shirt and he's dressed the same way.

JS: And he looks like my father, that's my father.

EL: In the hat?

JS: Uh huh.

LS: They couldn't have been nicer, they were really, you know it's family and you take what you get, you know.

JS: They all wear wigs, the women.

EL: Yeah.

JS: One of them is a wig maker, one of them is an accountant, teachers, they all have nice professions. They're bright people.

LS: And the kids were something. No TVs, you know.

JS: Really beautifully behaved children.

LS: They all went into the sukkah, they're doing their stuff you know.

JS: It was a really nice experience.

EL: Yeah. Is there anything else?

JS: Well I don't know if this makes any sense of not, I was, my dad I told you passed away in 1963 and he took ninety-nine percent of the business away in his head so Lee was left here, he was wiping floors, sweeping floors, he was a glorified stock boy.

LS: That's alright, you've gotta pay your dues.

JS: My dad had to, you know, he was from the old school. There was one funny thing here I think the day, one day you were talking about the Pirates, they were in the lead or something, they were going to win the tournament.

LS: [laughter] That's when-

JS: And he said, "Oh my gosh."

LS: When he hit the home run, Mazerowski, so he didn't know sports, and I was down below and I said, "Hey what happened?" and he says, "They made a touchdown."
[laughter]

JS: [laughter]

LS: So I had, I really laughed. You know just to add a little bit, living in a small town, even as a Jew, is not bad, it's pretty good in fact. It depends what you're like, you know. If you want to be off to the side and be the Jewish family, but if you want to be part of the community, very easily done. And I could say, you know, Judy has been involved in many, many things and me, I, they came and asked me to run for the school board, go figure, you know, didn't have any Jewish guys.

EL: And you did?

LS: I did and I won and you know what I became?

EL: What?

LS: The treasurer. [laughter] And the left-handed compliment, I really liked when I was done, it was on ten years, a woman said to me, she says, "You know I always felt good because I know with you our money was safe." [laughter] And we've been involved with the hospital and Randy was involved. Randy is the president of the YMCA.

EL: [laughter]

JS: The first Jewish president.

LS: So small communities are really pretty open, and as a Jew I think that we give exposure, we get dehorned, you know what I'm saying to you?

EL: By being around?

LS: By being here and they see that you're, hey, you're just what you are and there's nothing different about you, you have a family, and work, and you raise your kids.

JS: You try to live a respectable life. And I was homecoming queen in 1952. [laughter]

LS: Yeah it's been an interesting, I have no complaints, I don't think any of us do, you know, it's what you make of it.

EL: Yeah. Well we can add these to the record if you want to make copies.

LS: What else are you looking for?

JS: Oh I can make copies.

EL: Okay. Well thank you both so much.

JS: Well thank you for coming out.

LS: Yeah, I don't know if we gave what you wanted.

EL: Absolutely. It's exactly what I wanted.

END OF INTERVIEW