

A TEI Project

Interview of Abe Davidson

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SEVERAL

Today is November 10th, 2008. This is Michael Several. I am going to be interviewing Abe Davidson in connection with the PJTC oral history project. The first question I have how do you stay so fit?

DAVIDSON

Just plain dumb luck. That's all it could be. I do not take any special things.

SEVERAL

What is your date of birth and where were you born?

DAVIDSON

September 7th, 1912 New York, the Bronx. You want the address. 1632 Washington, at home not in the hospital.

SEVERAL

What generation was it your parents that came to the United States or was it your grandparents?

DAVIDSON

My parents.

SEVERAL

Where did they come from?

DAVIDSON

Warsaw, Poland.

SEVERAL

When did they come to the United States?

DAVIDSON

I am not 100% sure but it should be about I will try to figure for a minute, my sister was three years old, it is about 1905 or 1906.

SEVERAL

When your parents came here, were they married before they came?

DAVIDSON

Oh yes. My brother was born in Poland and my two sisters were born here.

SEVERAL

You came to the United States and you moved to the Bronx not to the lower east side.

DAVIDSON

Yes originally the east side before I was born but when I was born we lived in Bronx.

SEVERAL

Did both of your parents work or just your dad?

DAVIDSON

No, my parents had a store called the Dry Good Store, which was wearing a pair of sheets, blankets, socks and everything, dry goods.

SEVERAL

What did your dad do in Poland, was he also in dry goods?

DAVIDSON

No, he must have been a tailor.

SEVERAL

You were growing up in the Bronx, what was your Jewish education? It was in the Jewish community that you grew?

DAVIDSON

Jewish and Italian. I went to Hebrew School. All we did was learn to read.

SEVERAL

Hebrew or Yid...?

DAVIDSON

Hebrew

SEVERAL

Hebrew and any Jewish history or was it just?

DAVIDSON

No. I had plenty of Jewish history. My two sisters were sent to to learn Yiddish, to speak Yiddish. They spoke it very, very well. So did my parents. That is where I picked up my Yiddish is at home and girls at that time did not go to Hebrew school. They were not accepted I guess so they went to folkshula.

SEVERAL

What was a folkshula?

DAVIDSON

It was Yiddish. They learned Yiddish, history and the whole everything to do with Yiddish. Yiddish is a language.

SEVERAL

Were these functionally affiliated with synagogues or they were totally separate?

DAVIDSON

No not synagogues more with I say probably socialist union.

SEVERAL

Yeah. Yeah. How long did you live in the Bronx? We will start with there.

DAVIDSON

I lived there till about 1932-1933.

SEVERAL

Okay, so 20 years you lived there.

DAVIDSON

More than that. I was about 23 or 24 when I left.

SEVERAL

Okay, so it was mid 1930s that you left.

DAVIDSON

I moved to Arizona, Phoenix, not here, Phoenix.

SEVERAL

During the time you grew up in the Bronx that covers World War I, do you have any memories of World War I?

DAVIDSON

A little bit. I remember we had a store as I said and I remember my father writing the word peace on the window, it just about was over then when I really got to know and he had peace written over all the store windows.

SEVERAL

Did you go to a synagogue?

DAVIDSON

No except on holidays. My parent were not members of the shulas, as a matter of fact the place where we did go on holidays was not a synagogue it was a rented hall for the occasion.

SEVERAL

Okay. Did you belong to any clubs, was there like a socialist club that your parents belonged to or anything?

DAVIDSON

Zionist.

SEVERAL

Socialist Zionist.

DAVIDSON

Zionist very definitely.

SEVERAL

That was your parents, how about you?

DAVIDSON

The same.

SEVERAL

Really. How did they connect to being Jewish? I mean did they commemorate, how about Sabbaths?

DAVIDSON

No Sabbath Friday night and he had the store closed and open the store after sundown. We moved from that store to another in a very, very busy neighborhood and simply could not do it, all the stores were open but it is still closed Friday night.

SEVERAL

Okay, but opened on Saturday?

DAVIDSON

Yes.

SEVERAL

Did your family keep kosher?

DAVIDSON

Yes. I do not know a lot kosher, but kosher.

SEVERAL

The connection was being kosher was kind of a religious thing or what it more like a cultural thing?

DAVIDSON

Everybody did it, that was it, that was the thing.

SEVERAL

It sounds more like a cultural thing.

DAVIDSON

I remember one store that really wasn't stated on all of the windows it had buss out kosher meat and on one of the doors it had buss out, meat, meat, made it look like kosher meat but it was not, it was trying to pull a fast one on people.

SEVERAL

When you grew up were your friends both Jewish and non-Jewish?

DAVIDSON

Mostly Jewish. It was a Jewish neighborhood.

SEVERAL

When you mentioned Italian that meant

DAVIDSON

There were a lot of Italians and about 10 blocks away there was an Irish settlement. You had a little of everything.

SEVERAL

But your friends tended to be just the Jewish?

DAVIDSON

They were Jewish. Yes. In the school, they were mostly Jewish.

SEVERAL

How about for a seder ...Did you have a seder at home?

DAVIDSON

Of course every holiday we celebrated, may not have been orthodox but we celebrated every holiday.

SEVERAL

Did you have other relatives? aunts, uncles, cousins living in the Bronx?

DAVIDSON

In the Bronx, one in Brooklyn that's an outcast---laughing.

SEVERAL

Because he lived in Brooklyn?

DAVIDSON

That's right, that's a different country.

SEVERAL

Is that why your parents moved to the Bronx is because there were other family members there or was it?

DAVIDSON

In general that is a reason I guess we get away from east side and moved to a little better neighborhood.

SEVERAL

Is Washington Ave...? Is that near Jerome?

DAVIDSON

No Jerome is further deep going the opposite way from where we lived. We lived down Brooke Avenue, going to north, you'd hit Washington, going south you'd hit Jerome.

SEVERAL

Okay, Okay, Jerome is that where the L [train] used go over?

DAVIDSON

When we were there, the L was on Third Avenue. It was the Third Avenue L. My parents had a store on 169th street. The third avenue L had a stop on 169th that is where people went to work who came from work that is why my father moved there from the other store to a really busy area but Jerome Avenue and the Grand Concourse which was couple of blocks from Jerome that was a higher class, that was higher.

SEVERAL

Ruth lived on the Grand Concourse doing the cleaning.

DAVIDSON

No most of my relatives lived around that area.

SEVERAL

I remember as a kid, I mean he was born in Mount Kisco.

DAVIDSON

You are from New York?

SEVERAL

Yeah I was born in Mount Kisco, it was Westchester County and I remember on the street there was an L that went over this street, and it was low.

DAVIDSON

Jerome Ave. line was over the L. It was subway after it hit 149th street it went underground before that it was open L.

SEVERAL

I seem to recall my parents and grandparents getting kosher food there or something. I mean there was some draw that there were periodically go to Jerome Ave.

