

**Transcript of Interview with Marsha Mazer  
Small Town Jewish History Project  
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Myrnie is Myrna Cohen Helinsky.

Transcription:

**Eric Lidji:** Today is September 3, 2015. This is the Small Town Jewish Oral History Project. I'm Eric Lidji, I'm talking to Marsha Mazer and we are in her home in Connellsville, and we are going to be talking about Uniontown a little bit and then Connellsville. So you grew up in Uniontown.

**Marsha Mazer:** I did.

EL: How did you, how did your family get to Uniontown?

MM: My father's parents, to the best of my knowledge, were in Pittsburgh that I know of. I don't know where, they're from Poland, well they to get here so at any rate they were.

EL: What were their names?

MM: Jacobson.

EL: Okay.

MM: Sarah and Nathan. Those were my parents, those were my father's parents.

EL: So they come to Pittsburgh.

MM: Mhm.

EL: From Poland.

MM: They came to Pittsburgh. You know, I think they might have been somewhere else in the United States first, I can't answer that. Merv was wonderful with that, I can't. And I know that there were four children and they were poor. And my father, who was phenomenal, didn't finish school but he was jerking sodas and selling newspapers on the corner when he was, you know, a young kid.

EL: In Pittsburgh.

MM: Mhm.

EL: And what's his name?

MM: Jack, his name was Jack.

EL: Jack Jacobson.

MM: Mhm.

EL: Okay.

MM: And he passed away at age forty-eight, but he was [unclear]. And then he...

EL: Did he ever talk about that, that work he was doing?

MM: No, just mentioned that he, you know, that's what he was doing as a kid and didn't finish school.

EL: Because everyone was just raising money for the family.

MM: Right. Yeah. Yeah.

EL: Okay.

MM: They were poor. And he got involved with this company, Superior Auto Company. It was on Baum Boulevard, and he was working there. In parts and things like that. And he did a phenomenal job. They opened a Superior Auto in Uniontown and that's how we got to Uniontown. I was born there. My older sister, I'm one of seven, my older sister and brother were not, they were born in Pittsburgh. Then I wasn't and the next four, four were born. And my father, they opened the store and he was the manager for like a lot of years, probably twenty-five, and he just had a fabulous, you know, I don't want to say it that way, he was remarkable he did a wonderful job for them, made them a lot of money. Worked very hard, smoked two packs of Lucky Strikes every day, ended up killing him probably. And we had a nice life. We had, because of the store that had everything, parts and all, that had TVs and bicycles and all that, so we, not that he helped himself, but we were the first ones to get a television. One of the first people. And we had bicycles, and we had a great big house. We had three or four houses in different parts of Uniontown. Three that I remember. Then we moved to this big house in Uniontown and five bedrooms, two baths, whatever. And that's where I grew up. There was a school right in back where I finished up elementary, and then we went to two different schools for junior high and senior high. So I did all my schooling there. And then I went to West Virginia University, and I only stayed two years because my dad got sick and that's when he had his heart attack and whatever, so I came home. Came back and went to work downtown in Fayette Bank, Fayette National Bank and Trust Company, where I worked for several years, maybe six, seven. And then I went to Pittsburgh and got a job in a bank in Pittsburgh, Union National Bank on, down on Wood Street. And a woman from Uniontown introduced me to my husband, it was a blind date, and he came into Pittsburgh and took me to a Pirates game. And I said to myself, "That's the man I'm going to marry." He was so sweet. He was a sweet guy. So we went together for about a year and we were married within a year. Had two lovely children, a son, which I lost and a marvel of a daughter, right Myrnie?

**Myrna Helinsky:** Absolutely

MM: Who lives in California.

EL: Your mother.

MM: Mhm.

EL: How did your father meet your mother?

MM: I don't know.

EL: Was she, where was she from.

MM: I think we talked about that once, different parts of Pittsburgh.

EL: Okay. They met before he moved down here.

MM: Yeah. Oh yeah, they had children, there were two children, my brother and sister were born, were born in Pittsburgh.

EL: Okay, right. Right. What was her name?

MM: Her name was Levinson. Reba. Reba.

