

# Helen Hirsch Transcript

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

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

BA: Now, was this an Orthodox – this was basically an Orthodox –

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

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

HH: I think it was Adath Jeshurun.

BA: Jeshurun? Yeah.

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

BA: [laughter] Definitely.

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

BA: Did they ever teach you any Hebrew?

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

BA: Where was she from?

HH: She was from M?awa, Poland. That's where my mother was born.

BA: And so this was your maternal grandmother?

HH: My maternal grandmother and she lived with us most of the time, and sometimes with her other daughter, Aunt Violet. And when she came to this country, she came with

Aunt Violet. And Aunt Violet was already married, and she brought with her a six-month-old child – her oldest child. She would go to the other and stay awhile, but mostly at our house. I remember her crocheting stockings and socks that we wore. She was really quite something.

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

HH: My mother came on her own earlier.

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

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

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

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

BA: Oh, my!

HH: But later on, I made that up. In the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade, I was chosen as

one of the pupils to do the three years work in two years. So at the age of twelve years old, I graduated grammar school. That was the Oliver Wendell Holmes School. Then I went to the Dorchester High School, which was then co-ed. At the age of sixteen, I graduated high school with honors. The other recollections – my father's mother came here. I didn't know her too well. She had come much earlier and then had gone back to Poland. Then she came in her later years. I have pictures of her in albums, of her and my other two grandmothers. What else can we say about the temples? Later, well, as I went out into the business world, I started work at sixteen years old, but I continued going to night school. I went to Boston University School of Accounting and Secretarial School. I had a very good business – I studied a business course at high school, so I was able to enter the second year of accounting. Then after a couple of years, I say, "This is enough of business, and all that." And I discovered I did have a bit of a voice. So I started studying at the New England Conservatory, and then later private teachers and all.

BA: But you were working while you were doing all this studying?

HH: Always working, always working.

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

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

*Landsleit*, they were called, and they helped each other. And they also had what they called a Lodge doctor. The people went in, paid him a fee or a very small fee. He delivered the babies, and he was known as the Lodge doctor. What else can I say? Oh, later on, I had an opportunity to join the choir of the Mishkan Tefila [Editor's Note: Congregation Mishkan Tefila is a Conservative synagogue in Brookline, MA]. There I stayed for about fourteen years.

BA: Now, when you joined the choir, did your family join Mishkan Tefila, too or –?

HH: They didn't join.

BA: I wondered.

HH: But they –

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

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

BA: By that time, had Mishkan Tefila become Conservative?

HH: It was a Conservative temple.

BA: Yes. It wasn't founded as Conservative?

HH: That I wouldn't know. I don't remember. It was Conservative at the time I was there.

BA: Yes, well, I know that it thinks that it is the descendant of Temple Israel, but I know that there was a congregation, Shari Tefila, and Mishkan Israel. I don't know which was which. Then they joined –

HH: Joined.

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

HH: I would say there were about fourteen.

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

HH: Approximately. And the soprano section – I just remembered two people, Pauline Klarfeld and somebody by the name of (Ganz?). Oh, and then Mary Wolfman?.

BA: Oh, Mary was in the choir, too?

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

BA: Very interesting.

HH: What they did was they went on –

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

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

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

HH: We had rehearsals on Thursday night, and then we attended the services on Friday night and Saturday mornings. I couldn't always go Saturday mornings because I was a working girl. Then I remember I always did the solo for the Naomi and Ruth song for *Shavuot*. That was my portion, and after – well, I stayed there at Temple Mishkan Tefila. Some of my recollections were – one time we had Eleanor Roosevelt come. We had a museum there, and she came to the museum and spoke. She was so charming, and I couldn't associate her with her pictures where she wasn't so good-looking. But here she was so wonderful.

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

HH: Yes.

BA: It was at that period, yes.

HH: So it was quite an evening at temple.

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

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

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

HH: Oh, yes, yes.

BA: Yes, so that the choirs did participate?

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

BA: Oh, really?

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

BA: Oh, my!

HH: At the age of fifteen.

BA: My!

HH: That was my first contact with him. That was a very interesting thing. What else? After I got married to my husband, who was already a member of Temple Israel, so I transferred my allegiance to Temple Israel. And there, of course, I knew Dr. (Eisner?) and his wife, (Anne?), who was the chair of the women's choral group. I joined that, and Morey joined a glee club. Morey never wanted to hold office, but he was always a worker. In those years, he belonged to the Brotherhood. He was a life member of Chautauqua and a Glee Club member. He would always do what he could for our Brotherhood.

BA: I remember you did a lot for Sisterhood.

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

BA: They were in Boston.