DAVIDSON

You did not live in the Bronx?

SEVERAL

No, No, I lived in upstate in Westchester County. Let me tell you. I mean we lived in Mount Kisco. I do not know if you remember What Is My Line that television show?

DAVIDSON

Yes.

SEVERAL

That whole panel lived in Mount Kisco,. [unclear], Dorothy.

DAVIDSON

Brooklyn in some spots had category 2.

SEVERAL

Growing up in New York during the teens and 20s do you recall any anti-Semitisms that you experienced?

DAVIDSON

Yes, some at school, some of the other kids fight, there would be fights. At that time while Halloween was different completely from what it is here. Halloween used to be a battle day. All kids whatever clothes they wore they turned them inside out because every kid had either a stick with chalk marked on it or ladies stocking filled with flower and bang each other and that is when the Irish came around too from Gooviner Place and there would be fights on Halloween not trick or treats.

SEVERAL

It sounds like an ethnic conflict between the Irish fighting, the Jewish were fighting the Italian also?

DAVIDSON

No they got along with the Italians.

SEVERAL

Oh they did.

DAVIDSON

We got a very well with them.

SEVERAL

What was your Jewish education, was Hebrew School, you were Bat Mitzvahed? What was that like? What was a Bat Mitzvah? What they have today?

DAVIDSON

No. After my Bat Mitzvah, they had some wine and something stronger after the Bat Mitzvah with some cookies or something and then the immediate family came to our house and that was the way we celebrated.

SEVERAL

No big party with friends?

DAVIDSON

I do not know maybe because they could not afford it or whatever but for whatever the reason no. I know I was bombarded with candy but not gifts. There were more people at the Bat Mitzvah itself than came to our house but no big party.

SEVERAL

What was the synagogue that the ceremony or the Bat Mitzvah was held in the synagogue? Correct.

DAVIDSON

Yes.

SEVERAL

Could you describe that where these large ones or the kind of like a little small show.

DAVIDSON

It was a small shula. No but my Bat Mitzvah held at the synagogue where I went to Hebrew School so it was large, much larger than the shula we attended when we did go to shula. It was a much larger and of course you had a balcony upstairs for the women and men downstairs and the same thing in the shula on holidays, it be separated by a curtain women and men. It was real orthodox although we were not orthodox.

SEVERAL

You had no choice.

DAVIDSON

That was it.

SEVERAL

The shula that you went to did not have a Hebrew classes then. Was the place that you went for your Hebrew instruction was that like a school for a number of shulas in the area?

DAVIDSON

Yeah it was called the [unclear] of the Bronx but it was affiliated with the shula itself.

SEVERAL

What was your secular education? You went to elementary school and what was that like. I mean was that primarily Jews going there?

DAVIDSON

Mostly Jews. As a matter of fact on Jewish holidays everybody was a Jew, all the Irish became Jews.

SEVERAL

For now I do not know in New York but you know in the city of Los Angeles there are so many Jewish teachers they just close the school district, so you also went to high school?

DAVIDSON

And then I became a dropout after high school.

SEVERAL

From high school but you did graduate from high school?

DAVIDSON

No. I became a dropped out.

SEVERAL

What high school did you go to?

DAVIDSON

In the Bronx James Monroe High School.

SEVERAL

Why did you drop out?

DAVIDSON

I do not know. I was just as a matter of fact when I was 13 at Bat Mitzvah I had completed two years of high school. I went to junior high and we had RA classes rapid advancement and I skipped two terms and I guess I can think back I think may be I was too young too young I think. I was 13 and all the kids in my class were 16 and at that time 13 and 16 were big. I do not know but I was tired of school.

SEVERAL

So you dropped out after your Bat Mitzvah?

DAVIDSON

After.

SEVERAL

What did you do?

DAVIDSON

I went to continuation school and I went to work.

SEVERAL

Where did you work?

DAVIDSON

I worked in a wholesales house for a while and then I became a dental technician.

SEVERAL

Where did you learn that trade?

DAVIDSON

At the laboratory itself, went there, started as an errand boy and learned to be a technician.

SEVERAL

I think like a dental technician now, is not that the person who cleans your teeth?

DAVIDSON

No, dental technician is a one who makes the plates and crowns and anything else that is put in you mouth. It is a laboratory work in a laboratory. It is a lab. We work for dentists.

SEVERAL

Okay, Okay did you ever go to college.

DAVIDSON

No, self education.

SEVERAL

Wow. After you dropped out what was your continuing involvement in the Jewish community? Did you continue to take classes?

DAVIDSON

No, did not change anything.

SEVERAL

So when you did become a dental technician about how old were you?

DAVIDSON

About 17, 18, I started then.

SEVERAL

Were you still living at home at that time?

DAVIDSON

Pardon.

SEVERAL

Were you still living at home?

DAVIDSON

Oh yeah. I lived at home all of the time.

SEVERAL

You had how many brothers and sisters?

DAVIDSON

Two sisters and one brother.

SEVERAL

Are you the oldest?

DAVIDSON

No. My brother was the oldest, one of the sisters was older and one was younger.

SEVERAL

It was the brother, who was born in Poland.

DAVIDSON

Yes.

SEVERAL

Your older sister and younger sister.

DAVIDSON

They were born here in the United States. As a matter of fact, my little sister was the first one born in a hospital.

SEVERAL

At what hospital was that do you remember?

DAVIDSON

I do not remember?

SEVERAL

Were you a member of any Jewish organizations?

DAVIDSON

We had clubs there. We had athletic club and not much.

SEVERAL

Was there like a YMCA or anything.

DAVIDSON

Not anywhere near us. There was one, it was a big one I think it was on 92nd street, it was The Y but nothing near us.

SEVERAL

So where did you have?

DAVIDSON

We played among ourselves and we had teams and we play other teams from different areas and different schools.

SEVERAL

What kind of teams?

DAVIDSON

Baseball, softball, basketball.

SEVERAL

So these teams were organized, right?

DAVIDSON

We had yes, we did on our own.

SEVERAL

So was not like pony league or anything like that.

DAVIDSON

No, no and yet we were pretty busy playing other the teams, who were in the same category, usually they were from a certain school, elementary school or a high school for meeting.

SEVERAL

So where you meet girls. I mean were they in the neighborhood?

DAVIDSON

All different places especially we'd go to the mountains during vacation.

SEVERAL

Did you do that for the entire summer?

DAVIDSON

No, just go for couple of weeks or a week, could not afford the summer.

SEVERAL

Did you go with your family or did you go?

DAVIDSON

Originally we went with the family but then I went my own with friends.

SEVERAL

Do you remember any of the places you went to in the Catskills, the names of any?