EL: Not Levinson, steel Levinson?

MM: No.

EL: Okay.

MM: I wish, that would be nice. And it was Reba. And her mother's name was Ella, and her father's name was Barney. And my grandfather was a great big tall six foot something guy. And little Ella was, you know, little Ella. And they had ten children.

EL: Wow. So your mother was one of ten.

MM: Mhm. She was one of ten children. My mother never worked and she, you know, paid a lot of attention to her kids, and so did I. I was appointed her top babysitter, whatever. And I was the official, you know, mhm. I don't want to tell you. And I had baby brother when I was thirteen, that was our last and I adored him. I was with him all the time. I took care of him pretty much. My mom had help in the house, too. She liked to go out too, play cards and this, and prance around. But she was sweet, you know, because she was my mother.

EL: What do you mean prance around?

MM: You know, she liked to go play cards or she like, not run around, prance around. And my father was just a gorgeous, handsome guy, and my mother was, you know, sweet, she liked to do

things. I don't think she liked to stay at home too much. She was a wonderful mother, she was a marvelous cook, we always had dinner on the table, but a lot of times I helped prepare it. And took the kids on Sunday, Saturday morning, to, we had two theaters in Uniontown, we had three. We had the Manos, the State Theater, and there was another one where I took them every Saturday morning to see the cowboys. You know, Roy Rogers and, who else, all those guys, it was a three, four hour thing on Saturday mornings. I took the three girls.

MH: That's almost like here.

MM: Yeah. And you know we'd watch the Lone Ranger, bah bah bah, and then each week there was a different, I liked it myself. And we'd get money to get a drink and then my mother would pack sandwiches, and you know it was like a whole day affair. And then my other, two of my sisters, told everyone I hit them, I smacked them. And I can't remember doing it. And my one sister, I was in charge of birthday parties, and we had a place called Hagen's, and Hagen's was like a creamery, they had sandwiches and all that kind of stuff and they sold ice cream and had sodas and all that. So they always had, they had this back table where the businessmen sat all the time they came in. So I reserved that table for one of my sister's birthdays. And I'll never forget as long as I live, someone brought a bowl of fish, in the water, and they dropped the bowl. Fish were swimming on Hagen's floor, stones and all kind of stuff, I thought, "Oh God." It's funny how you never forget, you don't forget something. But I had a good time with them. We had, I just lost my baby sister, first one to go, out of seven. I call that being blessed. The rest of the health of the rest of them isn't great, but you know, we're here.

EL: What was home like, home life?

MM: Home life was great. Yeah, I had, well the girls fought, and we shared bedrooms. And my sister, my oldest sister was out very young because she got married at eighteen. And her husband was twenty, he was like six years older. So she was out early on. And yeah, we had good parents. My father was not real strict, but strict. And we were allowed to date non-Jews because there weren't too many Jews to date. We could have got Morty Opall.

MM: Morty and I were in school together. We graduated together. He's a sweet guy. I know you know Morty. You met Morty and Rosalie?

EL: Yeah, I an interview with them.

MM: Yeah, they're sweet.

EL: Was that unusual that he let you guys date non-Jews?

MM: Um, probably. But we were in a small town we wouldn't have had a choice to do anything else. We wouldn't have been able to go to a dance, do nothing.

MH: That would be me. My husband's not Jewish.

MM: Yeah, so...

EL: Was there social activities for Jews, BBG or things like that?

MM: Mhm.

EL: Tell me about that.

MM: BBG was wonderful. And then after that was BBYO. But we had a big group of girls and we did a lot of things, went to a lot of places for I forget what you call them. Because I can remember my daughter, Laura, she did the same thing. And she wrote speeches, she was the whatever there was for the poetry or whatever. But we, at our community center, we had a bowling alley, it was a great big place. In fact, I was at a meeting there yesterday. The synagogue, you know, is just finished being sold.

RL: Right.

MM: That's all over with. But we used to go there and eat and bowl, and we just had a great time.

EL: There's a bowling alley in the community center?

MM: Mhm. A little one.

EL: Yeah.