HH: Yes, well, he met –

BA: They moved to Brookline in 1928.

HH: Yes, well, he met his wife when they were about sixteen years old, and at the age of twenty-two, on his birthday, they were married. They remained members of Temple Ohabei Shalom. What else can I say?

BA: When you joined the temple after (Anne Eisner?) finished with the choral group, you became –

HH: When she finished, I became chair.

BA: I was going to say, I remember you're chairing it for –

HH: Yes, I was chair. We had Willem Frank. Do you remember the organist? He directed the group for a while. Then Mary came in, and she directed, and we had shows. Do you remember she put on shows? And Doris (Levy?) directed shows.

BA: Do you remember some of the shows that you did, or were they ones that people

wrote for the temple? Or was it a combination?

HH: Well, they wrote it, and Mary wrote quite a bit, and I think Doris did. We were in the shows, and I participated in all that. [laughter] And what else can we say of the times?

BA: Well, it's –

HH: [inaudible]

BA: Singing was one of your favorite things.

HH: Favorite things, yes.

BA: But you were also working, correct?

HH: I worked, yes –

BA: You worked doing business –

HH: – until I got married.

BA: How did you meet Morey?

HH: My employer.

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

HH: Morey had lost his wife, and he was out at one time, and my employer saw him out with his cousin and two women. He says, "Well, if he's going out with women," he says,

“I’m going to have him meet Helen.” So he did, and I thought he was a rather nice person, [laughter] and we got together. We were married. Of course, Irma was about fourteen years old at that time, and I knew nothing about how to bring up children. Nor did I know how to cook, because when I lived at home, my mother had my meals ready for me. But I learned. I said, “If you can read, you can cook.”

BA: [laughter]

HH: So I read recipes, and people gave me recipes. My employer’s wife lived in the same building. The first Friday, we spent the whole day cooking up the chicken, stuffing the neck, sewing it up, and chopping the liver – all day Friday [inaudible] this was really something. I became really proficient in cooking and baking. [laughter] What else can I say? I was always interested in religion, and anytime there were courses offered, I took part in them. I started Hebrew many times, but I couldn’t read them – never completely finished. Even when I moved to Florida, I even took a course at Temple Beth El. But, I don’t know, I never gave it enough time, I would say.

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

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

BA: Even though you didn’t –

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

BA: No, oh, heavens no!

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

BA: Well, let's see, you –

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

BA: Yes.

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

BA: Of course, you've been involved with your grandchildren.

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

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

HH: Right.

BA: Were they very observant or just –?

HH: They were not fanatically so.

BA: Yes.

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

BA: But she never taught you how to cook?

HH: Never. Never had time to. You see, I'd come home like six, seven o'clock at night. The meal was all done and ready. Of course, after I was married, I would help with the gefilte fish on the holidays. Then I would do it at her home, and then later at my home. We would have the seders and services at my home, and have the family – always have about twenty-two people. We'd always observe the holidays, and, as I think, Irma tries to do the same; Passover, Rosh Hashanah, and Yom Kippur.

BA: But you didn't feel that it had to be strictly Orthodox. What about kosher?

HH: I didn't. My husband was not –

BA: Kosher. [laughter]

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

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

HH: No, we lived in Brookline.

BA: Brookline. You were already living in Brookline.

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

BA: Did you consider going to college at all?

HH: Did I what?

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

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

BA: No, I know you –

HH: On my own. On my own.

BA: I knew you went to school, but I wondered if you –

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

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

HH: Oh, I was a bookkeeper at ten dollars a week, six days a week. After I was there a month, gave me a dollar raise.

BA: [laughter] Oh, that was nice!

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

BA: Coincidence.

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

BA: Oh, my!

HH: At the age of sixteen. At that time, I was given another raise, three dollars – fourteen dollars a week.

BA: They must have thought you were very capable.

HH: Oh, I was there a long time, until the Depression. This was a Dana Clothing Company, and there was a Dana Furniture Company in Taunton – related. The fourth person was Julius Glasser, Lester Glasser's father. Yes, Lester Glasser's father. So I knew that family quite well. There was Depression, and they went out of business. But we continued – it was a credit business, so there was an overlap of people owing money. So I would go to Moses Dana's house, and I would continue – they would go collecting the money and bring it, and I would record it and all that, until that ended. Then this friend of mine – we had these dear friends, Esther and Selma Levenberg. Selma became the secretary of the Ford Hall Forum. They were our neighbors and friends. She said, "I know

somebody who wants a bookkeeper.” So I did go – this was to the Siegel Shoe Company – Siegel Shoe and Arlace Company. Here too, I remained for a number of years until Lou Siegel, anyway, introduced me to Morey.

BA: And then you stopped working after you –?

HH: I stopped working. I worked for my husband, once in a while, without pay. [laughter] I retired from working, about, in October. I was going to get married. I got engaged in November, and in January, I got married. But Christmastime, we were very busy. Irma worked, and I worked, and I even had – my father would come in, and my brother, and my sister, and my sister-in-law. We all came in to help, Christmas time. My father was quite a – [inaudible] very much. He would stand at the door and greet the people, and my brother would do the wrapping of the packages. My sister and sister-in-law were good salespeople. I was never a good salesperson. I was in the office and doing the office work. The [inaudible] continued for many Christmases until my mother passed away, of course, at the age of seventy-five. My father and sister remained together. He died at the age of eighty-three, and she continued on. She was not too well, but she was bright – very bright. She came to work for Daniel Mordecai. So that was in Natick. We used to worry about her driving from – she was living in Brighton at that time – there to Natick. But she made it, and she loved that job and had a very good relationship with the company and their families. I understand he passed away recently. I saw it in the bulletin. I felt compelled to write to the son, but I said, “Well, he wouldn’t know me or remember me,” but I didn’t. What else would you want to know? Bring up thoughts. [laughter]

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

HH: Yes.

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

the Sisterhood.

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

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

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

BA: Well, it still exists.

HH: We did have it back. Then I did quite a bit for Hadassah. At that time – it was just after I married, and a woman in the building had called together a group of women, and she asked if I would have it in my house. I said, "Yes." [laughter] But after she had all these women, she wanted me to take it over. So we really worked for the Youth Aliyah section of it. I don't know if she called it *minyan*, but it had about 30 people. That's like three *minyans* in one. I became the treasurer of it, of our *minyan*. We had a study group. We met in women's houses. Later, I became the treasurer of Boston Youth Aliyah Movement. It was quite a job to do. I always remained interested in Hadassah – became a life member, made Irma a life member, and Audrey a life member.

BA: Faith, too?

HH: What?

BA: And Faith?

HH: No.

BA: Oh. [laughter]

HH: Only those who are interested in it.

BA: Oh, I see.

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

BA: Was your family Zionist?

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

BA: Well, I wondered, in those days, whether they were really interested –

HH: I don't know. I only knew in later years. So B'nai B'rith, Hadassah, Temple Israel, and other organizations as we went along. [laughter] I became a life member in at least twenty organizations, and, of course, then we became interested in Brandeis. I shouldn't forget that. That was one of the important things in our life. There was a meeting at the Hotel Kenmore, and I had received a notification in the mail. I said, "Morey, let's go." We went, and they raised money. I know it was a hundred dollars. And they asked for people to give more. People were giving large sums – thousands of dollars. But my dear Morey, he gave what he could. He got up, and he said, "I will give two thousand dollars." Well, that was the beginning. As time went on, you could pay that out in installments. Then they called a meeting. They really needed the money. You could pay it right away. So

that was okay. But then he became very active. He knew quite a few people there that were active and became the foster alumni and the beginners of, really, the nuts and bolts. He gave clocks for all the rooms. He gave a TV. As time went on, they used to have summer outings. They were really fundraising events, but they were enjoyable weekends. We'd go many places – Mount Washington, the Griswold. There were many places. Then he became Chairman of the Gift Committee at these outings. He worked very hard gathering the gifts, stamping the Brandeis insignia on everything, and raffles.

BA: And you were assisting him?

HH: What?

BA: You were assisting him?

HH: I was assisting him. We had some very nice times at those affairs. But he really worked hard. So, at one point, they honored him. I have in my apartment three photographs – black and white. It was a new media, at the time. He was presented these three framed pictures of the three chapels, of the castle, and some student administration building – things of that sort. Well, let me say further, at one of these outings, he didn't say anything to me, but somebody came over to congratulate me that he had promised 25,000 dollars for a science laboratory. But we were going to get a larger laboratory, one worth \$50,000, [laughter] because of his work in labor and interest at Brandeis. Well, that was in 1966 we dedicated that laboratory, which is still there in the Gerstenzang Building. Then, after a while, that was paid up, and Dr. Sacher invited us to come for lunch. He wants to talk over something. Well, Morey was not one to go for the lunches or anything like that, but we'll meet with him and see what he wants. He would like to do something more for the Hirsch family, something that will be remembered, and this and that. Well, we talked it over, and this and that, and I said, "Well, we'll establish music scholarships." His eyes lit up. We weren't asking for a building or anything that was tangible. His eyes lit

up, and he was very happy. So for many years, we assisted the scholarship in music. We got a letter saying this one was the recipient of the scholarship, and over the years – then he became a President's counselor, and then they honored him. He became a fellow of the university. As far as I was concerned, I was always at the side for all these things, but then, when the women's group started, there were eight women who were prominent in many organizations, for instance, (Gussy Katz?), who was prominent in B'nai B'rith and others. But I was right behind them. So I was –

BA: I was going to ask you if you were involved in –

HH: a charter member of the women's group. Of course, there I gave, too, to the libraries. I have at home a thing they gave me – framed. My name is supposed to be here, there, and every year I would give. And more or less, I give now only to the women's; I don't give to the main group. This year, I received a letter. This man, this Paul (Rosenstein?), wanted to visit with me. So I said, "Well, I don't want him to come and feel that I have to give a lot of money." He says, "No," he just wants to visit. He's going to visit a few people in Florida. So he came to my house, and I have many things in my apartment that are Brandeis things that show that we've given, and I have this man that came to my house. He saw that all over the apartment I have evidences of our interest in Brandeis. So he was interested in talking to me. I showed him around and showed photographs of Morey in the processional, in the graduations, and all that sort of thing. So he was very interested, and he said he would love to have me come to Brandeis this summer, and he would be happy to be my host for the day. But how can I get to Brandeis? [laughter] So anyway, that's bringing it up pretty well to date, I think. If there's anything you want to ask –

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

HH: His association with different things.

BA: You obviously did not have discrimination when you were looking for a job.

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

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

HH: No, I really didn't.

BA: You were lucky, from that point of view.

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

BA: I noticed that one of the things you had written about was living near Franklin Park and how it was perfectly safe to walk around and to do things.

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

BA: But you also walked at night, too.

HH: And at night.

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

HH: Yes, occasionally one person there had an automobile. [laughter] So we could get a  
–

BA: They allowed Conservative Jews to drive in those days?

HH: They did.

BA: Yes.

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

BA: That's true.

HH: That's the thing.

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

HH: Right, and another thing – of course, we lived on Talbot Avenue and [inaudible] Street. In winter, the Franklin Field was just across the street. They would flood it, and we would do our ice-skating. And we would have guests. All we'd do, put the skates on in the house, just walk across the car tracks, and we would do our ice-skating. Wonderful. In the winter, I played tennis on the field, and that was our recreation when I was young.

BA: Well, you've kept busy and –

HH: Yes, always had friends in school and friends –

BA: Did you have any hobbies?

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

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

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

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

HH: What?

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

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

BA: Do you still sing?

HH: Not now.

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

HH: Well, I sing along –

BA: Yes.

HH: – as best I can. Once in a while, somebody next to me will say, “Well, you have a nice voice.” [laughter] But I don’t do any singing. I used to, [inaudible]. And another thing, in those days every family I knew had a piano. Everybody took piano lessons.

BA: Did you?

HH: What?

BA: Did you take piano lessons?

HH: And I played quite well. My sister and brother took lessons. My brother took the least lessons, and he went into popular music. He entertained more than any of us with his piano and his singing. He sang well, too, and was in the Glee Club at Ohabei Shalom. He would lead his area, the tenors. [Recording paused.]

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

HH: No, I don’t really –

BA: Or show them how to sing?

HH: No, I really didn’t. Of course, Ashley studies the piano, and she always wants to play for me. In fact, the other night she said, “I’m going to play for you over the telephone.” And she played a piece [laughter] on the piano for me. So that’s it. Of course, Steven’s

oldest girl, Taryn, is studying the flute, and she's doing very nicely with that.

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

HH: No.

BA: No, just learned the piano –

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

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

HH: No, I don't think so.

BA: Or you liked it more as a hobby?

HH: I was just happy with what I was doing.

BA: It certainly was a very interesting –

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

BA: Did you take elocution?

HH: In school.

BA: Oh, it was in school. I didn't know that. Yes. Did they do plays in school?

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

BA: In the schools, did they put on plays or things like that?

HH: Yes, they did.

BA: So they did that, and you were in them?

HH: Yes, I was.

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

HH: Temple Israel. Probably.

BA: Well, it sounds like – go ahead.

HH: There were many times, working – [Recording paused.] – who became emcee in the White Mountains, the Catskills. On my vacations, a few of my vacations, I would go there, and she too would put on plays and singing. And so I would take part in that.

BA: Up in the White Mountains?

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

BA: Yes.

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

BA: No.

HH: No.

BA: New Hampshire.

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

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

HH: Oh, I had a few dates.

BA: But it wasn't something –?

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

BA: And you survived the Depression, obviously.

HH: We did.

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

HH: Well, thank you.