DAVIDSON

Well my memory ain't what it used to be. Yeah the aged are known for that memory lapses. Trying to think I remember some of the names of the hotels. We have one, Hotel Happiness, and then we went to went big hotel, my father and my two sisters and myself and we sat and ate and the second day we were there and they served something and I said to my father I think that is ham and he said no. He called the waiter and he said yes that is ham. This is a Jewish place, lets get the heck out of here. We just turned around and left and found another place that was kosher and yet as I said there was no stock but things like that. Yes you did not have to be orthodox but surprised and more surprised to me how I knew it was ham.

SEVERAL

May be you would be eating of that?

DAVIDSON

No, I was only a kid then about 10 years old.

SEVERAL

Did you go to any political clubs, any socialist clubs, were there are any socialist club in the Bronx when you were in your teens?

DAVIDSON

Oh there was one place called the Bronx House and they were clubs there and we did have a club leader for that only lasted about a year, but we did have that and went on a couple of outings within and put on some plays within and it was fun but yes I was, they had those that type of organizations

SEVERAL

That was during the 20s when you were a teenager?

DAVIDSON

Yes and even little older. Not in the 20s but up there close to it.

SEVERAL

And during this time, you would still if somebody were to ask you what scream of Judaism you would describe yourself as orthodox?

DAVIDSON

That is all I was. As far as we were concerned, that is all there was. It was not a reform or conservative around.

SEVERAL

In the 1930s when Hitler came to power, 1933 do you remember that?

DAVIDSON

Well I was in the army.

SEVERAL

In 1933?

DAVIDSON

No I got in the Army in 1941, but I remember that.

SEVERAL

Okay let's go back in 1933 when Hitler?

DAVIDSON

It was later than that.

SEVERAL

No he came in January of 1933. Do you remember?

DAVIDSON

Yes I remember that we read in a paper about it.

SEVERAL

I mean would concern you would remember any reaction?

DAVIDSON

We did not know, we never got reports on that, as a matter of fact, like I said I was in the Army. We went overseas, we went England and we would buy the paper there regularly and not one word about it in the papers. Not one word and as a matter of fact, we used to get the Yank magazine and weekly paper and no mention of it, no mention of it at all of the holocaust. No mention at all. Later on we thought about that.. this it is terrible.

SEVERAL

Now during the 1930s do you remember Franklin Roosevelt?

DAVIDSON

Oh yes I voted for him.

SEVERAL

As we enter a new depression. There was a lot of anti-Semitism during 1930s father Hoefflin, Henry Ford and so on, do you remember any of this anti-Semitism there was. What do you remember?

DAVIDSON

We would hear about and especially we hear about the German clubs The Bund, and knew all about that and what we do.

SEVERAL

Do you have any personal experience with any members of the Bund?

DAVIDSON

No.

SEVERAL

Now you lived in the Bronx to what the mid 30s? Then where did you move. Oh you moved to Arizona right. Why did you move to Arizona.

DAVIDSON

Okay, my brother's wife had to move out to Phoenix for the climate and at that time, I was working in the dental laboratory and we were out on strike and my brother was going to drive out with all his stuff to Arizona, I said I will go along with you so went along. I came back but then a year or two later, I just found out there was some place else besides New York.

SEVERAL

Where did you move to in Arizona?

DAVIDSON

Phoenix, out of Phoenix a little place called Sunny Slope, it is right about 8 miles out of Phoenix.

SEVERAL

So that must have been quite a change?

DAVIDSON

Oh yes definitely, definitely.

SEVERAL

Wow, it is mind boggling.

DAVIDSON

As a matter of fact, the first time I went out there, Phoenix and all the surrounding towns, Mason, Tempe, and Scottsdale, all the whole area, just 50,000 people. Now Phoenix alone is over a million, 50,000 people. In Glendale, there were about 10-12 towns around that area.

SEVERAL

Well it must have been quite a shock also being I mean urban eastern coming to a desert not having that urban density and also being Jewish. Was there a Jewish community?

DAVIDSON

Oh yeah there was, there was a Jews community. At that time, there were three temples in Phoenix. Well Phoenix was good size compared to the others, there were three temples but one really big one, where my brother and his wife joined.

SEVERAL

Was that orthodox or conservative?

DAVIDSON

It was more conservative. Yeah.

SEVERAL

And that is the one you also joined?

DAVIDSON

Yes.

SEVERAL

So this is, it is also you no longer had the neighborhood Jewish community around you that you had in the Bronx.

DAVIDSON

No there was a little bit of a Jewish area, not too much, it is scattered all over but in Phoenix but there was a Jewish area.

SEVERAL

So and that is where you moved and how did your affiliation or change in the sense, did you go to Friday night services.

DAVIDSON

They had Friday night services.

SEVERAL

But did you tend to go in Phoenix, well lets say did you go to Friday night service when you were still living in the Bronx.

DAVIDSON

No.

SEVERAL

Okay you moved to Phoenix, then you start going. How about keeping kosher?

DAVIDSON

She kept kosher, yes they were kosher butchers and yes she kept kosher, his wife, my brother's wife.

SEVERAL

So you lived with them?

DAVIDSON

For a while yes.

SEVERAL

And then you moved out to your own apartment or?

DAVIDSON

No actually I did live in apartment, a small apartment but then I got married there in Phoenix.

SEVERAL

And how did you meet your wife?

DAVIDSON

Well it was strange, she was a nurse, an RN but she was attending school and to become an RN in Phoenix at the Good Samaritan Hospital and a friend of mine, we had this store in Phoenix that sold drugs sundries and served coffee and beer and friend of mine brought her up to the place where we had the store and he introduced me to her and then he asked for beer. I told she is not old enough to have a beer. You had to be 21 at that time and eventually, she got the beer but that is the first time I met her.

SEVERAL

She was Jewish?

DAVIDSON

Yes Jewish and she was glad to meet Jewish people and she got along great with my brother and his wife.

SEVERAL

So where did you get married in Phoenix?

DAVIDSON

No that's a strange story too. She had an older sister and the older sister was not married and be bad bad thing for her to get married before her sister. They lived in Los Angeles so we went out of Phoenix out of their county because things that happened to Phoenix were published in LA, we went out of the county, got married by a JP and then after her sister got married, we got married again in Los Angeles with a Jewish ceremony.

SEVERAL

How long after your civil ceremony did you get married?

DAVIDSON

Oh not too long, her sister found some guy and they got married so.

SEVERAL

Do you remember where in Los Angeles you got married, what temple or?

DAVIDSON

No it was in a hall. Yeah we got married in a hall. Not in a temple. It was a big ceremony.

SEVERAL

Did your family come out for that?

DAVIDSON

As a matter of fact, the first time we got married, my family knew. Their family didn't. Nobody in their family knew and we kept it quiet and then folks back

home knew I was married already and I didn't want to put on to the expensive of comin out, we just got married.

SEVERAL

When you lived in Phoenix, did you go back to visit your parents anytime or?

DAVIDSON

To visit my parents? No. I went back quite a few times before I got married.

SEVERAL

Oh okay.

DAVIDSON

But after I got married, no because it was less than a year that I was married and I was in the service.

SEVERAL

So you got married in 1940 or so?

DAVIDSON

1941, I was in the service.

SEVERAL

Did your parents ever come out to visit you in Phoenix?

DAVIDSON

Yes they did. My mother. My father died when I was still 20, 21. My mother came up.

SEVERAL

Who took over the store when your dad died?

DAVIDSON

Well for a while, we did up without him and everybody chipped in and then later, I had the store and we decided to get rid of it, sell it because things were going bad anyway.

SEVERAL

So who supported your mom during that time when the store?

DAVIDSON

My sisters. And I sent some money too, we all did.

SEVERAL

Its the days before social security. In Phoenix, you went to Friday night services at the temple, did you have any other involvement in the temple? Did you participate in the governance, did you become a member of the board or any committees?

DAVIDSON

No.

SEVERAL

Do you remember Pearl Harbor day?

DAVIDSON

Yes.

SEVERAL

What do you remember about that, December 7, 1941.

DAVIDSON

Just what I read in the paper.

SEVERAL

Do you remember hearing it on the radio that day?

DAVIDSON

Yeah we heard the whole thing and Roosevelt's famous speech something about infamy and oh yes we heard it there and we knew eventually I would have to get in.

SEVERAL

Where were you in Phoenix, were you at home when you heard that?

DAVIDSON

Well I was married and living in Phoenix. There weren't too many healthy people in Phoenix. I came out, I came out with a health they are either TB or asthmatics and I was way down the list but they got me right away.

SEVERAL

On December 7, you were home. Do you remember what you were doing when you heard about it, I mean were you playing tennis, were you playing golf or did somebody come running into the house and say the Japanese have bombed Pearl Harbor.

DAVIDSON

No we would listen to the news everyday, no question about that. We always listen to the news, we got it on the radio. A day that long lives in infamy, is something similar.

SEVERAL

Where were you employed at when you were in Phoenix? What were you doing for...?

DAVIDSON

Or a couple of other things, I worked in a couple of stores, but they were all temporary things because we figured we weren't sure but we told we might move to LA, that's where all her family was and then I went into upholstery.

SEVERAL

In Phoenix?

DAVIDSON

Here.

SEVERAL

Oh okay.

DAVIDSON

I worked in printing, a friend, he had a print shop. We worked together.

SEVERAL

In Phoenix. Did you let's see okay, you were drafted in 1941, oh actually then you were drafted before the Japanese bombed?

DAVIDSON

No its when the war started.

SEVERAL

So it would be 42.

DAVIDSON

I was drafted and there were two other fellows, two other Jewish boys. We were all drafted at same times, they gave us 10 days to finish what we had to, finish up so on the 9th day, we enlisted in the air corps to get away from the infantry.

SEVERAL

So you were in Phoenix at this time still?

DAVIDSON

Yes.

SEVERAL

Okay so you were drafted in 42, was it early in the year or later in the year?

DAVIDSON

Oh in 41.

SEVERAL

Well the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor in December of 41.

DAVIDSON

So a couple of months later.

SEVERAL

Well that would be 42.

DAVIDSON

Yeah I got in the Army at 42.

SEVERAL

Okay so you went into the Army Air Force.

DAVIDSON

January 1942.

SEVERAL

Where were you stationed?

DAVIDSON

Fort Bliss originally, Texas, that's El Paso and then they sent us to Jackson, Mississippi.

SEVERAL

And what did you do in?

DAVIDSON

I worked in operations.

SEVERAL

Which means what?

DAVIDSON

Well we made up all the flight crews that would go on raids, kept all records, interrogated then afterwards, cole operations.

SEVERAL

Were you sent overseas?

DAVIDSON

Overseas 34 months.

SEVERAL

In Europe?

DAVIDSON

Europe. England, France, Belgium and Germany.

SEVERAL

You went first to UK, to England I guess what to handle the operations the 17 crews, what kind of, what air force were you assigned to? G8?

DAVIDSON

When we were in England, we were part of the 8th Air Force, after D-day, we became the 9th Air Force, all the big bombers, outfit was a medium bomb crew. We went overseas. The 8th Air Force was B-17s, bigger planes. They remained the 8th but they remained in England. They didn't go out of England and we went out, followed the troops so we were the 9th Air Force. There was no Air Force. We were the air corps. The army air corps. There was a navy air corp, marine air corps. There was no one air force.

SEVERAL

Did you after D-day, you went on to the continent to Belgium and France and then finally in Germany. How long after the E-day did you stay in Germany?

DAVIDSON

After the E, oh must have been about, well they sent me on a special deal to place called Camp Lucky Strike where we interviewed ramps. We covered our late military personnel, people who would be in jail, in the army in German camps. We had to interview them find out what happened to them and were they entitled to any decorations the whole thing because I was raisin hell, I wanted to get home and so they sent me there but it was interesting.

SEVERAL

How long were you in Germany after the war, when did you finally get discharged?

DAVIDSON

In Germany about three months.

SEVERAL

Were you discharged before the J-day or?

DAVIDSON

No after the J as a matter of fact we were afraid they are going to send us over there.

SEVERAL

But you were not sent there?

DAVIDSON

No they said that we might go to the CBI or whatever it was called.

SEVERAL

What was it like being a Jew in the army air corps during world war?

DAVIDSON

You had anti-Semitism oh yes.

SEVERAL

How was that, do you remember any incident?

DAVIDSON

With the other guys you know call you damn Jew so you call them a damn whatever but you could, there are little things.

SEVERAL

Did you practice your Judaism in any kind of formal way, I mean did you go to services?

DAVIDSON

Well the only time we did was pace us, we went to a saydor in Paris and as a matter of fact, at that saydor I met my brother-in-law who had been sent over and he came there too, he just come and that's about all we did. Rosh Hanna we'd do a little bit.

SEVERAL

Was there a Rabbi?

DAVIDSON

There was chaplains, Jewish chaplains.

SEVERAL

And where would you hold the services, was there just kind of a room somewhere or?

DAVIDSON

Whatever was handy.

SEVERAL

I mean did they have a torah for these do you remember?

DAVIDSON

I don't remember. May be, may be not. I don't know.

SEVERAL

How about foods, do they, if say you were really orthodox, you wanted kosher food, I mean?

DAVIDSON

You are out of luck.

SEVERAL

In terms of, now the seder thing you went to in Paris, was that a synagogue or was that?

DAVIDSON

No it was not a synagogue, there was a hall and they came from all over Europe, it was nice, oh a couple of times we went to different clubs as we get passes to go here and there, and one of them, it was a British outfit and we met, I forgot his name now, he became a real big shot in Israel, age, names especially, no it wasn't Herzog. I met him at this place anyway, it was a Jewish outfit, strictly Jewish club run by the British soldiers and we went there few times.

SEVERAL

So they had just a Jewish club, I mean they would not have that kind of thing today.

DAVIDSON

Yeah they had.

SEVERAL

Did they have like a club for blacks?

DAVIDSON

I doubt it.

SEVERAL

You were in Europe when the concentration camps were liberated. Do you recall learning about you know the extermination of the Jews in Europe, I mean you were in Europe when publicity came out, do you remember that?

DAVIDSON

We didn't hear too much about it really, I am saying the same thing. We didn't hear too much about it. Some of them, we weren't in the infantry and the infantry freed most of those camps that got to see but we didn't get too much information on it, it is strange.

SEVERAL

Yeah I know, I know. After so you were discharged from the army air corps in 1945, you came back to the United States and you came back to Phoenix?

DAVIDSON

No when I went overseas, my wife moved to LA where all her family was, when I signed out, that's where I came.

SEVERAL

Okay and where did you first live in Los Angeles.

DAVIDSON

First, when I got there, my wife was living with her sister and but then we got in an apartment up in City Terrace, first Boyle Heights and then City Terrace.

SEVERAL

Oh interesting. You are the first person we have interviewed who lived in that area.

DAVIDSON

Who?

SEVERAL

You.

DAVIDSON

Is that right?

SEVERAL

Yeah I mean.

DAVIDSON

Living in Boyle Heights as a matter of fact, my father in law at one time, he was president of the Breed Street Shul.

SEVERAL

Really?

DAVIDSON

Yeah so that is where I used to go for services in Breed Street Shul.

SEVERAL

When was the last you were in the Breed Street Shul?

DAVIDSON

Not too long after we got out of there.

SEVERAL

You know because they were attempting to restore it.

DAVIDSON

Yeah as a matter of fact I think, I don't remember who but one synagogue offered to buy it and reassemble it, something about that but oh yeah I know the Breed Street Shul well.

SEVERAL

So you said your father in law was the president. When was he the president do you recall?

DAVIDSON

Oh lets see 1945, must have been about '48 around '48 or '49.

SEVERAL

So when you came back to the United States, you moved to City Terrace, and you were a member in a Breed Street Shul.

DAVIDSON

I wasn't the member.

SEVERAL

Oh you weren't?

DAVIDSON

No. The whole family would go there for services.

SEVERAL

What for Rosh Ashanah, Yom Kippur?

DAVIDSON

holidays too.

SEVERAL

But then you go there Friday nights?

DAVIDSON

I went on once in a while, we would go once.

SEVERAL

Now that was orthodox wasn't that and..

DAVIDSON

They go Saturdays.

SEVERAL

Yeah.

DAVIDSON

Its right off of Brooklyn Ave.

SEVERAL

Right. How long did you live in City Terrace?

DAVIDSON

I say first we lived in Boyle Heights. We lived there for about two years and then about two years in City Terrace, then we moved to Alhambra.

SEVERAL

Oh okay. Was it you when you returned to the United States in 1945, what did you do for living?

DAVIDSON

I worked with my brother in law, he was in a upholstery business and then I opened my own shop.

SEVERAL

Where was that?

DAVIDSON

The first one I opened was in St. Gabriel and then we moved to Alhambra and then in Pasadena.

SEVERAL

So you opened up a shop in St. Gabriel before you moved to Alhambra.

DAVIDSON

No we lived in Alhambra at that time.

SEVERAL

Oh ok.

DAVIDSON

And we were long time members of the Alhambra synagogue.

SEVERAL

When you lived in Boyle Heights and City Terrace, did you do any teaching?

DAVIDSON
Teaching? No. That is when we started Debby oath, she went to Hebrew school there. You heard of Zev Yaroslavsky?

SEVERAL
Yeah.

DAVIDSON
His mother ran a Hebrew school.

SEVERAL
Where at the Breed Street?

DAVIDSON
City Terrace and that is where Debby started and that is when she got her introduction to Hebrew, that woman was terrific. She couldn't forget it.

SEVERAL
Really.

DAVIDSON
we went to his Bar Mitzvah.

SEVERAL
Deb's Bar Mitzvah?

DAVIDSON
Zev's but Debby, as a matter of fact, he taught here for a while.

SEVERAL
Right right.

DAVIDSON
So he and Debby, they know each other pretty well.

SEVERAL
So what school that Debby went to. Is Debby the oldest of your children?

DAVIDSON
Debby yeah. Debby and Michael.

SEVERAL
Did the school Debby went to, was that part of, that was not part of the Breed Street Shul.

DAVIDSON
No.

SEVERAL
That was a separate.

DAVIDSON
No the Hebrew school.

SEVERAL
It was a stand alone Hebrew school, wasn't affiliated with any synagogue.

DAVIDSON

No.
SEVERAL
Was it a private school then?
DAVIDSON
Yeah. It was run by Mrs. Yaroslavsky.
SEVERAL
Wow and what year was Debby born?
DAVIDSON
Which what?
SEVERAL
What year was Debby born?
DAVIDSON
Debby was born in '46.
SEVERAL
So lets say you moved to Alhambra around when 1950?
DAVIDSON
No much later than that. I said we spent at least 4-5 years in City Terrace.
SEVERAL
Oh okay.
DAVIDSON
Debby was about 7 or so when she started Mina Yaroslavky. That was her name Mina.
SEVERAL
Did you have any involvement in the Jewish community in City Terrace and Boyle Heights I mean did you... ?
DAVIDSON
No not there but we did in Alhambra.
SEVERAL
Okay. So when did you move, you moved to Alhambra when about 1955 or so or...?
DAVIDSON
Just about that, little early than that.
SEVERAL
And you joined the Alhambra temple?
DAVIDSON
Yes.
SEVERAL
What is that, is that a conservative?
DAVIDSON
Yes.
SEVERAL

So this is really the first time you have really been affiliated with conservative.
DAVIDSON

With any.

SEVERAL

What did you, what was your involvement in the synagogue, did you?

DAVIDSON

Oh I was a member of the, I was corresponding secretary once, I was also, like kids they went to Hebrew school and on Sundays, they go to the West Side to athletic club, the university of Judaism had that place at the Los Angeles athletic club, they had two floors and I would drive early, kids stayed at school on Sundays, that is before they built that whole thing. They were on Sunset Boulevard.

SEVERAL

I remember that.

DAVIDSON

But otherwise I was active in the temple.

SEVERAL

You were? Okay. Did you also, were you also involved in any of the education?

DAVIDSON

No.

SEVERAL

So you got involved in the governance and the board and the politics and things like that?

DAVIDSON

I would go to the meetings.

SEVERAL

How long were you a member of the Alhambra temple?

DAVIDSON

Alhambra temple? Until we moved to St. Gabriel. I mean to Arcadia.

SEVERAL

Oh Arcadia.

DAVIDSON

Till we moved there so we were there a long time.

SEVERAL

When did you move to Arcadia?

DAVIDSON

Years. Dates, my failing. Well first...

SEVERAL

Reagan president.

DAVIDSON

Well I am trying to figure something else out, we had a very very good rabbi there, rabbi Miller and he left, he went to become a rabbi in Long Beach and we stayed in Alhambra for a year, we didn't like the rabbi that came up so we joined Long Beach from Alhambra, we drove to Long Beach just for this Rabbi Miller and David Cane was the cantor, two terrific people but then we joined Arcadia later but I am trying to figure out the exact dates.

SEVERAL

So you were members of Alhambra briefly a year or two in Long Beach and then you were a member of the Arcadia temple?

DAVIDSON

Yeah. No we were never members of Arcadia.

SEVERAL

Oh you lived in Arcadia.

DAVIDSON

Yes. When we moved to Arcadia from Alhambra.

SEVERAL

I see.

DAVIDSON

As a matter of fact kids went to.. no, what are we talking about? Alhambra, we stayed in Alhambra, that's where the kids went to school. Debby and Mike both graduated from Alhambra High School.

SEVERAL

And I guess Michael was bar mitzvah, did Debby have a bat mitzvah?.

DAVIDSON

Yes, it wasn't really official. They still hadn't accepted it for girls to be called to the torah.

SEVERAL

Okay.

DAVIDSON

But she had a half torah.

SEVERAL

Was it on a Friday night?

DAVIDSON

Friday night yeah.

SEVERAL

So that would have been around 1959 or so. Things were no different here in 1959 I mean there were two girls that had a bat mitzvah in 1950 here but it was basically reading the half torah on a Friday night and you know, I don't think so.

DAVIDSON

But Mike had his bar mitzvah in Long Beach, as a matter of fact that is where Debby got married, but we wanted that rabbi, we were members there, she got married in Long Beach and we were only there for one year or so.

SEVERAL

So where did Debby and Michael get their Hebrew instruction, in Alhambra, there was a Hebrew school at the temple? Where did they get their Hebrew, their Jewish education, their formal Jewish education at Alhambra?

DAVIDSON

From mostly through Alhambra and they had a high school, she went to University of Judaism and then later on she went ahead when they had the new building where she got a degree teaching at University and as a matter of fact, he wasn't a principal here when I started, Betty Fishman, you know Betty Fishman?

SEVERAL

Yes.

DAVIDSON

She was the principal at the time when I first started here.

SEVERAL

Listen, I will get to that, after Long Beach, you then joined the Pasadena temple. Did you have any involvement when you joined, did you join any boards or become active like you were in Alhambra.

DAVIDSON

No. In Alhambra I did but not elsewhere.

SEVERAL

Okay. Do you remember who the rabbi was when you joined here?

DAVIDSON

Here?

SEVERAL

Yeah. Was it Galpert?

DAVIDSON

Galpert.

SEVERAL

Okay and the cantor?

DAVIDSON

Well David was the cantor, Julian.

SEVERAL

Okay. And Betty Fishman was the principal of the Hebrew school. When did you get involved in your job? Well how did you get involved?

DAVIDSON

I was asked to. I guess they didn't have any males there then, may be they wanted some anyway, it was in, I will tell you exactly, date I can tell you that Mike Jeff was '68, '81.

SEVERAL

'81 okay and this was shortly after you had joined here?

DAVIDSON

Shortly after what?

SEVERAL

You had joined the Pasadena temple.

DAVIDSON

Yes.

SEVERAL

And Betty Fishman asked you to do what?

DAVIDSON

To help tutor the kids.

SEVERAL

No why did she pick you out?

DAVIDSON

I don't know. I never asked her. It may have been that Debby asked her and told her about that may be I go to work there. Debby was teaching there.

SEVERAL

Oh she was.

DAVIDSON

She was teaching under Betty Fishman yes she was a teacher here. So she may have suggested it.

SEVERAL

Okay. What the tutoring is what, my kids went through it?

DAVIDSON

The what?

SEVERAL

My kids had you as their tutor, what did you do?

DAVIDSON

What do I do?

SEVERAL

Say I am about to be bar mitzvahed.

DAVIDSON

So you have a half torah and a maftur right? I teach you how to read the prayers before, the prayers after, the half torah and the maftur and be able to read it from the torah, which is written different than, it is vowel less, no vowels and besides that, that I do before Hebrew school or after Hebrew school, well through the week Hebrew school is from 4-6 so I had the kids before for or

after 6 and from 4-6, I helped the kids in their regular school who need help, who were behind to catch them up and so on and there were plenty of them.

SEVERAL

Where did you learn how to read Hebrew back in...

DAVIDSON

When I was a kid.

SEVERAL

This could be a skill though that you could forget. I mean how did you maintain it?

DAVIDSON

I just started and eventually I found the system that I knew would work and I used it and it works 100% and the kids learn.

SEVERAL

And wow.

DAVIDSON

I just learned from scratch, I didn't get into any schooling or teaching, I had no idea I would be a teacher, I wasn't trained for it but here you are. It just worked out.

SEVERAL

What is the method that you used?

DAVIDSON

The what?

SEVERAL

The method, you said you found a method.

DAVIDSON

Yeah all right, I will give you an example, whatever you got here. Read these words here.

SEVERAL

The stories of Nama.

DAVIDSON

Read it again.

SEVERAL

The story of Nama.

DAVIDSON

Once more.

SEVERAL

The story of Nama.

DAVIDSON

Read here.

SEVERAL

Noah's wife. Noah's wife. Noah's wife. The story of Nama. The story of Nama.

DAVIDSON

No just once.

SEVERAL

The story of Nama, Noah's wife.

DAVIDSON

And I take the next three words or so that do them at least three or four times, go back to the very beginning and it is surprising how it works. And I understand that is the way piano was taught.

SEVERAL

Yeah but.

DAVIDSON

And it works here.

SEVERAL

Now there is one thing to read it, you know to, I can read this lets say.

DAVIDSON

But for them its tougher for the kids, it is not English but they do get it.

SEVERAL

But then you know it is one thing to may be read it but not being able to pronounce it. So where did you learn how to...

DAVIDSON

When did I learn?

SEVERAL

Yeah.

DAVIDSON

How to read?

SEVERAL

Well its one thing to be able to you know as an example, there are many words that I can read but I cannot pronounce I mean if I were to pronounce the word, I would get tongue tied.

DAVIDSON

Well there is certain, the vowels tell you how to pronounce the word and there were certain words that are pronounced a little different than they are written, not too many and the beauty of it is every letter is always pronounced the same, not like English, not like C which is an S or K. The Hebrew letters are all same all the time except like I say there would be two or three exceptions but otherwise, it is not a hard language to learn. It isn't. The only difference is, you have to, if you really want to speak it, the difference between that and English is everything is either masculine or feminine including a table or anything.

English, there is no node of gender which makes it a little tougher, French or Spanish is the same thing.

SEVERAL

So you never had other than your Hebrew instruction as a child, you never took any classes as an adult?

DAVIDSON

No. For adult classes, no.

SEVERAL

Wow that's impressive.

DAVIDSON

It worked. Call it dumb luck whatever. It works.

SEVERAL

So and here did you ever do any torah reading for Saturday mornings?

DAVIDSON

No I know the torah, I have been called to torah, all I have to do is to say the prayers before and after but no I would not want to read torah. When I was in elementary school, the teacher had each kid sing a little bit to know how well they got through. When I sang my bit, the teacher said Abe, you are a listener. I can't carry a tune.

SEVERAL

When you joined the PJTC, did you ever, were you ever a member of any board or committee, did you join any committees here?

DAVIDSON

No.

SEVERAL

Okay. Have you been a Gabi, did you ever do any?

DAVIDSON

No.

SEVERAL

Okay. Were you ever a member of any other Jewish organizations such as the veterans. Was there...?

DAVIDSON

Jewish war veterans?

SEVERAL

Yeah you were and...

DAVIDSON

Yeah I was a commander one time.

SEVERAL

How long were you a member of that organization.

DAVIDSON

About six years till it just fell apart.

SEVERAL

Where did they hold meetings when you were member, I mean you were living in.....

DAVIDSON

Alhambra.

SEVERAL

Oh you were living in Alhambra at that time.

DAVIDSON

Yeah.

SEVERAL

And where did they have meetings?

DAVIDSON

We had a monthly meeting.

SEVERAL

Where at?

DAVIDSON

At that time, we used to meet at the American Legion Hall in Monterey Park.

SEVERAL

Okay. About how many members do you recall, how many members?

DAVIDSON

Oh we must have about 20.

SEVERAL

And it just died out. I mean what did you.

DAVIDSON

It died out. Actually what it was, was a good place to play cards. That was the main feature and as a matter of fact last time we met, we knew we were threw, we took the treasury and we went to, what is the name of that, Wilshire Boulevard Club, it's a night club big one.

SEVERAL

Pareno?

DAVIDSON

Which?

SEVERAL

Pareno?

DAVIDSON

No. Anyway went there for supper and, and...

SEVERAL

Had a good time.

DAVIDSON

Had a good time. But we still met once in a while.

SEVERAL

Did any of those members join PJTC?

DAVIDSON

No. Most of them lived in Monterey Park, it was Monterey Park in Alhambra combined but most of them lived in Monterey Park or elsewhere, not too many in Alhambra.

SEVERAL

What are the things, just kind of curious, I am think in large part considering the liberal political orientations that both Michael and Debby have, I mean they get that from you? Or...

DAVIDSON

That's what I am told. Yes.

SEVERAL

First of all, did you ever go to Israel?

DAVIDSON

My wife and I, we lived there one time for 15 months and one time for 13 months.

SEVERAL

When was that?

DAVIDSON

Besides that, we made about 6 or 7 other trips.

SEVERAL

Oh really?

DAVIDSON

Mike our son, was a member of a Kabutsa and whenever a child is born, go and had three kids there and we go other times whenever there's something doing so we must have gone about 10 times altogether.

SEVERAL

When did you live there?

DAVIDSON

Years again.

SEVERAL

Yeah. I mean was Mike living on the Kabutsa at that time?

DAVIDSON

No he was on the Kabutsa when we went there, but then he went back home but we stayed. Everybody thought oh boy soon as he leaves, you know but we made the best friends in the world in Israel. As a matter of fact, the kids here we were at 15 months, it's like when are you coming home and we finally came home, our friends there wrote to us, when are you coming home?

SEVERAL

Where did you live in Israel?

DAVIDSON

Jerusalem. We rented an apartment, as a matter of fact we rent in a three bedroom because we knew Debby and Jack and her family would come so they had a place to come to, came there for Mike's wedding and things like that and they just came vacation so we had a place for them and oh it was great.

SEVERAL

What did you do there, I mean did you work or.?

DAVIDSON

No. We made some great friends, we always had something to do. As a matter of fact, one of the friends we made, he used to work on the digs and when they were through with the dig, he would say, we can go there and anything you can find, you can keep after the dig is over. So we would go to the digs, when we had nothing to do, we just go to the old city, we'd take sandwiches and sit down and watch all the people just to see the people come and go. We always had something. I bought a car, we traveled over the whole country, the whole thing all the way from the north down to a lot and as a matter of fact, we went to the Danta Sharam-Ul-Sheikh. At that time, it was in Israel's hands, and went all the way through the whole Sinai. Oh we had a ball.

SEVERAL

So that would have been in the 1970s that you were living there.

DAVIDSON

Yeah must be. She is 22 years old now, she was born there, about 4 years, about 20 years ago.

SEVERAL

Because Sinai was turned back over to Egypt I think in 1981 or '82.

DAVIDSON

We were there in some exciting times. We were there when Sadat came too, oh my God you can feel the electricity in the air when he came to get the Sinai back and it was wonderful, as a matter of fact, one time we went over to the King David Hotel where he was staying but before he came, they emptied the whole hotel and then we saw an American flag flying there so we asked the guard, why the flag, well there is an American senator here so whenever there is a visiting so he was there so there is a guy behind me and he says, are you kidding? The United States flag is for both of them which is true.

SEVERAL

Right wow.

DAVIDSON

Oh we had some crazy things happened to us, there was some things that never happened here. One time we went there for a short time and we were going to leave, and they send us, I think the name of the town I went to stay there and at night, we would go into Tel Aviv, it was near Tel Aviv, we would go in Tel Aviv and eat there and we were there for three days and one time in Tel Aviv,

we were going back and its pouring cats and dogs and at that time, we didn't have the car, we had to sell it, so we got on the bus and the bus driver says, what hotel you're from? He knew we were tourists or whatever so we told him so he said well I don't go there. I said we know you don't , just drop us as close as you can and he drives up there and he says "ah shit", he took us to our hotel. See an American bus driver to...

SEVERAL

No no.

DAVIDSON

Only in Israel.

SEVERAL

I know.

DAVIDSON

One time we were just for a short time too, the last day we stayed at a hotel in Jerusalem and we were going to leave early in the morning and we got up in the morning, there was a ticket on the car, I said the heck with it, we got home, I figured out how much the ticket was and I sent them a check and about three weeks later, I get a letter from them, you were here a short time, we don't think you should pay a ticket and they sent the check back.

SEVERAL

Wow.

DAVIDSON

Can you see that happening anywhere?

SEVERAL

I can't see it happened even there. I am surprised he didn't cash it.

DAVIDSON

We went on the flame.

SEVERAL

Wow.

DAVIDSON

That's what I mean. Only in Israel.

SEVERAL

Yeah. Well I am really impressed by your Michael's kind of reaching out you know to the Palestinians, I mean this is...

DAVIDSON

No he is really doing great with water irrigation.