MM: I don't know if there still is, but there was and we had a lot of fun. And then we had groups in from other places, Altoona, Pittsburgh, whatever. And we had big things and they had, we went different places in our group.

EL: So what was this, once a month or something?

MM: BBG and BBYO met more than once a month, I'd say probably every couple weeks.

EL: And the idea was that there weren't many Jewish kids in any one town, but if you put all the towns together...

MM: Right, right. Well, not, maybe we had a girl or two from Brownsville, Masontown, but mostly Uniontown, you know, when I was growing up. We had enough young people, but they weren't all people that we would have gone out with. So, not that they weren't nice, but age, you know age-wise it wouldn't have worked.

EL: Right. Was there a lot of interaction between Uniontown and Brownsville and Masontown and Connellsville?

MM: No, no. No, there wasn't. I mean we, some kids came from there, but not many. No, there was no interaction that I would say.

EL: So there were two synagogues in Uniontown, which one did you guys...

MM: One. One Temple. I was the Temple.

EL: You were Temple Israel.

MM: Mhm.

EL: Okay, that's interesting. I haven't, I don't know very much about Temple Israel.

MM: I was born and raised in Temple Israel. I mean, I wasn't born, we went to Sunday school there, I taught Sunday school there, my kids, Jack was bar mitzvahed there. Laura, as Myrnie said, we didn't do bat mitzvahs, and still don't. Well, I think Swimmer did one. He did a bat mitzvah. But we never had, but my boy, they went to Sunday school every Sunday.

EL: What, how did you end up at Temple Israel instead of Tree of Life?

MM: Because I was brought up in the Temple.

EL: Okay.

MM: My parents were there.

EL: What attracted them to the Reform rather than...

MM: Uhm, I can't answer that question.

EL: Okay.

MM: I think because they just felt more comfortable. Probably a big part of it was the Hebrew.

EL: The lack of Hebrew?

MM: Yeah. Yeah. I mean I took it in high school, maybe we had an hour every week or something and Rabbi Roeder, who was the most marvelous rabbi there ever was in this whole world, taught us Hebrew. Ludwig Roeder, he was, did you know him Myrnie?

MH: Sure, he married Susie.

MM: That's right. And married me, oh what a dream, what a dream.

EL: Ludwig, was he an immigrant?

MM: Mhm, mhm. And he was spectacular. So he would give us a little Hebrew lesson, I didn't know, I didn't know one thing from the other. I couldn't read a word of Hebrew today.

EL: What was spectacular about him?

MM: He was kind, he was gentle, he was sweet. Just, he's a little man, you know, glasses and he, what else could you say about him? He was just marvelous. He was just a marvelous man. And he was single, he was never married.

EL: What do you remember about the actual building itself?

MM: It's, it wasn't real, real big like the synagogue. In fact, the synagogue, did you see the synagogue? The temple was down on the next street with a dome, with a dome on top.

EL: Sort of with the red brick? Okay.

MM: It was just, you know like a nice, nice size main sanctuary. And small rooms for Sunday school and then we had assemblies downstairs in the whatever room you want to call it. And it was always kept up, nothing fabulous, but nice. And we had nice services. We had Friday night services, too. They had Saturday mornings. And I went very early, too. I went to our Friday night when I was really needed. As a kid I didn't love it, like Myrna, you know, Myrnie. I professed to be a marvelous Jew but I don't, didn't run for the services all the time. I will go for the High Holidays, I'm gonna probably go to Morgantown I think.

EL: Okay.

MM: And I'm gonna go with Myrna Giannopoulos, I think.

EL: Were you involved in any of the conversations about merging the two?

MM: My husband was. And people from the synagogue were not very nice, a couple in particular, they were not very nice. We might have had a better chance, we still would have problems. I don't know that we could still be viable, how'd you like that word?

MH: Very good.

MM: Wasn't that good?

MH: I'm impressed.

MM: I'm telling you I come up with a good one. We, you know, it might have ended up the same way.

EL: Were those conversations regular?

MM: No. No, Temple members got together with the synagogue maybe twice.

EL: Okay.

MM: And they just poo-pooed everything.

EL: But it came very close once, didn't it?

MM: Yeah. Mhm. But they poo-pooed everything so...

