

A TEI Project

Interview of Marlene Segal

Contents

1. Transcript

SESSION ONE JANUARY 15, 2008

1. Transcript

1.1. SESSION ONE JANUARY 15, 2008

SIEGAL

Okay. Hi, this is Caroline Segal and I'm here today January 15, 2008, 2:05 p.m. and I'm with Marlene Segal and we are no relation. And with that, I'm going to turn off my phone and we're gonna get started.

SEGAL

Okay.

SIEGAL

Okay. So Marlene, tell me a little bit about your own Jewish education and how you became a Jew.

SEGAL

I went to Sunday school and... I think I was, oh from _____.

SIEGAL

And that was Philadelphia.

SEGAL

In Philadelphia and I was confirmed by confirmation class.

SIEGAL

And was that typical were there are other girls in the class.

SEGAL

Oh yeah...girls and boys. Yeah.

SIEGAL

Okay.

SEGAL

And we met at the Y...the YMH Jewish men and women's...it was a Jewish Y.

SIEGAL

And that's where you had your classes?

SEGAL

And my classes...yeah.

SIEGAL

So it wasn't actually in a synagogue?

SEGAL

No. Plus, afterwards, after I finished in the confirmation, I took several classes at the Y at night and became a high school teacher and I taught Sunday school until the year before we got married.

SIEGAL

Was that your...do you have another job as well or...did you teach at a regular school?

SEGAL

Yes.

SEGAL

I graduated from the Philadelphia High School for girls and in my third year there, I got a job at an insurance company...a big life insurance company and I started there, I was putting things away like yearly things that they could package and put away and then an opening came up in the medical department, and they asked if I would like to work there part-time, and I said I did. I really did, and then I was...I had applied to college. I was going to be a dental hygienist, and I...I just felt I really liked this job so much that I ended up not going to college, and I worked there until I had Howard.

SIEGAL

And...maybe...I'm trying to transition a little bit to today. I guess, well, as you were involved in Jewish education, how was your mother involved in the Temple?

SEGAL

My parents didn't really belong to the Temple. They went to the High Holidays, but we lived in a neighborhood that was all Jewish. So all the holidays, it was like every store closed, and it was a holiday! It really was, but my grandparents lived a couple of doors away from us too, and they had a kosher chicken place, and the whole family lived within five or six blocks...my aunts and uncles, they all lived together.

SIEGAL

So was that...when you moved to California, was that difficult?

SEGAL

It was very difficult.

SIEGAL

Now what about the whole Jewish community thing---you came out here, and it must have felt very different.

SEGAL

It was very, very different.

SIEGAL

Yeah.

SEGAL

I mean, I lived in...when Ros Hashannah and Yom Kippur came, I mean, forget about it. It was a holiday! We celebrate here for Christmas or something. That's just the way it was. We all lived within three or four blocks of each other, and it was a great department...a big family...my grandfather's mom and dad had thirteen---

SIEGAL

Wow.

SEGAL

Children, and they all came here from Europe. They also lived in South Philadelphia. We lived in North Philadelphia, but we have a family club which we...they still have, and every summer we had a big picnic, and for Passover we took over a restaurant. I mean it was that...it was completely different. It was great.

SIEGAL

Well tell how it was...what it was like when you came here then.

SEGAL

It was very difficult. I was always like half packed and ready to leave, and we lived in Arcadia. We had an apartment when we first came. Then we decided to buy a home, and we bought one on Hastings Ranch, and Herb and Gloria lived on Hastings. We were like four houses apart from each other, but it was...that was...it was difficult because she had two little ones. I had my...I had Howard, and I was pregnant with Mickey. They're only 17 months apart.

SIEGAL

Did you experience any anti-Semitism in those early days?

SEGAL

Really not. In the area...this area, no...apparently not. There was no problem. As a matter of fact, my boys went to Enovia, which rarely had Jewish kids in it...

SIEGAL

That's a school?

SEGAL

It was a pre-school.

SIEGAL

Okay.

SEGAL

A pre-school, and they did have regular class too, I think, and in the beginning I think I kept saying I don't know if I'm doing the right thing because there weren't too many, but it's funny...in Howard's class---ended up with three or four Jewish boys who...they...they're still...we see them all the time.

SIEGAL

That's nice.

SEGAL

Yeah, and then all three boys went there, and I remember when Mickey was born, my grandmother came out to visit. She had never been further than Atlantic City, and she came out to see me when Mickey was born, and we took her to the Christmas program at the school, and I kept telling her, "Now remember this isn't like a Hanukkah program. This is definitely a Christmas program."

SIEGAL

Right.

SEGAL

And when we got there, they sang a Hanukkah song because there was like four boys in the class, and I guess they decided it would be nice, and they sang a dreidle song. It was very nice. It really was, but other than that, that was the only...just the Temple, Sunday school and that...that was the only thing.

SIEGAL

It took you a couple of years to join the Temple. What motivated you to finally join the Temple?

SEGAL

Well we...what happened was we were...I think we joined the Temple in Sierra Madre just for a short time, and we realized that they had something for Howard who I think hadn't started kindergarten yet, but they had like a pre...

SIEGAL

So did you join something like a pre-school?

SEGAL

So that he would go there too. That's when we joined, right.

SIEGAL

Is that the same as the B'nai Simcha that they have now that they have like---

SEGAL

No because B'nai Simcha is really a pre-school. This was just like a Sunday---or I don't know if he went every Sunday. He may have just went a couple of Sundays. Then he went into first grade...second and all that.

SIEGAL

And then when you joined did you get involved with sisterhood right away?

SEGAL

No. I didn't get involved until later when the boys got a little older then I got involved, and then after...the only thing I really got involved in because the boys were so young and all, is I ran the ___ carnival but not myself...

SIEGAL

Right. And was it joint with the other temples at the time?

SEGAL

No, we had our own ____ Carnival and the kids loved it. It was really nice. Each class had their own theme and what they were going to do, and we had...all I remember is that every year I had new fish in the house because it couldn't---

SIEGAL

Little goldfish?

SEGAL

The goldfish, right! And...oh I did that quite a while...I did it with Elaine Reese. Linda Brown did it, and Shirley Cohen. The four of us did it for quite a while, and then when the other Sunday school at Temple Fifth David---I think what happened was they wanted to do it together because their school was smaller than ours, and the Arcadian Temple decided you know maybe it would be nice, and that's when they started that.

SIEGAL

Did you remember when Debbie Singer took over the religious school

SEGAL

My boys were already out.

SIEGAL

Who was running it when they were little?

SEGAL

I think it was Betty Fischman and I forgot the other gals name. I know Betty Fischman was there, and forget...they had a couple of men that ran it too. One of them, his name was Ginsburg.

SIEGAL

Is it similar to today where the kids would go three days a week as they get older?

SEGAL

They went three days a week, and yeah...

SIEGAL

And they prepared them for their---

SEGAL

The same thing, yeah. Yeah.

SIEGAL

B'nai mitzvahs and all that?

SEGAL

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. It was the same way.

SIEGAL

Well when you did finally join the Sisterhood, what put you in there

SEGAL

I worked with Charlotte Nachman and Shirley Hill in the gift shop.

SIEGAL

Oh how did you get started? Tell me about the gift shop. Was the gift shop there when you got there? Was there always a gift shop?

SEGAL

No, the gift shop was there, and another lady was running in the gift shop, and she was selling invitations, and then they moved to Palm Springs, and I didn't know her at all, and she said, "How about if I show you what is involved so you'll still do the invitations?", and that's how I got involved. I did the invitations.

SIEGAL

Do you remember what year you started in the gift shop?

SEGAL

No...Barry do you remember?

BARRY SEGAL

Remember what?

SEGAL

When I started in the gift shop?

SIEGAL

Or approximately how many years it's been?

BARRY SEGAL

(coughing)

SEGAL

Because I did just sell the...I sold the invitations...

SIEGAL

Well let's see...how old was Howard when you started, do you think??

BARRY SEGAL

I don't remember the exact year.

SEGAL

Oh, I think Howard must have been...

BARRY SEGAL

It was in the 60's.

SEGAL

In the 60's.

SIEGAL

Okay.

SEGAL

It was in the 60's, yeah.

SIEGAL

How has the gift shop changed since then, do you think?

SEGAL

Oh! We had a little tiny gift shop! It was the size of a closet!

SIEGAL

Just not in the same place that it's in now...

SEGAL
On the other side...you know where the office is now?

SIEGAL
Yes.

SEGAL
You know like when you come down there and you just see where Alex sits?
That was our whole gift shop!

SIEGAL
Okay.

SEGAL
And we just had a thing in the front and a couple of shelves in the back.

SIEGAL
Yeah.

SEGAL
But I did take...I did the invitations. It's funny because do you know I've done invitations so long that now, some of the kids that we did for bar and bat mitzvahs---I've already done their wedding invitations!

SIEGAL
Now that's nice!

SEGAL
It's really funny. It really is! It's fun. It really is, yeah. We still...do the invitations. We still have the invitation.

SIEGAL
And the proceeds of the gift shop go just directly to the Temple?

SEGAL
Go to Sisterhood

SIEGAL
Go to Sisterhood.

SEGAL
Everything goes to Sisterhood. Yeah, but Sisterhood gives the Temple.

SIEGAL
Okay.

SEGAL
A nice amount.

SIEGAL
Right. Right.

SEGAL
And also they pay for other things too.

SIEGAL
Uh what other jobs with Sisterhood have you held or what other positions...

SEGAL

Actually I only did the...

BARRY SEGAL

You were president of the Temple in '65.

SEGAL

Oh 65 Okay.

BARRY SEGAL

Or if you wanna really be exact. Find out when Sam Weiss was president of the Temple.

SEGAL

That's right.

BARRY SEGAL

It was the same year.

SEGAL

Around the same...

SIEGAL

You were president of Sisterhood the same time as he was---

SEGAL

Was I president when he was president

BARRY SEGAL

Yup.

SEGAL

We were both presidents. He was

BARRY SEGAL

You had a congratulations I remember.

SEGAL

He was president of the Temple, and I became president of Sisterhood.

SIEGAL

And what were some of your main goals? Do you remember what you really wanted to work on ? Or what the Sisterhood accomplished back then?

SEGAL

Well basically I did the invitations...

SIEGAL

Yeah.

SEGAL

Which was a lot and was really worth doing because that was a big income for Sisterhood.

SIEGAL

Well like in '65, was it hard to get people to join the Sisterhood? Were there...what were the challenges that Sisterhood faced back then?

SEGAL

No, I think it was pretty good. They had...oh we met every month. We had a luncheon meeting every month...a different program set up.

SIEGAL

Yeah. With a speaker kind of thing...

SEGAL

Speaker. Right. That was it, and we had nice turn-outs. We really did.

SIEGAL

Yeah. When did that change? Because at some point, women were working and...

SEGAL

That...I would tell you. It changed I guess the beginning of the '70s when the gals started working, even part time, even if they had, you know, little kids.

Then I started working. I worked at the Humane Society for about eight years.

SIEGAL

So did that affect your involvement at the Temple?

SEGAL

No, not really. It worked out fine except it was real great because all the people that had never gone to the Humane Society, if they wanted to board, they would call.

SIEGAL

Oh.

SEGAL

To make sure that they could get the dogs in and all, or if they wanted a nice puppy or something and a certain kind, they would call and say, "We would like to get a puppy like 6 months old, and how about a German shepherd or a lab or cocker spaniel," and I would keep a list, and if something came in I would call...

SIEGAL

Well, it sounds like you became the president pretty quickly. Like you joined the Temple in '59, I thought, and then you became the Sisterhood president in '65. So that was just sort of rocketed to the top there.

SEGAL

Only because I was working in the gift shop.

SIEGAL

So people got to know you?

SEGAL

That's...I was just going to tell you that.

SIEGAL

Yeah.

SEGAL

And we took, you know, we did our own luncheons so we were always on committees.

SIEGAL

And do...did the Sisterhood sponsor a lot of Onegs the way it does now as well, like the Oneg lunches, did they have Saturday luncheons?

SEGAL

No, it was different. They didn't sponsor it that way. A lot of the Friday nights, they sponsored.

SIEGAL

Yeah.

SEGAL

But they didn't start sponsoring these Saturdays til a while...for a while, they didn't because I don't think they got as many people on Saturdays, and then they started to, when they realized that the kids...I think it was Betty Fischman who said, "You know, you can't just have a kid be bar or bat mitzvahed not coming to the service and seeing what they're going to have to do if they read Torah, if they do the haftarah. So she pretty much set that up that if the last year when they were gonna be bar or bat mitzvahed that they had to attend services.

SIEGAL

Right. And they still do that now.

SEGAL

And they do it! Right. Right.

SIEGAL

That's a good tradition.

SEGAL

So that helped too, and it brought more people out on Saturday and Friday nights too.

SIEGAL

One of the things we learned in the other interviews was that Rabbi Galpert didn't go to Saturday services when he was rabbi.

SEGAL

He went, but not. No, he went Saturdays. I don't think he did Friday nights.

SIEGAL

Oh well that's different. I heard that he liked Friday...

SEGAL

He loved Friday nights, but I think he was there on Saturdays.

SIEGAL

But he didn't necessarily lead the services

SEGAL

Oh he didn't lead the service.

SIEGAL

Who would lead the service, then?

SEGAL

Mr. Silver for years.

SIEGAL

Was he just a congregant?

SEGAL

Yes.

SIEGAL

He's like a lay person who---

SEGAL

Yes. Yes. Yes.

SIEGAL

And who was the...and there was a cantor that helped too at that point? Or one of the cantors?

SEGAL

But I don't, yeah...one of the cantors yeah. I didn't remember that, but Mr. Silver ran it, and then, I think when he passed away---I'm trying to think---Mister...you know, Sam Roth ran it also, and I don't know who else, but there were...there were always someone that took it over, that helped.

SIEGAL

You know, now the Sisterhood is very involved in the kitchen and maintaining the kitchen. Was that the same case back then?

SEGAL

They did too.

SIEGAL

And what about kashrut? It seems like we have a whole new thing with kashrut right now. Were we maintaining kashrut?

SEGAL

When Rabbi Galpert was president---

SIEGAL

Yeah.

SEGAL

His philosophy was very different, and he didn't really push kashrut to a point. I mean, you couldn't bring bacon or stuff like that, and you couldn't have meat with dairy, but he never really pushed it, but when he passed away, the ones that came after him really wanted a kosher kitchen.

SIEGAL

That's interesting, so it really went through a big change there. After you were president then were there any other positions you held besides the gift shop and Sisterhood?

SEGAL

No, just the gift shop and then---

SIEGAL

And then the president---

SEGAL

Yeah.

SIEGAL

Yeah.

SEGAL

That was all.

SIEGAL

You're due to be president again then...

SEGAL

No way. No way!

SIEGAL

The main purpose of Sisterhood in your years, was it to raise money for the Temple?

SEGAL

Yes. Exactly.

SIEGAL

And how---what were some of the activities that Sisterhood did, besides the gift shop?

SEGAL

Oh we had...we had great luncheons and great---

SIEGAL

And those were fundraisers---

SEGAL

Yeah. People paid, and they had committees that would each take a part. If we were gonna have a speaker about like a book return or something like that, then certain people would do the luncheon, and it worked great, and we got a lot of people.

SIEGAL

I mean were there other benefits at the Sisterhood? Did you have like ____ Torah fund?

SEGAL

Oh yeah! We had the Torah fund.

SIEGAL

That's been going on along time.

SEGAL

Oh that was...Oh yeah! We've always had the Torah fund, but it was put in the memory of Miriam Beco's mom when she passed which was I think before we

were even there, but they always had that, not as great as it is now, but each year it got better and better.

SIEGAL

And any other kinds of fundraisers or activities?

SEGAL

We had fashion shows---

SIEGAL

Okay...

SEGAL

Oh yeah. I remember, I'm trying to think. The Carnival---the ____ but the money went to the school.

SIEGAL

Oh I see.

SEGAL

Sisterhood did a lot of the work, but the money went to the school.

SIEGAL

Yeah.

SEGAL

So they could get things that they needed.

SIEGAL

I was thinking, if you have photos from the fashion show in the 60's---Michael might want to see those. That'd be pretty amusing.

SEGAL

I don't have. You should ask Edie Taylor.

SIEGAL

Oh really was she involved in that too

SEGAL

Yeah.

SIEGAL

Yeah.

SEGAL

She would probably know. If she doesn't have it, she's gotten it from different people.

SIEGAL

Yeah and did you get involved with the pool and the recreational aspects? Also I heard about Sisterhood having theatrical performances.

SEGAL

Oh shows! Yeah, but I was never involved. Barry was like that.

SIEGAL

Yeah. What was the relationship of the Sisterhood to each of the rabbis? How would you compare them? Like, how did Sisterhood and Galpert work together?

SEGAL

Very well. He really did.

SIEGAL

Did he come to the lunches?

SEGAL

If any, if there was a book review or something that he liked, if we were getting a film or something that was about Israel and he was interested in it, yes, he would come. Absolutely.

SIEGAL

So...did he---

SEGAL

But not his wife. We never saw his wife.

SIEGAL

Oh she did not participate in the congregation?

SEGAL

She belonged to the Sisterhood but very rarely showed up.

SIEGAL

And, did he kinda schmooze the ladies? That's the impression I had a little bit.

SEGAL

Like you can't believe!

SIEGAL

Really?

SEGAL

I would go to the mall when it first opened in Arcadia, and he walked there all the time, and I...this would happen like...someone told him I'm gonna be there or something, and all of the sudden you'd hear someone hollering, "Marlene!" and after I knew who he was and all, and he was so glad to see me. I mean he was just this kind of guy. "What are you doing here?" I say, "What do you think I'm doing here? I'm buying pads." Or I'm picking up a shirt, or the boys need this and that. You know, there's always something going on. He said, "That's right, but I'm walking here." And he did, he walked there a lot.

SIEGAL

And what about Rabbi Collin and the Sisterhood---did he work with the Sisterhood?

SEGAL

He worked very...yeah, it was fine. I don't know. She would partake when she could, but you know---

SIEGAL

She was sick.

SEGAL

She had a---

SIEGAL

Oh yeah...she was a psychotherapist---

SEGAL

Therapist, yeah, so she couldn't come if it was during the day. The meetings were always during the day so it was hard, but she would come. Yeah, but Rabbi Collin came a lot, especially depending on the program.

SIEGAL

Yeah, and what about Rabbi Graeder, how do you think he's doing?

SEGAL

I think he does great. I really do. I like him a lot, and he tries to do his best. The kids love him!

SIEGAL

Yeah.

SEGAL

The kids absolutely adore him. The funny is when he first came. I guess it was about two or three months after he was there, and he always came when they had like their break. Even though he was there earlier and he was meeting with a parent or something, the break he took, and I would hear the kids say, "He's gonna be on our team," and they started arguing like you couldn't believe! Finally I had gotten up nerve because I would hear them in the gift shop, and I said, "Who are you fighting over?" They looked at me, "Rabbi Graeder!" It was really cute. I mean, they...he was like a bunny, and they would say, "Well, he was on your side last time. It's our time." I mean no one would believe this is the rabbi!

SIEGAL

Rabbi.

SEGAL

But the kids really like him. They really do.

SIEGAL

Does...has Sisterhood always been represented on the board?

SEGAL

Yes. As long as I...We always...The president, for a while, was in charge, would go to every meeting.

SIEGAL

So like when you were the president you were at the board meetings.

SEGAL

Yeah I...I went. Yeah.

SIEGAL

Did you ever think about being on the, like running for a different board seat for yourself or---

SEGAL

No.

SIEGAL

Temple president? Or---

SEGAL

I only did that once. Barry got involved, and he was going.

SIEGAL

Yeah.

SEGAL

It worked out fine.

SIEGAL

In general, how do you see the role of women in Jewish life changed since you were a girl?

SEGAL

It's changed a lot. I mean when we first came here, I don't know if there was more than just the secretary was the...on the board. The rest were men! Very few women, but then the women started to take position that they offered,

SIEGAL

Yeah.

SEGAL

And that's how...I think it's great! We have a lot of the women on now.

SIEGAL

Yeah, and are there certain women that you think of as being a little bit more pioneering or feminist in the congregation?

SEGAL

Well, Marsha ___ always liked being on the board, but she was president of Sisterhood too. She's the only one that comes to mind that really worked both ways.

SIEGAL

Yeah.

SEGAL

As long as I can remember, anyway...

SIEGAL

And was there controversy among the women? Like Sisterhood women, when there was a woman who started reading Torah, which was Marsha, did they--- were there women that didn't like it?

SEGAL

No. They really liked it. The only time we really got involved was when Howard was bar mitzvahed. Shirley Kittiver, who was also a president, a

Sisterhood president, insisted her daughter have a bat mitzvah, and she was the first one, but I think it was only on Friday night, and then afterwards, after she had I think it was---no, she insisted Saturday. That's what it was because they were letting the girls have the Friday night owning, but she insisted on being Saturday. Forget it, I'll do Friday, but I want a regular bat mitzvah. She was the first one.

SIEGAL

Is that what changed it? One person?

SEGAL

Well no. Sisterhood was on them for a long time to do it, but the Conservative movement, remember, did not recognize that until then.

SIEGAL

Right.

SEGAL

And slowly each temple would go to allowing the girls to do it.

SIEGAL

So but this one person sort of pushed the Temple to make the change, and did that sort of open the floodgates for everybody else?

SEGAL

Oh absolutely, absolutely, right.

SIEGAL

So the Hebrew school itself, they weren't really the ones that were pushing for the changes?

SEGAL

No. No. But once they started...there were articles like that came in the magazine

SIEGAL

Yeah.

SEGAL

And stuff, and then Betty Fischman and she had another gal that worked with her...they really wanted it. They really did. So that helped the cause a lot. See now, when I was thirteen, I had a twin brother, and he was going to be bar mitzvahed, and he went to the shiva. My parents went and said, "Look they're twins. She has to go in to the shiva too." So I went into the shiva, but it was a nightmare because the principal was very nice, and he met with all the teachers, but the teachers did not want a female there. Not on your life. And even so, all I learned...I learned Hebrew but not the way the guys did.

SIEGAL

Yeah.

SEGAL

And then when the time for the bar mitzvah was, they let me do two prayers. That's it, and then it was an Orthodox temple, and then you went and sat upstairs.

SIEGAL

Yeah. Yeah.

SEGAL

But even so, a lot of the guys were very upset. They actually let you do that! But the principal said, "Look this is the way it is. If it is two girls or two boys born in the same...or a boy and a girl, it's recognized." I don't know if it was, but some guys make up their own rules, and he lived in the neighborhood, and he knew my grandparents and us and---

SIEGAL

Yeah.

SEGAL

So, who know, but that was the only time.

SIEGAL

That's nice because you can say you had a bat mitzvah which not that many can...

SEGAL

Yeah. I know, that was the thing.

SIEGAL

That's right. Was Sisterhood---did you recall Sisterhood having any relationships with organizations outside of the Temple? Any Pasadena community groups or other things?

SEGAL

No, except I think one time they did have a program, you know like Brotherhood or some program that was at the church.

SIEGAL

Like a Big Brother kind of thing.

SEGAL

Yeah.

SIEGAL

What about like Hadassah or groups like that.

SEGAL

They didn't meet at the Temple, and a lot of our people did belong to Hadassah. I still belong to Hadassah, and Org. Org was pretty big too then.

SIEGAL

Yeah.

SEGAL

But it was not affiliated with the Temple because it took in all of the temple so there wasn't any affiliation.

SIEGAL

Right, and there was a federation office back then?

SEGAL

No, not that I...not here. In Los Angeles...

SIEGAL

Yeah, no, right, but not in the West Coast.

SEGAL

Not out in our area.

SIEGAL

When did we finally get the federation out here, then, do you remember?

SEGAL

I venture it must be maybe 20---or it's probably more, maybe close to 30 or 40 years that we've had it.

SIEGAL

Yeah, and how do you view it in terms of its contribution?

SEGAL

Truthfully I don't see what they do.

SIEGAL

Yeah.

SEGAL

Not for Pasadena, I mean, I don't know what they may do for the littler places, but I don't think they do that much for us.

SIEGAL

Yeah, I don't know---

SEGAL

Although now, with that book reading.

SIEGAL

Right, the Book Festival---

SEGAL

The Book Festival, I think that's really nice.

SIEGAL

Yeah.

SEGAL

And it brings a lot...it brings people who aren't interested in one thing that will be interested in this.

SIEGAL

Were your kids involved in youth groups at all ?

SEGAL

Yeah, they belonged to the youth group at the Temple. Steve Sensor was in charge.

SIEGAL

Yeah.

SEGAL
They loved him---absolutely loved him! They had a terrific time, and he would take them all out to a place near Palm Springs---

SIEGAL
Like Joshua Tree?

SEGAL
Joshua Tree, yeah! Once a year, they would all go out there, and you should talk to Steve, he'll tell you of some of the things they did, and Mickey was the cook.

SIEGAL
Oh really?

SEGAL
Yeah, he loved to cook for them, yeah. So---

SIEGAL
So there was like USY...

SEGAL
It was like USY, but it was a little...it wasn't as set up that way.

SIEGAL
It was more like your own youth group at the Temple for the kids---

SEGAL
Yeah. Oh he was terrific. He was a great guy, and his girls belonged and all.

SIEGAL
Right.

SEGAL
So it was very nice, and he did it for quite a few years, and the boys loved him. They really did. They had a great time.

SIEGAL
We don't have anything like that now.

SEGAL
Well, I think USY has a little bit of it.

SIEGAL
Right, sort of like that, but not the same as having your own flavor...

SEGAL
Right. It wasn't...Exactly. Right, but there wasn't a USY then, and that's why he wanted to get something started for all the kids because it was a nice group of really nice...all the kids, it was a great group.

SIEGAL
Boys and girls alike, right.

SEGAL
It was really nice. Yeah.

SIEGAL

How do you view yourself within the context of the Temple? Do you see it as a religious connection? A social connection?

SEGAL

Oh.

SIEGAL

Which is more important to you, do you think?

SEGAL

I think the religious.

SIEGAL

Yeah?

SEGAL

We've been here so many years...

SIEGAL

Yeah.

SEGAL

People know us, and you know---

SIEGAL

Yeah.

SEGAL

It's a different feeling, but it's very nice because...well, because I do the invitations and all, I get to meet some of the parents...

SIEGAL

Right.

SEGAL

Which makes it very nice, really.

SIEGAL

Well, it sounds like when you first joined, Barry was not involved at all.

SEGAL

No, because we had a...our...well, in the beginning he was working---

SIEGAL

Right.

SEGAL

In the area. Then he had a drugstore in Arcadia for a few years, and he sold that. Then he worked a little while, and then we bought the store in North Hollywood. So he was very involved there, and he didn't come back to the Temple for quite a few---I would say we had the store maybe ten years and then...

SIEGAL

I mean it sounds like it was the same time you were a Sisterhood president. So were people saying to you, "Marlene, where is your husband?"

SEGAL

Oh yeah! But they all knew because a lot of them knew about our store in Arcadia that we had so...and that he was looking for a store.

SIEGAL

Yeah

SEGAL

And then when we bought it in the Valley, they knew it was hard. He had to get organized. It takes time to you know...and he worked, every day! Even Sundays, but then when things...when he got everything organized and all then he would be off on Saturdays. That's when he started getting involved.

SIEGAL

Were you like surprised when Barry became a gabbai?

SEGAL

Yes. Very. Really, yeah, but he really likes it so it was fine. He really did, and Morton really talked him into doing it.

SIEGAL

Were you involved at all in activities outside the Temple like PTA, stuff like that at the kids' school.

SEGAL

Because I worked. Before I worked at the Humane Society, I worked for an engineering company.

SIEGAL

Oh so did you always work?

SEGAL

No. Not until the boys were...my youngest boy was thirteen, and the other two were in high school already because there's four years difference. So I think basically I waited until after he was bar mitzvahed---

SIEGAL

But then you were working...

SEGAL

Yeah.

SIEGAL

Now, was that unusual Marlene. I mean was that a time when not that many women were working?

SEGAL

Not as many as now.

SIEGAL

Yeah.

SEGAL

But a few did, especially the ones where the kids were teenagers---

SIEGAL

Yeah.

SEGAL

And were in high school, you know, then they would do it, and I...the way it worked out, I usually was home by well, when I worked for the engineering company, I think I was home by four, and the same thing with the Humane Society. I always had an early schedule. So, it always worked out fine. Most of the time they didn't get home until later because they played football and baseball so I never had to really worry.

SIEGAL

Do you have any special memories? Like when you look back at all your years in the Temple is there anything specific that stands out for you?

SEGAL

Well, it's really nice when you have your three boys bar mitzvahed, and then you have your grandchildren!

SIEGAL

Yes that's true.

SEGAL

That's a fabulous way, you know. And I guess Mickey---Allison is his oldest, and she had a really great class...a really nice class, and I remember it was like I couldn't believe all these---everyone came for invitations, and they invited us. It was really nice. That was really, really nice.

SIEGAL

And you must have other couples that you have now known for forty-plus years...

SEGAL

Oh yeah! Well we used to have... you know, the Temple had a group that you learned to play bridge, which we did, and then afterwards, everybody sort of formed their own group if they were gonna play once a month, or they were gonna play during the day, or...and we had a group that played. We played once a month, and we had dinner at our houses, and we were...I gotta think how many couples we were. The Weiss', the Minovitz's, Roger Brown, us. Barry, who else was in the bridge group? Oh the Farvsteins...who else? I'm trying to think. Oh, Bill and Ruth Fox, but we had to have another couple because yeah we had three tables. That would be twelve people, four at a table.

SIEGAL

Was that like in the '70s that you were doing that?

SEGAL

No, it was later. It was later, and we played up until about three years ago...

SIEGAL

Oh really?

SEGAL

Three or four years ago.

SIEGAL
Why'd you stop?

SEGAL
They decided...a couple decided that it was too difficult having dinner, and then a couple of the gals---Oh it was the Epsteins, Zeld, and Say was the other couple. We must have played for twenty years.

SIEGAL
Well.

SEGAL
It was really nice. We still see each other, but we haven't been able to get together for that.

SIEGAL
Any other activities like that?

SEGAL
No that was the only one, but there were a lot! I mean that's how people got involved.

SIEGAL
Yeah.

SEGAL
They took the classes, and then they played...there were people that were playing during the day or at night or like that, but that's like the things they have now, the ____ group...

SIEGAL
Right that they're starting out.

SEGAL
That they started, which had...ours happened to be for bridge, and we all took lessons at the Temple, and then you formed your own group...played up until maybe up until about four years ago.

SIEGAL
That's really nice.

SEGAL
Yeah.

SIEGAL
How about things like the pool? I mean...

SEGAL
We never went.

SIEGAL
You didn't go---

SEGAL

Because we had the pool here, and the boys and all, they would always have people here.

SIEGAL

Well, Michael, I'm at this stage where I'm asking for some more questions from you I guess.

SEVERAL

This is Michael Several. I wanna get some location information.

SEGAL

Okay.

SEVERAL

Your parents came from where?

SEGAL

My parent came...my dad came from Romania, and my mom was from Russia.

SEVERAL

And your...all your children live here?

SEGAL

Yeah, Arcadia...

SIEGAL

Arcadia.

SEGAL

And one lives in Bellflower.

SEVERAL

Okay.

SEGAL

His house, the front door is Bellflower. The back of his house is ____ (10:44).

It's just the way it was built.

SIEGAL

(LAUGHTER) That's funny.

SEVERAL

It's either a big house or...

SEGAL

No! It's not, and it's a cul-de-sac! It's really funny because I always kid them. I say, "How many are in Cerritos and---" He said, "No, we're all in Bellflower."

(LAUGHTER)

SIEGAL

Yeah.

SEVERAL

I was looking through some yearbooks, and I came across...there was an executive director that was hired I guess in 1965, Joe Behar?

SEGAL

Behar. Yeah.

SEVERAL

Behar.

SEGAL

Joseph Be---yeah, Joe Behar Barry, remember?

BARRY SEGAL

We had a couple of 'em...

SEGAL

We had quite a few of them, right.

BARRY SEGAL

We had...I hired when I went to Philadelphia.

SEGAL

Oh that's right! I'd forgot about that.

SEVERAL

Now, because they don't have an executive director now---

BARRY SEGAL

No but I understand it's on their agenda...

SEGAL

They're looking for one...

SIEGAL

Because I was gonna say, I think we could use one.

SEGAL

Definitely.

BARRY SEGAL

I heard it was on their agenda when I talked to...I think Faith told us.

SEGAL

That they're thinking of it.

SIEGAL

Well, what does the executive director do? What did they do?

BARRY SEGAL

What...what...Bruce does now.

SEGAL

Barry never took it. I will tell you what Bruce does.

SIEGAL

But it must be more than that.

BARRY SEGAL

But he would spend more time with it.

SEGAL

Well, he was involved with the school too, Barry, remember?

BARRY SEGAL

He was involved with everything.

SEGAL

Yeah.
BARRY SEGAL
Yeah.
SEGAL
He was involved with the school.
BARRY SEGAL
But they were...we were very disappointed with it---I think we had two executive directors. We had one, then we fired one when we had a second one, and he wasn't doing anything. We fired him. Then we decided not to do it anymore because of the expense, and they weren't that good.
SEGAL
I know at the school---remember the people that ran this school like Betty Fischman forgot the other ladies name? Other gal that worked with her. No, when Betty Fischman did it, remember that other girl that lived in Altadena. I forgot her name. She was a teacher too. When they took over the school, you didn't need an executive director because it was really run very, very well.
BARRY SEGAL
It's still run well.
SEGAL
Oh I know!
BARRY SEGAL
Betty does a good job.
SEGAL
She does a great job.
SEVERAL
She really does.
SEGAL
She really does. So I guess they found---
BARRY SEGAL
But executive directors, you know, spend that much time with the school. He's got...executive director's got so many things he has to do.
SEGAL
Well yeah, but I think Bruce pretty much can do it.
BARRY SEGAL
Well, not really. He's doing the best he can, and I'm not knocking 'im, but we need somebody who is going to spend more time at certain things. He does a lot of printing of things. You'd think the executive director wouldn't do the printing of the...he wouldn't send you out the---
SEGAL
...Blade (13:46) and stuff like that.
SIEGAL

Right.
BARRY SEGAL
Well not only that he wouldn't send out the, you know every week---
SIEGAL
The weekly e-mail.
SEGAL
Yeah and the ____ (13:51)
SIEGAL
Right. Right. It's a lot of paperwork there.
BARRY SEGAL
Well there's a lot of work for an executive director if we can get a good one.
SEVERAL
Yeah what are the things that are non-profits...the executive directors do a lot
of fundraising.
BARRY SEGAL
Yeah. You're right,
SEGAL
But the two...the ones that we had, it ended up Sisterhood would sponsor it or
you know, someone from...some other thing from---
BARRY SEGAL
No but they're talking about hiring another one but---
SEGAL
I don't know...
BARRY SEGAL
They're going to pay him a lot more money, but they're going to expect a lot
more work.
SIEGAL
Right.
SEGAL
But the ones that they had never did fund raise.
SIEGAL
They were just running the office---
SEGAL
Basically...
SIEGAL
Like an operations person.
SEGAL
Right.
BARRY SEGAL
Operations. Which is not what they need. You need somebody more than that.
SIEGAL

Did the rabbi have a secretary like back in the 60's? Did Galpert have a secretary?

BARRY SEGAL
Oh no.

SEGAL
I don't think he ever did.

BARRY SEGAL
Let me tell you something about Galpert.

SIEGAL
Yeah we wanna hear. (CHUCKLES)

BARRY SEGAL
I love him. I tell you he was the greatest guy.

SEGAL
I'm telling you he was!

BARRY SEGAL
But he comes into the office early. He gets to the office 8 in the morning or 830 in the morning.

SIEGAL
Yeah.

BARRY SEGAL
By noon he's out of there.

SIEGAL
He might run into somebody if he stays and have to counsel them apparently.
(LAUGHTER)

BARRY SEGAL
He was out of there. Marlene used to meet him at the shopping center!

SEGAL
I told her at the mall! And I would say, how does he know I'm always here? I can't believe it's like I called him up because you...I would go maybe once a week or a couple---but we always met! It was really funny.

BARRY SEGAL
He knew everybody. He knew everything about everybody.

SIEGAL
So was he there when...if you needed to reach the rabbi, could you reach him?

SEGAL
Yes. Absolutely. Oh yeah.

BARRY SEGAL
And bar mitzvahs? Did I tell you the story that I was...when I was president of the---

SEVERAL
You said sit down.

BARRY SEGAL

No I don't think---(LAUGHTER) You're here to interview her.

SEGAL

No! They've done it. We're fine.

BARRY SEGAL

But the thing is...I would sit with him...we were, like Stu does now, (15:55) sits with Rabbi Graeder, and he would tell me the life history of everybody, every president and past president---

SEGAL

That's the way he was...

BARRY SEGAL

And he would even tell me the ones that were past presidents before I even joined the Temple.

SIEGAL

Like gossip-ables?

SEGAL

No, I don't think...well some of it.

BARRY SEGAL

Some of it.

SEGAL

If he knew something, he would tell you too.

BARRY SEGAL

He would tell you, see this guy? He tells me what he does for a living, and he tells me whether he was a nice guy or whether he's not a nice guy...yeah, I guess it was gossip.

SEGAL

It was gossip really.

BARRY SEGAL

But he was---

SEVERAL

You should've taken notes. We could use that (LAUGHTER).

SIEGAL

We could use that. That's what we need. We need the dirt on the ex-presidents. That's actually it.

SEGAL

Great guy though. My kids loved him! You have no idea. They really---

BARRY SEGAL

He was a great guy.

SEGAL

And you know he married Mickey and Lee.

SIEGAL

Yeah, oh that's nice.

BARRY SEGAL

He always instilled some humor into any marriage too. People at the Temple--- I don't wanna take up your time. You need to interview her. You interviewed me already.

SEGAL

Okay...(LAUGHTER)

BARRY SEGAL

You're here for her now.

SEVERAL

What are the duties of the invitation---preparation of the invitation? I mean...

SEGAL

We had to have the books that we get from...we have almost every company you can imagine, and the nice part for the people is that they can take them home.

SIEGAL

That's very nice.

SEGAL

And it makes it very nice because they sit down with the kids, and they pick what they like. Most of the wedding they come in, usually the bride and the groom and either mother or the mother-in-law...

SIEGAL

I look forward some day to order wedding invitations...

SEGAL

And that's how they come in. Usually the mother or the mother-in-law will come in.

SEVERAL

So...so your job is to get these books from the card producers---

SEGAL

Right. We get them, and then I let them pick which one they like and which ones, and we have some that are way out of line, price-wise and all, and then we had some that are just great---absolutely great. A lot of people didn't know that we did it when they would get invitation for a bar or bat mitzvah they would say where did you have them done, and they would say in the work room! You know, and one would tell the other.

SIEGAL

Was it always in the work room? Same set up?

SEGAL

Always. Always. Except the work room was half the size, and they...that's why it was better that they took them home. Also there was a problem. The mother would come in and pick it, right? And I'd say, "Well don't you want

them to see it? It's their bar or bat mitzvah?" And they would say, "Well yeah but I don't know when they—" So why don't you take this book home this week. Bring it back and take another, and usually that's what...and never has it been the one picked by the mother. Never. Not on your life. Never. The kid always picks something else. It's funny. It really is, but it's good because it should be theirs, and it works out really nice.

SEVERAL

Were you involved in the temple in Philadelphia? Before you came out?

SEGAL

No. No.

SEVERAL

Do you think your involvement here is in part a substitute for the absence of---

SEGAL

Absolutely. Absolutely, and my...you know, when we moved out, in a year Barry's parents moved out.

SIEGAL

Oh! So---

SEGAL

So we had here were Herbie and Gloria, and his sister came too, but they lived in Fairfax, and we would go every weekend on Sunday usually to Fairfax to have dinner. We'd go to cantors with them, and the little kids...and then as they got to be big kids...and they loved it. Absolutely loved it.

SIEGAL

Why did they decide to move to Fairfax?

SEGAL

Because it was more Jewish, and that's what they really wanted.

SIEGAL

They felt that...yeah...yeah...I was thinking about your statement about you know how it was in the nursery school class where they had three or four other Jewish boys---how if you'd been in Philadelphia, that'd have been like, "What's going on here," but here it's like let's have a celebration, there's another Jewish kid in class.

SEGAL

Well, in Philadelphia every single...you had a temple on almost every corner that had a pre-school and a Sunday school and a Hebrew school. Here, I mean, I remember when I went to Barry's store in North Hollywood, and they say, "Oh, where do you live?" and I'd say, "Pasadena" They say, "Pasadena?! Are there any Jews in Pasadena?" and I mean I would hear it so many times like you can't believe because we lived, it was like North Hollywood!

SIEGAL

Did you think about moving to like the San Fernando Valley?

SEGAL

Barry wanted to move nearer to his store, and we had already made friends, and the kids were in school. I said I'm not doing this Barr. We looked, before he bought that store, we looked at a place near San Diego...Palm or something...and he really wanted to buy that store. I said "Barry I'm not taking the kids, and I'm not moving here. Forget it." I mean, and there it was even worse because the temple definitely was not there. In San Diego there are a lot, and it's different, but this store was not anywhere near that.

SIEGAL

Do you know what happened to the Sierra Madre temple?

SEGAL

We belonged to the Sierra Madre temple.

SIEGAL

You said that. I mean, where did it go?

SEGAL

Arcadia.

SIEGAL

It physically moved---

SEGAL

It became the Chara Torah yeah because someone bought the property that the temple was on...

SIEGAL

Oh...

SEGAL

And that's when they started looking for a new property which they had on Foothill Blvd. Right at 2nd and Foothill Blvd where there's a market and stuff now, but they got so much money to sell that that they had enough money to build that other one on you know not in such a busy place, once Arcadia gave them a hard time.

SIEGAL

They did? To have a temple there?

SEGAL

They didn't want a temple on Foothill Blvd.

SIEGAL

Oh.

SEGAL

And the guy who owned it had a little bit...owned the property that they would have bought, I think he had a little bit to do with it too.

SIEGAL

Yeah.

SEGAL

I'm sure he got more money from the market than, you know...

SIEGAL

Yeah does the building the Sierra Madre temple was in still exist?

SEGAL

In Sierra Madre?

SIEGAL

Yeah.

SEGAL

No.

SIEGAL

I was always curious about that.

SEGAL

Nah, that...I think it's apartments...little apartments or something...

SIEGAL

Yeah.

SEGAL

No. And we only went, I think we only belonged there one year, and then we joined here, and then...oh that was another thing, the man who was running the membership at that time---I remember he called Barry and told Barry that, "You have to raise your dues." Now we weren't even 30 years old, and they had one for 25 and a different rate at that time, and Barry said, "Why? I'm paying what everyone else---" but he said, "Well you're a pharmacist, and you make more money so you can afford to pay the full amount." And that really made us upset. I think that was when we said, "You know what---let's go over to Sierra Madre and see if we like it." It was very nice, but there were no young people. None whatsoever. There really wasn't, and we already had...I think I was pregnant, or I had just had the second one. I said, "Barry this isn't going to work. The kids are going to have Hebrew school and Sunday school," and they didn't have a school, but they had a rabbi who prepared the kids for Hebrew School.

SEVERAL

Has any of your family moved out here? Any of your brothers, sisters, cousins, aunts, uncles?

SIEGAL

But Barry's parents...

SEGAL

Barry's parents...yeah, but no...none of my family.

SEVERAL

Same here.

SEGAL

And then you know, I mean they came and they came to the boys' bar mitzvahs, and they came for Mickey's wedding. They do this you know, but---

SEVERAL

They rather freeze, ____.

SEGAL

It was different. It's different. My sister's 13 years younger than them, and my brother probably would have moved here, but his wife would not move here. Her family was all there! And my sister never really would---my dad died when he was 49. My mom raised my sister, and they were very close. They would never move here. We tried. When my dad passed away, my mom came with my sister, and she stayed with us for 6 months. She got a job right away at Robinsons which she loved, but after Christmas, they let her go, and she had worked at Sears for many years. As a matter of fact they kept the job for her because of so many years and she had taken off for 6 months. When she went back, she got her job back. So that was another reason, but my sister came every year. Then my nieces came every...I mean that's the way it was, but nobody wanted to move.

SIEGAL

Well thank you so much.

SEGAL

Oh you're welcome because Shiela called me, and she opens the gift shop today, but she's not feeling well, so I'm gonna go, and you know, we have the gift shop open Sunday.

SIEGAL

Oh really? So is it successful? I heard there are 450 people in the Temple.

SEGAL

I wanna tell you. I've never seen so many ladies in my whole life come in to check our gift shop, and you wanna know what they said?

SIEGAL

What?

SEGAL

They said, "Where did you get this lovely stuff?" They spent over \$500.

SIEGAL

Oh that's great. So it was a banner day. It was good you opened.

SEGAL

And I said, "Well wait a minute. I go to the gift show. I get the catalogues like you people." I mean that's the only way you can buy.

SIEGAL

Well, you just have a good eye.

Date:

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