SEVERAL

It is really admirable of him to.

DAVIDSON

He is traveling all over the world for it, Africa. As a matter of fact he went to Jordan one time as a representative of Israel and they were supposed to be two

Israelis there but at the last minute, they changed their mind. They would not go there, they were worried about the protection, here Mike says.

SEVERAL

You lived in Israel twice and you weren't deployed there, you were just kind of living there.

DAVIDSON

We were living there.

SEVERAL

Did you ever live on the kibbutz

DAVIDSON

Yeah.

SEVERAL

You did?

DAVIDSON

Yeah and had a crazy thing happened to me there too. I was on a kibbutz and I said I should do something so they put me in a chicken house and I said fine and I was supposed to take the eggs and candle them and make sure they were good eggs and they had, four belts of chickens on each side and you can have one belt for it or two I didn't know anything about it at that time so all the eggs are coming and I am trying to stop it and I am rolled it all over me, real slapstick, eggs are all over the place, I finally pushed every button to stop it.

SEVERAL

I think Charlie Chaplin had a line like that.

DAVIDSON

That was a real, oh my God that was awful. Let alone candle them.

SEVERAL

Lets see I just want to make sure I got everything here.. oh when you started here as teaching..

DAVIDSON

Tutoring.

SEVERAL

Tutoring.. was there any difference between tutoring the boys and the girls?

DAVIDSON

Not that I could see.

SEVERAL

When you were tutoring, the girls were already having their bat mitzvahs on Saturdays.

DAVIDSON

Same as the boys.

SEVERAL

So I guess that is it. You know I really appreciate... I am continuing the interview with Abe Davidson.

SEVERAL

When you were in the Israel, were you able to get around on your Hebrew?

DAVIDSON

Yeah I can make myself understood. I don't speak Hebrew that well but I could make myself understood because a lot of times we had people here ask us to look up some of their friends or family and so we had to ask and we got around.

SEVERAL

When you had your Hebrew instruction as a kid, was it, it was really to prepare for the Bar Mitzvah wasn't it?

DAVIDSON

It was just to read mostly. We had one teacher who was, that's all. All we did was read from the Torah, not from the Torah, from the book itself. That guy had a rule, he was one of those guys, but then later we got a teacher from Palestine and at that time Jew were Palestine Jews, the Jews were Palestinians they took the name from them. Anyway he was more so trying to teach us the grammar and of course how to speak but we only had him for a short time so.

SEVERAL

So when you went to Israel then that was about the only speaking?

DAVIDSON

No in Israel, we went to what's called Ulpan.

SEVERAL

Oh you did?

DAVIDSON

Yes. We went to one and it was very very tough and the teacher told us, said look you don't think about visiting any place, all you got to do is study, no we did not know how long we are going to be there, we said no that's not for us, we found another place, another Ulpan and it was more a social event than anything but they had some good teachers but so we picked up there. But the Ulpan it was good.

SEVERAL

Where was that, was that in a [unclear]?

DAVIDSON

No in Jerusalem. We lived in Jerusalem the whole time, every time, we rented a house it was in Jerusalem that is where we lived and that is where we went.

SEVERAL

How long was the Ulpan was it the entire time you were there or was it like?

DAVIDSON

It was during the day.

SEVERAL

Was it during the 15 months you were there did you go to the Ulpan every day for 15 months or was it?

DAVIDSON

No it was four times a week and we went there and we made the greatest friends from all over the world, South Africa, Britain, one from I don't know he spoke crazy English. As a matter of fact we asked this friend of ours from London, he was London, and we asked him Harvey do you understand when Irvin speaks to you? He said no and he is a British.

SEVERAL

When you were living in Jerusalem, did you go to the Ulpan during the entire time you were there for the 15 months, four days a week or did you go for....?

DAVIDSON

No. I went probably for about a half a year.

SEVERAL

Okay so after that you must have been pretty fluent.

DAVIDSON

No we speak to Israelis you no and we would speak to them and they "speak back to me in Hebrew" we'd say "are you kidding I want to learn English." They didn't want to speak Hebrew, they wanted to speak English.

SEVERAL

How was your pronunciation, your accent? Good?

DAVIDSON

It was different because at that time, I spoke more Ashkenazi type and they are strictly Sephardic.

SEVERAL

Oh they are?

DAVIDSON

Oh yes, Isreal is Sephardic. The Hebrew is fine, that is what we teach here too, Sephardic, we don't teach Ashkenazi so it was a different. As a matter of fact when we went to the class one time, we stopped before we go in there is a little place where you can pick up some candy or coffee or stuff and we stopped and we said something, I don't remember what, Bolkartov and she looked at us and said Bokatov. That is where we first started but then we learned more of the Sephardic, yeah they all speak Sephardic.

SEVERAL

Interesting.

DAVIDSON

And it's strange too. All that papers are without vowels. They have one or two with vowels that is for people like me and anyway, one time I had a couple of kids I was hoping for their Bar Mitzvah, brother and a sister, they were not at the same time, they were separate but I started with the sister and she could

read without the vowels you know but and that is the way the torah is without the vowels but I had to teach her vowels because there are so many words that are not used every day in Hebrew and not spoken now, old time words and unless they know what the word meant, they could not pronounce it so I had to teach them vowels to be able to read it. Strange, huh? Had to teach people who could read without vowels.

SEVERAL

Interesting. So now although you were trained in the Ashkenazi pronunciation, you are now tutoring the kids with a Sephardic.

DAVIDSON

I will tell you some of them here, I will not mention names, who do not read correctly. For example, alright two dots is a vowel, do you know Hebrew at all?

SEVERAL

Very little.

DAVIDSON

Two dots under the letter that are pronounced differently. In Sephardic and Ashkenazi, they all pronounce A. In Sephardic, they pronounce Eh unless they are followed by an Ud which makes it A and how many people here pronounce it A regardless which is all wrong.

SEVERAL

So you correct them on that?

DAVIDSON

Yeah it is a tough job when they are here the whole day long.

SEVERAL

So you are tutoring them in Sephardic but by the time you get them, they have been taught in Ashkenazi.

DAVIDSON

No by the time I get, most of them are alright because they learned they learned there Hebrew here. Before 13, they start at eight you know and they've learned unless you've won a certain teacher who will remain nameless. Shall remain nameless.

SEVERAL

Are there synagogues to your knowledge teaching the kids the Sephardic?

DAVIDSON

I think most of them are. The only ones that would not would be the real orthodox. The orthodox are strictly Ashkenazi. Yeah everybody has gotten against them and they are pain in the neck and I'll grant ya they are, but if a weren't for them, there would not have been any Jews left because they carried it all through Europe, all through all the time, it was strictly the Ashkenazi. The orthodox.

SEVERAL

Well this is very interesting. I have learned something, I mean not just about the temple and the history and your experiences, but something about the pronunciation. I am wondering if I.

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