EL: You feel like it would have been a good thing?

MM: Uh huh. Oh sure, you know.

EL: Just because power in numbers.

MM: Yeah! I certainly did. And my husband was, you know he was very, my husband is a very, very good Jew. He loved it. He was every Saturday with you know, just loved it. Spoke Hebrew fluently. He was a great man, he was. And a good Jew. And the nice part, we're very lucky, we have two beautiful granddaughters, and I say that because they're mine, of course. And they both went to Sunday school in Manhattan Beach, they live in California, went to Sunday school, they both had wonderful bat mitzvahs and then they went to a class through senior high school, Jordan did, and I forget what she called it. Two men came in, in two separate rooms every Friday, Friday night, I think it was, I can't remember what she called it and they would discuss current affairs and things going on with Judaism, Jews, whatever. There was a name and they loved it, so they both went through high school to that. So I mean now Jordan's in college, this is her first time and I imagine she'll get involved...

MH: And she was in Israel.

MM: Yeah, she went to Israel twice. And she's been to Europe. She's something else. So we were lucky there. And Ralph felt very good about that.

EL: So let's go back a little bit.

MM: Mhm.

EL: You, you finish at WVU.

MM: I just went two years.

EL: Okay. And then did you, you went immediately to Pittsburgh from that?

MM: No, came home.

EL: Came home, and...

MM: Worked for about five or six years at home.

EL: And where was, where did you work?

MM: In a bank downtown, Fayette Bank.

EL: And was that just fortuitous or was there a reason why you went to the bank?

MM: No, well, yeah, I had to get money.

EL: But as opposed to something else. Was it just an opportunity?

MM: Well I knew some, yeah. I knew some people, and I worked, I had a good job there. I mean I was head bookkeeper at one point, and then I decided I wanted to go to Pittsburgh.

EL: This might be a silly question, but was it unusual for Jews to work at the bank?

MM: I was the only one.

EL: Okay.

MM: Oh, my sister, Nancy, did too. She worked for them years later. Yeah, she did too.

EL: So why did you end up going to Pittsburgh?

MM: Well, I think for some kind of social life. You know. My aunt, one of my aunts, my mother's sister, wanted me to come and stay with her. So I did, and I got a job in a bank on Walnut Street.

EL: Right. What street?

MM: At the time it was Western Pennsylvania National. On Walnut Street.

EL: Oh.

MM: Then I went to Wood Street.

EL: In Shadyside and then downtown.

MM: Mhm. Yeah, and then I met my husband and...

EL: Union National is the big...

MM: Uh huh. The biggie downtown on Wood Street, the corner of Fifth and Wood, I think.

EL: Okay.

MM: And I worked there two years and then I met my husband, came back to, came to Connellsville. So we were married fifty-two years.

EL: Was he, why did you come back to Connellsville?

MM: Because he bought a business. Children's store.

EL: So tell me a little bit more about that.

MM: He came way before me.

EL: Okay.

MM: I mean he was here eight years before he met me. He had a children's store.

EL: So tell me a little bit more about his story.

MM: Well he...

EL: Where did he grow up?

MM: In Ellwood City.

EL: Okay.

MM: And he was born in Pittsburgh, I don't know how his parents, his parents came over, you know they all came over one at a time and no one knew their ages. They, they didn't get birth certificates, I think they made them up. But my mother and father-in-law were both, came over, and they were, both spoke with an accent. And really sweet people. And bought this children's store in Ellwood City. So when Ralph graduated from Pitt, he went to the Army, and then he got out and was looking for something, and found that this store here was for sale. These people, Lottie and Bill Goldstone had the store and they sold it to Ralph. So we were married like eight years after he was here.

EL: Okay.

MM: And we lived in a small apartment complex for a couple years, and we built this house.

EL: You build this house.

MM: Mhm. Yeah.

EL: So tell me about Connellsville when you got here.

MM: Booming. Like Myrnie said, absolutely booming.

EL: And this is about what year are we talking?

MM: Lot of Jewish, '60, '60.

EL: 1960.

MM: Uh huh.

EL: And you were how old then?

MM: Twenty-five.

EL: Okay.

MM: I'm seventy-eight, did I do that right? I don't know. I think yeah, we were married in '60, the kids were born... I was married in '62... whatever. Because Laura, Jack when we moved in here Jack was ten, yeah that's about right.

EL: So even in 1960 it was booming still.

MM: Mhm, oh yeah.

EL: And what was the size of the...

MM: The restaurants were big, and we had a big, what did we have fifty Jewish people? Or more?

MH: At least.

MM: At least.

EL: In the...?

MM: In here, in our community. We had a blast. We had nice parties, we had, we went to the synagogue, had parties there. Or you know, our Temple downtown, we had parties there, we made Seder dinners there, we all got together. Peeled potatoes, made matzah balls, and all that was fun. Had a Hanukkah party for the kids, had a Purim party, we did a lot down there.

EL: Did you notice the difference between being in a community with a full-time rabbi and being in one without?

MM: Oh yeah.

EL: What's the difference?

MM: Well there's no one, you know, there's not a rabbi around to, you know if you need someone to talk to or you know like, I always was, went to Rabbi Roeder, was always doing something with him. Talking to him, you ask him, yeah there's someone there very definitely.

EL: Was there any upside to not having a full-time rabbi?

MM: No.

EL: I ask because in Latrobe they said they felt like it made them stronger as a community because they kind of had to do it on their own.

MM: Yeah, well that could be.

EL: Okay. Did you know Rabbi Sion, at all?

MM: Uh uh.

EL: Was that his name?

MM: Uh uh.

EL: Or Rabbi Sion David.

MM: Oh yes, very well, sure. He was our rabbi. He bar mitzvahed my son.

EL: So he was after, he was after Rabbi Roeder?

MM: Oh yeah.

MH: Oh yeah.

MM: Oh many, many, many, many years. We had a couple rabbis between that. Yeah, he bar mitzvahed my son.

MH: And he married me.

MM: Yeah, married Myrnie. He had the confirmation class, yeah. He was around for all, in fact, he just left here. He just left Uniontown maybe six months ago.

MH: Oh, we didn't know that.

MM: Mhm, he moved to Pittsburgh. Yup.

EL: When did Temple Israel close?

MM: Oh, I couldn't give you a date. I would say eight, ten years ago?

EL: And did a lot of those families migrate over, or did they just...

MM: They kept the Temple. They got a room in the community center.

EL: So the congregation remained, but the synagogue closed.

MM: Mhm. No, the Temple. The Temple closed and the synagogue-

EL: Right, sorry.

MM: Same with, well now it's going to be the same with the synagogue, but then they just kept their own.

EL: The building closed but the congregation....

MM: Right. They had a little congregation and they had a rabbi come once a month. And they had nice services, I think I went to one. And they had, you know a little room in the community center, that's where the synagogue is now. I was at a meeting there yesterday. And I don't know how long that'll last because they're selling and they have to sell the community center.

EL: Right.

MM: So...

EL: So you maintained ties in Uniontown even though you were living here.

MM: Oh yeah. First of all you could go to the YMCA there, and I've taken a water aerobics course there for eight years. I met a lot of lovely women. Not as lovely as my Myrnie, but lovely women. And Myrnie's sister is my best friend, she just had by..., she just had a heart surgery. And, yeah, you know.

EL: How were the Jews treated in Uniontown when you were growing up?

MM: Pretty good.

EL: Yeah?

MM: Yeah. I'd say good. I had a few incidents in school, even into high school. And yeah, naturally you don't like that, it makes you feel like hell. My kids had it here.

EL: They did...

MM: Did you ever have it here? Oh yeah, you said, oh yeah.

MH: We did have one problem here.

MM: Which one was that, with the hand?

MH: Yeah, that. [unclear] up at the...

EL: What's the hand?

MM: Well... Start that and then I can finish it, I forget.

MH: It was a certain teacher. We had a member of the congregation that was a teacher at the high school who, it's all hearsay story, I don't know if you want that recorded or not?

MM: Yeah it's alright.

MH: And I get a phone call, why I got a phone call, still to this day I don't know, from this person. Telling me that a fellow teacher, in the teachers' lounge, had made a comment that Hitler had the right idea for the perfect society. Okay? And just by that and her way that she addressed different children in the school, you know, class-wise, not class by class by class by poor rich, et cetera, class. And the woman that we know in our congregation for some reason didn't want to address it, and I said, you know at this time being a young and single person, what do you want me to do? As I told you before, you know, I get a little infuriated. So I said, well, I called, actually I called, his name was Gabor, it was the anti-defamation league, who really didn't want anything to do with it.

MM: I called them once, too, and they did, they did nothing.

MH: No they didn't, they didn't want to address it at all. So I wound up talking to, I think, either the superintendent of schools or the principal and you know, to address it and, of course, the woman that we're talking about claimed that, you know, basically it didn't happen. And we just had another incident, Marsha and I, this was probably thirty, forty years ago, at least, but we just in the last couple years had a little incident with this woman's husband. It was very strange. Who wanted to write the history, he was also a retired school teacher, the history of the Jews in town. And he was getting a grant from some organization, he wanted to apply for a grant from a certain organization to do this, and I'm, and his conversation with me left a lot to be desired. It was very derogatory, it was terrible. But I...

MM: He said, "I'm part Jew!"

MH: A Jew is a word, he said, "I have Jew blood." I said, "Excuse me?"

MM: And he said to me, I said yeah, I said, "We don't say Jew, we say Jewish."

MH: I said, "Excuse me, I find that to be a little derogatory." You know, and then he gave an analogy of somebody's cousin that could look like a Jew because they wore glasses and had a big nose. Seriously. And I said, you know, I think, I can't remember the exact words that I said,

but basically ended the conversation. And then we all had a little conference together, and that never happened of course.

MM: What a...

MH: Yeah. It was, it was...

EL: Very unusual.

MH: [unclear] to say the least.

MM: This time, I mean, this time in our lives...

MH: It was the most derogatory conversation I have ever had with a person, ever. And...

MM: ...look like a Jew with a big nose and glasses.

MH: Yeah, mhm.

EL: So it sounds like a few incidents, but maybe limited to certain...

MM: Oh yes, oh yes.

MH: It was husband and wife, it was the same....

MM: These people, it's the same family. Just crackpots.

MH: It was the same family, they're crackpots, they're both school teachers, does that scare you?

MM: Yeah, so we've had things.

MH: Yeah, but we've addressed them.

MM: We've not, we've not gone without any.

MH: No, we've not, but we've kind of...

MM: Yeah we've...

MH: Taken care of it.

MM: Yeah, we take care of things.

MH: Between Marsha and I, we, we are both very quiet people.

MM: Mhm, until it comes to something about Jew, I mean Jewish.

MH: And then don't mess with us.

MM: Uh uh.

EL: So Marsha, you had mentioned your children.

MM: Mhm.

EL: So what were the differences between how you grew up and how your children grew up?

MM: You know what I don't think there was a whole lot, really. They had a good home here. And you know, I didn't go to work until Laura was a senior in high school. And then she finished college, and, of course, Jack then passed in '03. He had a massive heart attack. And you know he also smoked three packs of cigarettes a day, drank all kinds of black coffee, did a few drugs here and there, you know did a drug there and there and here and there towards the end. But Laura, you know, went on to school, but I'd say they had a happy childhood, pretty much like mine.

EL: And Jewishly, was it a smaller group of people by the time that they were growing up than when you were growing up? Or was it about the same?

MM: No, we had more, I think we had more people.

MH: There were more children than any other [unclear].

MM: Yeah, more children, we had a lot of children.

EL: Was that, is it, are the numbers in both cases so small that it wasn't any particularly harder for you or for them, it was the same?

MM: I'd say it was about the same. Yeah, about the same.

EL: When did Connellsville start to noticeably shrink?

MM: You mean, well, you mean...

EL: The town and the community.

MM: The whole town. What with Anchor? Myrnie? With Anchor closing do you think?

MH: I think it started before that.

MM: Yeah.

MH: Don't forget Rack Engineering closed.

MM: That's right.

MH: And a lot of the other places.

MM: What year was that, do you remember?

MH: I have no idea. Probably starting in the seventies and...

MM: I don't know either. Yeah because we had a lot of, of well like, you're right, Rack Engineering. And then that other....

MH: Anchor alone employed probably sixteen, eighteen hundred people at one time. You know, there was a manufacturing place on the west side.

MM: And there was something else too, but I can't, we had people started leaving then to get jobs. And then, a lot of the younger people went to college and didn't come back.

MH: Right. All of the younger.

MM: All of the younger people.

MH: All of them, nobody stayed.

MM: Nobody came back. Why come back here?

EL: Right. Because there was no opportunities.

MM: No!

MH: No.

MM: No, especially the Jewish people because they, there was nothing for them by that time unless they were, very few of our kids, if any, came back.

MH: None. None of them.

MM: You're right.

EL: When did the Connellsville synagogue close?

MM: I don't know.

MH: It's in those papers.

MM: It's been awhile.

MH: It's in the papers.

MM: It's been a good while, Eric.

EL: Okay.

MM: It's been a long time, twenty years at least?

MH: Oh more than that maybe.

MM: More than that I think even.

EL: And where did those families go?

MM: You know...

MH: Scattered everywhere.

MM: Yeah, everywhere. Like my friends, when my friends left they went to Florida.

MH: Right.

MM: California, you know, most of those, New York and then, where the kids went to school, soon as they got jobs and the parents you know, moved closer. So no one bunch went one place.

EL: Did you ever consider leaving?

MM: Uh, no.

EL: How come?

MM: Because we had a very sick young man, and he had all his doctors, all his this, all his that. I would have never moved. I would have never moved and taken him, and I would have never moved and started all over again, because we worked too hard at it with the hospitals and the doctors. And our daughter wanted us to move to California at one point, but her children, you know were growing up, and if it were me to go out and they were younger, I would have gone in a minute. But they don't need me, Jordan's in college and Barry's in tenth grade and she's busy with tennis and this and that, so you know, they didn't need me. And I wouldn't live with her, couldn't afford to live there. And I have my, too, have my little round of doctors and this and that.

MH: And your friends.

MM: And my friends and certainly that's the number one. And I just didn't want to leave.

EL: When did it become clear that Uniontown was closing? Was going to have to close?

MM: Oh, yeah I don't know Eric. You know, when Temple decided, they just did it. They had to. They didn't have enough money to keep going. And us, we had too many, you know people, money, but no one came.

EL: That's common in small towns.

MM: People, I mean money, lots of it. They synagogue has lots of money. And they're very generous and giving and all that, it's not like they're hoarding it, but we have a beautiful cemetery and a lot of it is that. For endowment and this and that, so, no, just nobody came. Saturday morning you were lucky to get a minyan. So that got to be old. And then we didn't have a rabbi, and that's what did us in because the last two, the last two rabbis, one died and then the other one wasn't a rabbi but he was a, he came from one of the colleges in Pittsburgh. And he was in an accident and so there was no one there. And then the Opalls are really terrific, wonderful Jews, Jewish, Jew, and they've been conducting services, but I don't know that they get ten there. I couldn't go the last time, but I think one Saturday a month they're going to do it for two months.

EL: Is it disappointing to you that these small towns are shrinking and closing?

MM: You know what, no. I mean I'm here, I'm not going anywhere. I have great friends. And I keep busy. I do volunteer at the Salvation Army, this, that, I keep very busy. Now I'm very busy trying to find a place to live. But other than that, I'm not. Are you, Myrnie? I don't know, I say no.

MH: Am I...?

EL: Disappointed.

MH: In the...? Repeat that Eric.

EL: Are you disappointed that the small town synagogue, the small town Jewish communities have shrunk and the synagogues have closed?

MH: I don't know if disappointed is the word, I mean it's just the inevitable. You know, you kind of go with the flow.

MM: And it hurt when my friends left.

MH: But you know it wasn't like bang, it was over a period of time.

MM: Right. Right.

MH: It wasn't like we're going to do this tomorrow, it just little by little everybody was gone and then there were none.

EL: Alright, well, thank you both.

MM: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW