

A TEI Project

Interview of Robin Evans

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SEVERAL

Today is January 9, 2012. I am with Robin Evans. My name is Michael Several and we are going to explore a number of items, one of which is a rather unique experience for Jews in the San Gabriel Valley and that is going to a Yiddish High School. I first want to get some background from you, of your family. What generation came to the United States? Was it your grandparents?

EVANS

Right my grandparents came in 1914 and they came from the Ukraine basically. It was the little town called the Shtetl the area of Chenekev Guberniya. Guberniya is like the county, so it was in the county of Chekenev and that was in the Ukraine area of Russia. So they came in 1914 and they actually settled in Omaha, Nebraska which actually had a big Jewish community there. So my grandfather was a shopkeeper and they were very involved in Russia in the Socialist movement. Of course the revolution was in 1917 right, so they came just before the revolution and they became very active in the Socialist movement here, in Omaha. That was my mother's side of the family who was more politically active. My father's side of the family came and they were in Springfield, Massachusetts. So, both of them came around the same time. My parents met in California after the war in 1947.

SEVERAL

So your grandparents both came from the same area in the Ukraine?

EVANS

Well my mother's parents came from the same area and my father's family also came from a similar area, but we are not exactly sure. And the reason we know that is because they spoke the same dialect in Yiddish so they must not have been from very different places. So my father's family was orthodox, but my mother's family was very secular and very progressive Jews. So when we came

along we got involved more with the Yiddish movement and the secular Jewish movement and so instead of joining a synagogue we went to a kinder shul and then middle shul, which was the Yiddish progressive movement at the time.

SEVERAL

So when your grandparents came to the United States did your grandmother come as a young girl then or...?

EVANS

They were married already.

SEVERAL

Oh, they were married?

EVANS

Yes. They were married already. They were going to be married and my grandfather may have come first and my grandmother came later. So they were already planning to get married and they were probably in their early 20s.

SEVERAL

Oh OK, so they got married in..?

EVANS

In 1914.

SEVERAL

In 1914, about the time they came here.

EVANS

They already had known each other in Russia.

SEVERAL

They got married in Omaha?

EVANS

Yes, I think so.

SEVERAL

So you mentioned something about Springfield, Massachusetts.

EVANS

Right. That was my father's family.

SEVERAL

OK. I see, OK. Your grandparents from your mother's side were in Omaha and your grandparents from your father's side were in Springfield.

EVANS

Right. And my dad came out to California; actually he came after the war with some friends because he was going to be a songwriter. My father was a songwriter. He was coming to Hollywood to have his music published. My mother's family came here because of my grandmother's health and they needed to get out of Omaha because she had very bad asthma, so they sold their store and moved to California and they had been very involved in the labor movement in Omaha, Nebraska. My mother was involved in the union

organizing activities there. So that was something they were very involved in and always had a very strong interest in, you know, concern about the workers and their rights and unionization. My mother worked as a Union organizer.

SEVERAL

Did you know your grandmother?

EVANS

Oh yeah. She lived with us.

SEVERAL

Particularly being involved in the Socialist movement she must have encountered or had stories to tell about the attitude toward Socialists during World War I, and the post war period and the _____ raids.

EVANS

You know, I think with the Jews at that time, everybody was an activist, you know? Most Jews at that time, there was so much going on at that time with the Bundist and the Socialists and the Communists and the Haskalah. There was just so much going on, but above all that was the grinding poverty and the anti-Semitism. So most people at that time knew, especially in 1914 with the war, you know World War I and with the chaos and the problems with the Czar, they just wanted to get out of the country. Everyone was moving away because their life was so horrible and they never knew what was going to happen next. Especially in the areas between Poland and Russia, you know. That entire problem and they were very bad to the Jews, so most of them who could get out, got out of there.

SEVERAL

But once they got to this country, I mean being active as a union organizer and being active in the Socialist scene, they must have also encountered things about political oppression that was taking place at that time.

EVANS

Yeah they did, but what was interesting was they had in a sense almost like an underground, you know where they did their work and they had their connections with the people. Things were kind of underground because it was. My mother organized boycotts of the JC Penny Store because they would not allow African Americans to work anywhere but in the basement. She organized labor strikes and things like that. In fact, she at one point, she had to leave Omaha and go to Chicago because she had come to the attention of the FBI and they sent an FBI agent and it turned out that he was Jewish and he came and he said to the Jewish community, let it be known that this would be a good idea. And she kind of disappeared and left Omaha and went to Chicago. So yes, it was true; you were in danger if you were too active. And then of course during the McCarthy era, they also had to be quiet and I think that is one of the reasons why people did not really advertise very much about the kinder shuls. You

know, we were there and then an interesting thing with the kinder shuls was there were a lot of different kinder shuls. There were some that were with the arbitring, they were the Socialists and there were some with the IWO, the international workers organization they were more communists. They supported the Soviet Union. They did not want to believe the atrocities that Stalin had perpetrated and that's why you had like different _____ movements and different organizations. So once I think they realized these terrible atrocities with the Soviet Union, the Jews started leaving and things really changed and they lost a lot of the romance.

SEVERAL

Where did your parents meet?

EVANS

My parents met in Los Angeles.

SEVERAL

They did?

EVANS

My mother's parents had a little apartment building and my father came with his two friends and it was very hard to get apartments after the war in 1947. Housing was impossible to get, but they had a cousin who lived in one of the apartments and they allowed my father to come with his friends to stay there for a while and he met my mom and it was immediate. They were not young, my father was 30, my mother was 29 at the time. They had been through the war, the war years where people put their lives on hold. My father was in Panama during the war.

SEVERAL

Which branch of the service?

EVANS

He was in the army. He was a very small man. My parents were very small. They said if they're taking Mishi into the army, we are going to lose this war, and they sent him to Panama to guard the Panama Canal.

SEVERAL

He did a good job.

EVANS

He did a good job. There is a great story about how he left. He was like you know 5 foot.2, 110 pounds and you know he came out 5 years later 5 foot 5, solid muscle at 150 pounds, so he was in the war but fortunately he was guarding the station in Panama.

SEVERAL

So your parents met in Los Angeles. Were they politically active in any way?

EVANS

They were very involved with the Democratic Party. My mother was involved with the Democratic Party and we were involved with the Civil Rights movement.

SEVERAL

Your father prior to 1947, was he politically involved?

EVANS

My father was not as much. It was my mother and her family. My dad was not that politically active because he came from a much different life. They were orthodox Jews, they had 7 kids in the family, they were struggling just to make a living. Whereas my mother's family was a lot more politically active, just I would say a little bit more of the intelligencia for some reason.

SEVERAL

Where was the apartment?

EVANS

On 14th Street in Los Angeles.

SEVERAL

14th and what?

EVANS

Probably in the downtown area. They were not involved in the LA Jewish community at that time, you in the 30s and 20s, because by 1947 it was already on its decline the whole Boyle Heights thing. We knew people, but my parents were not born and raised here.

SEVERAL

Let me back up here. So your grandmother came out to Los Angeles when, in the 1920s?

EVANS

No, no they did not come until, I think they probably came... that is a good question. I think they might have come shortly around 1945 or 1946, after the war. They were in Omaha during the war, I think.

SEVERAL

What were the occupations of your grandparents again? Your grandfather was a shopkeeper and...?

EVANS

And my grandfather on my dad's side was a carpenter.

SEVERAL

Your grandparents came out to California for health reasons?

EVANS

Yeah.

SEVERAL

Now when they came here, your parents met in 1947, they got married. What was their connection with the Jewish community at that time? Were they members of any temples or anything?

EVANS

No. That is when they started the kinder shul and so there was an organization of kinder shuls and middle shuls, the secular Jewish movement and they knew people who were involved in this organization. In fact, one of them lived on our street and she was a school teacher and she was the one who I think got my mother involved in that. They just knew Jewish families who were secular Jews and they started a kinder shul, so it was an organized group. They had a curriculum. They had a Board of Directors. The big director was a man called Itcha Goldberg and he was very, very well known. He was like the head of the secular Jewish movement of the IWO in this country and he would go all over the country to visit these kinder shuls and middle shuls and he lived to be quite elderly like 103 or something. So they had this organization and they had 13 kinder shuls in Los Angeles, so there was the San Gabriel Valley kinder shul and we had probably 50 or 60 kids and then there was the I think they had one in Hollywood, they had one in east LA, they had one on West Adams, Phillip Balkan was one, Bowers was one. And then we would all get together periodically once a year to do a big concert or a big presentation.

SEVERAL

What year were you born?

EVANS

I was born in '53 and I started kinder shul in 1958.

SEVERAL

Ok so you were 5 years old. You have one brother?

EVANS

I have a brother and he was born in 51, so he started kinder shul probably in 1956.

SEVERAL

After your parents got married, they lived on 14th Street you said?

EVANS

Well yes, but then they moved in 1951 when my brother was born to Monterey Park.

SEVERAL

Why did they move?

EVANS

A lot of people were moving to Monterey Park. It was a bedroom community, brand new streets, they could get an inexpensive house, you know the typical suburban sprawl that happened after the war when these houses were being built and they could have their own little house and it was a nice little area.

Middle class, but the whole area was moving and so we actually had a lot of Jewish families on our street and a lot of young families. We all grew up together, went to school together.

SEVERAL

Now when your dad came out here to be a songwriter, did he succeed in that?

EVANS

Well no. As a matter of fact, it is a long, long story. A very sweet story, but he did not. He had some of his songs published and some of his songs on the radio, but it was a very hard life and his agent who had been working for him had a heart attack and it was very hard for him to get beyond that so he did not, and he worked very hard his whole life as salesman and then worked in a liquor store but he always had his music. And an interesting story, my brother is a producer director for a television station in North Carolina and they just did a World War II experience; North Carolina's World War II Experience, and in that they used one of my dad's songs. So, it was very beautiful. When my dad was 70, I had all of his music recorded. I went to a studio and had all of his music recorded. We still have all of his music and it is all very nice. It was hard in those days.

SEVERAL

Your mom, did she work?

EVANS

She did not work all the time but then later on she did market research. She always worked in secretarial work for many, many years but when she got married she did not.

SEVERAL

So your brother was born in 1951 and you were born in '53, growing up in Monterey Park and in '58 you ...?

EVANS

Started kinder shul.

SEVERAL

Now what do you know about the history of that shul? I mean that school. First of all do you know when it started?

EVANS

I think it started around 1955 and I remember we started right at the beginning. They had the first teachers and we used to meet in this old Knights of Columbus building. It was really cold and drafty, it was like _____, you know, it was depressing. But then shortly thereafter, so probably '59 I remember we moved into another building. We used the Salvation Army building in East LA. It was on the border of Montebello and east LA, and it was a very nice space and we were there for a lot of years. We had music and we would come in, it was on a Tuesday after school so we would get there about

3:30. We would first go out and play for a little while until they started the classes. We would have music, Yiddish, literature or drama depending, and then we would have history, so we always had four classes that we would go to.

SEVERAL

And it was 1 day a week?

EVANS

1 day a week. Every week we would come and then a lot of times we would have extra rehearsals on the weekends if we were doing a performance. We always had a Hanukah performance and it was always at the City Terrace Cultural Club and we would go there and would sing for the ____ Club and they would always give us treats and Hanukah geld, so we did that every December and in the spring we always had a big concert at the Wilshire ____ Theatre and all the kinder shuls would come and we would all sing. So the singing teachers and the drama teachers would prepare the children in their own kinder shuls and then we would all get together on stage and we would do our singing. They loved the kids. There was so much affection and so much joy. It was all about brotherhood, non violence. I just remember the songs that we sang were about peace and brotherhood and the United Nations because it was so new, it was a big part. You know, it really molded all of us to be very humanitarian. We all got involved in the Civil Rights movement; we all got involved in the anti war movements. It was always about humanism, non violence. We were very involved in the Civil Rights movement.

SEVERAL

In terms of the school, how many grade levels were there in that school?

EVANS

That is a good question because the children were from 5 when they started and then we graduated at 12 or 13, so there was probably like a young group and then an older group. I do not think there were more than 2, maybe there were 3 groups and they would alternate through. I just remember that the kids that were together, you know there was like my group and then there was my brother's group which was 2 years ahead of us.

SEVERAL

So each group then would have more than 1 grade level from a regular school?

EVANS

Yeah, you'd probably had like 2 or 3 grades together. You probably would have like from 5 to 8 and then from 9 to 12. I would say that was probably how it worked, and the kids, you know, we would do our different classes. We would do our homework and read stories and we would act in little plays and we would have folk dancing and singing, and we would have our friends there, and on _____ we would do the ____ things and on Hanukah we would do the Hanukah things. Passover was obviously a big thing because of the freedom.

We had a lot of history and everything was really tied to the history. We had Bible stories, but they were not like about the miracle of God, it was always more about what is this story teaching us about life and what it means, things like that.

SEVERAL

Do you recall or have a sense of how many students were in the school?

EVANS

I would say we probably had about 40 kids, 40 or 50. It varied, but I would say maybe 40 kids.

SEVERAL

What was the geographic area? I mean were all the kids primarily from Monterey Park, Montebello?

EVANS

Yeah Monterey Park, Montebello and I think we had people from Alhambra, a few from Pasadena.

SEVERAL

You did? Do you remember the names of any?

EVANS

Not in Pasadena, but in some of the other areas.

SEVERAL

This school was located in Monterey Park?

EVANS

It was actually in Montebello. It was just like on the border of Montebello and East LA.

SEVERAL

Do you know the address?

EVANS

It was the Salvation Army. I am sure if I looked it up I could probably find it. It was a nice building. It was a newer building so I am sure it would still be there. The other, the Knights of Columbus building that probably does not exist anymore. It was a pretty shabby building at that time.

SEVERAL

How many months did you go to school each year?

EVANS

We started in September and we went through June.

SEVERAL

You did? So it was a regular school year. What were the hours? You got there at 3:30, four classes, it sounds like you would be getting out at 8 o'clock at night.

EVANS

No, because the classes were 25 minutes. We were kids. They were short. They were smart. We would probably have about 20 minutes of class, so I think we left at about 6:00 and got home around 6:30. So it was probably from 3:30 to 6, two and a half hours.

SEVERAL

In that, you also learned to read Yiddish, right?

EVANS

We did. I mean they taught us the letters of the alphabet and we had books and some children were more adept at it than others. We had materials that we could learn, but you know, those of us who had Yiddish speaking parents or Yiddish speaking grandparents, we of course learned it better than those who did not. You know you teach children Hebrew, right? And they are not listening to Hebrew every day at home. We were listening to Yiddish at home.

SEVERAL

Your parents did not speak Yiddish, did they?

EVANS

Yes.

SEVERAL

Oh they did?

EVANS

Yes and my grandmother lived with us for a number of years, probably about 5 years and they would speak Yiddish so we heard a lot of Yiddish. Unfortunately today I probably speak the level of a 4th grader because that is where I kind of stopped learning. Like any language, you hear it and you hear it every day, you are going to pick it up. I can understand a lot.

SEVERAL

You can?

EVANS

Yeah.

SEVERAL

I grew up in a house where my grandparents spoke Yiddish and I did not pickup anything.

EVANS

Well you know, I was going to school to learn it and if I was hearing them to talk especially telling each other things they did not want the kids to hear, so I would just sit there and listen and I knew what they were talking about and I would say something and they would look at me like how do you know this, and well you are sending me to kinder schul to learn this so I should learn this. But we had a funny thing because in kinder shul we learned to speak, well you know when the Jews came here they all spoke in kind of a different dialect.

SEVERAL

I did not know that.

EVANS

Oh you did not know that? Well this is very true because Yiddish is spoken with a number of dialects and if you come from one part of the Yiddish speaking world, you would speak it, for instance our family came from the Ukraine, _____ was kind of our center, and they would say things like otaze, okay, bread is broyt but we would say brate, so we would elongate the A's. They would say bread, we would say brate, they would say azoy, we would say azay. So when the Jews came here it was important to organize Yiddish in such a way that everybody kind of read it the same way, said it the same way and they actually started this kind of I guess you would call it a lexicon, a Yiddish lexicon, they put it in a Weinreicht, put it in a dictionary and put it all down in a formal way so that we would all say Yiddish the same way. Some people would say nisht and some people would say nit. There was the German, there was the Russian, there was the Polish, there were many different ways of speaking Yiddish and there were the Galitzianers and they all spoke Yiddish a little differently. If you go to any Yiddish thing today and someone is about to tell you a poem in Yiddish, they would usually start out saying, I know whatever I say, some of you are going to say we do not say it that way, because that's very true. So when I was in kinder shul, I always learned the proper way which was broynt, azoy, but at home they would always say, we don't say it that way, we say it this way. It was always very fun and when we would have to recite something, we would have to recite it properly. I was visiting my Yiddish teacher and she said you know Weinreicht, the dictionary they have like a Yiddish group they get together and they spend most of their time looking things up in Weinreicht, and saying we don't say it that way, how do you say it? They kind of sanitized the Yiddish because they didn't want it to be so German.

SEVERAL

Oh really, I would almost think the opposite. They would adopt the German.

EVANS

No they didn't want it to be German Yiddish, they wanted it to be Yiddish Yiddish, and Yiddish is different. Yiddish is a very interesting language because it has so many words from different languages, right? I mean English does too, but Yiddish definitely has and a third of it is really straight from Hebrew, so if you're reading Yiddish, you really have to know a lot about the Hebrew.

SEVERAL

Did your shul have any contact with any of the kinder shuls and that were part of other groups? The IWO?

EVANS

No, they did not agree with each other and they did not get along and they did not talk to each other, which is of course so typical, right? But it's so ridiculous, so no we didn't. We didn't go to the _____ terrain and we didn't go to the other things, but we had like our own thing, but in the real world I think we used a lot of their materials and I think they used our materials and things like that.

SEVERAL

During this time did your parents have any... When they lived in Monterey Park, were they members of any temples or anything?

EVANS

No because remember we were not religious at all, zero. We were anti religious. We thought that was just ridiculousness, complete secular humanists.

SEVERAL

So you didn't go to services. How about on High Holidays, did you go?

EVANS

We didn't go to school. My parents said you don't go to school because out of respect for the Jews who are observant you don't go to school, but we didn't go to temple. I don't think, and a lot of my generation who grew up like that, I think it was in a sense a mistake and I think even my Yiddish teacher said, you know I think we made a mistake, because we missed out on a lot about what Judaism is. And most of us, I belong to a reformed temple, but it's a progressive reformed temple, but we are kind of religious cripples.

SEVERAL

I know, I grew up in a secular home. And I can say at this point in my life, although I have kind of flirted with trying to get into it, it's a waste the time for me, you know? I mean, I am just...

EVANS

What happens is it is something that I think is very comforting and I love the music and I love being there. My children were B'Nai Mitzvahed. I was very interested in having them know what Judaism was, even though we are, I would not say an interfaith family, my husband is not Jewish but he is totally committed to Judaism and how we have educated our children, but it is something I think you learn very young. So I would say that I am not a particularly observant Jew, but I am very involved in the temple, very happy with living my Jewish life and I know a lot about Judaism. The secular Jews like me who studied the history and studied all of the language and the history and the drama and the literature and all of that, we know more than kids who went to temple because they didn't learn about those things.

SEVERAL

Was your brother bar mitzvahed?

EVANS

No. We had a right of passage between kinder shul and middle shul, which took place at the same time, so at 13. We graduated from kinder shul and we had to do a research project. We had to study. We had to do like a Jewish learning project and then we had a graduation ceremony, so in way it was a right of passage. No Torah, no praying, nothing like that, but we did have a celebration and we did music and we did literature, we did history and that was the basis of our secular Jewish education. It was very rich.

SEVERAL

This right of passage was actually a group thing, it wasn't an individual thing.

EVANS

Exactly. The whole class would graduate and we would have a big celebration. Not a big celebration, but like a big party. Not like in today's world with the big B'Nai mitzvahs, but I mean we would have like a gathering of our families and our friends and we would do our, it was like a graduation. It marked the passage from kinder shul to middle shul. And then middle shul was just a scream, it was a great experience.

SEVERAL

During this time you were going to the kinder shul, where were you going to regular school?

EVANS

I was going to school in Monterey Park in Montebello. It was just grammar school, middle school, junior high school and then high school.

SEVERAL

Did your friends from the kinder shul also go to those schools? Were those your friends in the grammar school or did you also have other friends?

EVANS

No, we had friends from all over. I only had a couple of friends that lived, I had one friend that lived on my street and we went to school together. We shared our kinder shul things at school which was kind of nice, but a lot of my friends were Jewish and they attended temple B'Nai _____ or you know, temple Beth David, so we were connected that way. There were a lot of Jewish kids in my school come to think of it.

SEVERAL

Did your parents do any shopping in Boyle Heights? You know, did they go there? Your parents obviously did not keep kosher, but did they think they go there because they were gastronomic Jews, they liked the rye bread?

EVANS

Oh, you mean did we eat Jewish food?

SEVERAL

Yes, right.

EVANS

You know what is interesting, in Monterey Park there was a Jewish bakery called the Atlantic Score Bakery and it was a Jewish bakery so we could get everything we wanted, rye bread and we could get anything we wanted, rye, pumpernickel, challah, and everything. You could get the best _____ everything right there at this Jewish bakery on Atlantic Square, which is you know right there and then we also had deli. We had Pete's Deli, so we could, we didn't have any problem. We didn't have to go into Fairfax, Boyle Heights or anything like that to get that food and actually by that time, I think Canter's had already moved, and Boyle Heights was already becoming a Hispanic neighborhood, so we didn't really, so when you think about it at that time, we didn't have the need to go far because there were so many Jews in Monterey Park.

SEVERAL

Yeah. I try to explore what connections to Judaism, not just the religion but also the cultural aspects of it and it seems this is one thing. There was a Jewish delicatessen in Pasadena up through World War II and it was kind of a meeting place for Jews in the community.

EVANS

What was it called?

SEVERAL

It was called, I think the Fair Oaks Market or something, but the sons were interviewed as the father had died and at least one of them said the gastronomic Jews who knew Yiddish and were more secular and had no connection with the temple went there.

EVANS

Right, right. A lot of people, there were a lot of secular Jews who were not religious and their families were. The live of religious Jews, many times when they came to this country they deliberately abandoned those very ritualistically lives because they were so hard and you couldn't keep them and live here and survive. You know, you had to work on Saturdays and you didn't know if the food was kosher. You were lucky to eat so, and the women had to work and the women couldn't spend all of their time after a while, they couldn't spend all of their time making sure everything was perfect so things changed. And we also have to remember there were a lot of people that deliberately rejected that because it was like old fashioned and they didn't want to be old fashioned. They wanted to be Americans.

SEVERAL

I had my grandparents; I had one on my mother's side who came from a socialist background in Lithuania. I mean the story I heard was he was arrested and it was on my mother's side which was very unreligious, all of them.

EVANS

Right. They were the new generation. And if you read the literature and you look at what was going on in those days with the progressive Jews and the socialists movements and even the women, the women embraced this so much. The Russian revolution was all about equality and all about bringing people into the new century, and the women were allowed to do this. They embraced it very much and many Jewish women embraced it very much.

SEVERAL

In the kinder shul, were there any political issues?

EVANS

Yes. It was all about politics.

SEVERAL

I mean you were growing up, let's see you were there in late '58 through...?

EVANS

Yes, all throughout the 60s. We were very involved in all of the civil rights movement, we were involved in the anti war movement, we were involved in the grape boycott. I mean, we had the United Farm Workers sign on our window. For 10 years we didn't eat grapes.

SEVERAL

So when you say involved, what...?

EVANS

We demonstrated, we went on marches, we wrote letters. In 1967, I was in middle shul and we all got on a bus and we drove up to San Francisco and we marched in the peace mobilization of 1967. We were very involved. We had people in Delano and marching with the United Farm Workers. We were involved in all kinds of demonstrations and all kinds of anti-war demonstrations and you know, you could just think about how in those days, our parents had marched in the 30s you know against Hitler and were involved in Spanish civil war and all of those progressive causes. We marched in the 60s, that's was what we did. Our parents you know were involved, and we were always involved in political activism, always.

SEVERAL

So when you graduated into the middle shula, where was that school?

EVANS

It was in Los Angeles. I don't remember what street it was on, but I do remember it was off of Vermont, Santa Monica. Between Vermont and Santa Monica Boulevard, in that area. It was Saturday morning so we went on Saturday morning from like I think 9:00 until about 12:30.

SEVERAL

So your parents drove you there?

EVANS

We had carpools, yep. I spent a lot of time in carpools. We would get picked up on a Saturday morning and we would drive and we would stay there, I think maybe it was longer than that. Maybe it was early afternoon until 2 or 3.

SEVERAL

So how many students do you recall were in that schul?

EVANS

I think it was bigger than kinder shul, so maybe we had 30 kids in kinder shul and maybe 40 kids in middle shul, I can't remember. You know when you are a kid, you don't really remember.

SEVERAL

So what was that broken down?

EVANS

It probably had more than that, because it was maybe broken down different anyway.

SEVERAL

What was this school so broken down into these kind of large groups?

EVANS

Well middle shul was kind of like from bar mitzvah age to confirmation age, right? So we went probably from 12 or 13 to 15 or 16 and we graduated around 16, because I remember when I was in my senior year in high school, I had already graduated the shul and I graduated high school when I was 17. So I think we went from about 12 or 13 to 15 and 16, which is kind of confirmation age and that was wonderful. That was crazy teenagers being involved in the civil rights, the music and singing and marching and the history and how Jews were fighting for freedom.

SEVERAL

Kind of a value oriented cultural centered education. It was not religious other than maybe religious stories in how they touch upon the culture.

EVANS

Exactly. Like you would hear the stories of Solomon and you would hear the story of course of Moses right, because of Passover, and you would hear about the Maccabees and you would hear, they would talk about ____ and what it meant and ____ how that was like an ecological thing. They were into all of these causes years before they became popular. We were into you know brotherhood and ecology and the environment and helping people and civil rights and women rights and gay and lesbian rights and all of these things that you didn't even talk about in school.

SEVERAL

I remember as a measure of the stigma of homosexuality in the '60s, you know, I knew people who were avoiding the draft and going to Canada. I met one person who stayed in this country but went underground. He just never showed

up for the draft. I never heard of anybody saying I'm gay to keep out of the army.

EVANS

Really! The gays want everything that other people don't want, right? Nobody wants to get married, they want to get married. Nobody wants to go to military, they want to go to military. It's very, very cute. I think absolutely it's like we go, okay guys, you know?

SEVERAL

In a sense that's why I was kind of mad they got rid of Don't ask, Don't tell, because I always thought that could be a safety valve. Now there's another unpopular wars and you can go in there and say I am gay.

EVANS

Right. What is interesting though, and I am really happy about is in today's world, in the kids today, it's such a non issue, it's so beautiful. They don't see color and they don't see gender, they don't see sexual preference, they just are not, it is such a non issue. And with us it was like we saw color and we had to break down the color barrier. Nobody can say they were a communist, nobody can say they were, you couldn't even mention the Soviet Union or communism and today these things are like non-issues.

SEVERAL

Except the Republican Party.

EVANS

Yeah, and they are all trying to talk to a new generation who are going, really? Did you see the republican thing last night when Mitt Romney said that they should overturn Roe v. Wade, and I go well, that just cost you the election because who is going to vote for that and the kids today they are like, really? Are you kidding? What planet are you on? Because their world is so fundamentally broader than ours was.

SEVERAL

It's astounding. I have two daughters and I am just, when I think of the people they know, the diversity of people in their lives and then I think back in mine, I mean, I am just astounded.

EVANS

I was really lucky. When I was in Monterey Park we had a lot of cultural diversity, but I didn't realize it. My next door neighbor was Mexican and across we had, I went to school with Japanese students and Chinese students and Filipino students, all of these different students but somehow it never really registered because we just were all American kids.

SEVERAL

Did you have friends that were Japanese?

EVANS

Oh yeah! They were my Girl Scout Troop and my neighbors, which is one of the reasons I think I was so interested in learning Spanish, because my next door neighbor was Mexican and she would always bring food over to my father because my mother was such a terrible cook and all the neighbors helped my dad who was never getting any good food, so she would always bring him food. She would always speak Spanish with me although she spoke English perfectly and you know, she would practice with me and everything, but we just all were fine and we never even thought about it until years later and I thought wow, I went to school with all of these kids. Montebello was kind of a melting pot in that respect, we all got together and we were fine. We didn't have African-American kids and I think that was the difference.

SEVERAL

My elementary or high school was definitely just all with whites. The only contact I had with Hispanics was in the Air Explores. There was one later, I met a number of years later, who was working for Caesar Chavez, but my high school was segregated. The Hispanics were put into the shop classes and us whites were trapped.

EVANS

They are all probably working real jobs now.

SEVERAL

Or retired.

EVANS

That's right with a good pension.

SEVERAL

In the kinder shul, how many teachers did you have?

EVANS

Good question. We basically had two teachers and in kinder shul it was Ethel and Sig Weinstein. She would do music and literature in Yiddish and he would do history, social studies, and also drama. So they would split us.

SEVERAL

Each time you went, you would see both teachers?

EVANS

I think so. As I am thinking back, she may have dealt more with the little kids and he may have dealt more with the older kids. I have a vision more of a sense that she had us more when we were younger and as we got older we went to hear more history and more about the social studies, history and the literature.

SEVERAL

It's interesting that the music teacher you had is still alive and you have contact.

EVANS

She is.

SEVERAL

Now in the middle shula, how many?

EVANS

It seems like in middle shul, we had more teachers. I think we had because the day was longer and teenagers are harder to deal with, we had I think a singing teacher who was separate and we had a literature and drama teacher, we had a separate Yiddish teacher and I think we had 4 or 5 teachers because they would rotate us through. Probably three classes would rotate through.

SEVERAL

In terms of your Yiddish speaking skills, about what level would you compared that with?

EVANS

I would say that I am a pretty good beginner. I would maybe say intermediate.

SEVERAL

Would it be comparable to somebody who say took three years of German or Spanish or whatever?

EVANS

Yes, I would say that. It is interesting, I can understand quite a bit and I can come up with a lot of words and statements, things I don't even know I know, because I learned it so much when I was a child and I heard it all my life. My mother towards the end of her life, she just liked to hear Yiddish and I would talk to her a little bit in Yiddish and she really liked that a lot.

SEVERAL

You started learning the Yiddish from the very beginning of your time in the kinder shula?

EVANS

Formally right, but I learned Yiddish from the beginning. My parents would talk to me in Yiddish and my grandmother would talk to me in Yiddish, so I mean I learned it, I heard it, but when I started learning it formally I was in kinder shul.

SEVERAL

It was from the very beginning of the...

EVANS

First they would teach us the letters and then we had a little book that we would read and then we would learn songs in Yiddish. That was a big part of our learning in Yiddish. So she would teach us a song and then she would teach us the words and what they meant and a lot of the vocabulary that we would need to learn like the days of the week, the bulba song, the potato song. I don't know if you know that, and then there is like parts of the body songs and then there is just lots of different things. They would teach you the vocabulary in the songs, so we learned them all.

SEVERAL

Do you recall inspectors coming out to looking at the school?

EVANS

That's a good question. I don't remember in kinder shul, but in fact, I asked my middle shul teacher this when we visited her over the holidays and she said that they actually did have every year a ____ would come. He would be with her because she was kind of like the principal of the school, and they would talk about the curriculum, talk about what we were learning, just go over all of the things and it was organized in such a way and they had a set curriculum of books that we used and things that we did and what we were supposed to learn, so once a year she said he would come. I remember him coming once, it was a big deal. He did a seminar for us who were teenagers and he talked about Jewish identity and he said that every Jew finds their identity in a different way, at a different time, and he passed out a postcard and he said when you find your Jewish identity, send me this postcard. It impacted me very greatly at that time.

SEVERAL

So when did you find yours?

EVANS

Well, I lost the postcard. You know, I always felt very comfortable in my secular Judaism, always, it was such a part of me. It was almost like living in a little parallel universe. I always lived in a parallel universe and I always felt like it because my perspective on things was so different growing up in the cold war, but being really raised by socialist parents, being raised in a time you know, we just lived in a very progressive... People didn't know about the grape boycott. We didn't eat grapes, but nobody knew that. I mean people didn't have the United Farm Worker's sign up in their window for 10 years, but we did.

SEVERAL

What was your personal relationship in the regular school to the non-Jews who now are republicans or politically indifferent?

EVANS

Well, I was always so much more aware of what was happening and I always knew so much more than they did because I was educated in this. I had only one run-in with a teacher and that was when I was in either 5th or 6th grade. This was the time of the Freedom Marches in Alabama and they were breaking the law, right? These black people and these white activists were sitting in areas that were only for whites. And so of course this was something we talked about every day at home and supported immensely, and I remember being in school and one of the kids or somebody saying, well this is terrible, they shouldn't be breaking the law. These were the Jim Crow laws. And I said you know, sometimes laws have to be broken. I was a little revolutionary socialist. So, I

said, you know sometimes laws have to be broken. And I don't know, we got into it and he told the teacher or somebody told the teacher during class. Well, I had to stay after school.

SEVERAL

Did you really?

EVANS

So I got in trouble.

SEVERAL

I know it wasn't Tuesday.

EVANS

Really. I don't think it was. And so, I had to stay after school and my mother had to come in. So of course my mother said, well, I am sorry that this happened, but this is how I raised my daughter, to have a voice and to care about the world and this is how she should speak out if there is something that's wrong. So she totally supported me and when we left she said, Robin you have to be respectful, but you have to state your opinion. So the teacher just kind of like backed down and she just realized that you know, I was not doing anything wrong. I was being taught to speak out if something was not right. But after that we discussed the need to be respectful and to be polite, but boy, this was not something that was going to go down easy.

SEVERAL

You mentioned at the kinder shul there was an annual event at the Wilshire _____ Theater. When you were in the middle shul did you also have annual events?

EVANS

Yes we did. When we were in kinder shul, we were mostly just like in the chorus and we would sing the songs, but when we were in middle shul we put on these big plays, Yiddish plays by _____ for our parents. Sometimes they had a series of skits. They would pull out these great plays in Yiddish and the kids would learn the Yiddish and they would say it in Yiddish. So my brother who does not know any Yiddish was a good actor and he always got the parts, the big parts, so he can recite all the Yiddish lines from all these plays, but he doesn't know what they mean. It's very funny. But we did, we learned the Yiddish, wonderful stories, wonderful plays, poems. A lot of times we would do something with young _____ and the Warsaw Ghetto and we would commemorate the Warsaw Ghetto. I think every year they had a theme and then we would do all the songs and all of the stories and things about the theme. One year, I remember we did a theme about the immigration. I think it was like a triangle shape fire anniversary so we did a whole thing about all of the Yiddish poems at that time, Morris Rosenfeld's songs and poems, and beautiful things. And then one year we did a whole thing on I think it was Parrits, _____ Parrits

and all his stories and we did the _____ play. Every year we would do something so one year I think it was about the Warsaw Ghetto uprising and we sang the _____ and all of the songs, the story of Itzik Wittenberg and we just had such a rich knowledge of things that happened and how it affected us as Jews and progressive Jews and we were very involved like I said in the civil rights movement so we were always involved in this struggle for the African-Americans, very involved in that, Martin Luther King, and what was happening at that time, the anti-war, very much against the war in Vietnam.

SEVERAL

Do you recall what books you had both in the kinder shula? I mean you brought some here.

EVANS

We had literature books, the collective stories of _____ and we had a history book that we had; Jews in America was one, History of Jews I think was another, and we just had basic Jewish stories. We learned about the inquisition, we learned all about; we spent a lot of time learning about the Jews of Spain.

SEVERAL

Now was this in kinder shula or middle shula?

EVANS

Both, but we learned a lot about the history of the Jews so even just as a young person, you don't get that. So here is Christopher Columbus right, and Columbus Day, but you know all about the inquisition, you know all about the expulsion of Jews from Spain, you know all about Columbus and how he, you just know so much more and your friends at school are talking about Christopher Columbus and you are talking about the Jews that had been in Spain for 1500 years and the Muslims were there and how Islam and Judaism with the golden age and Queen Isabella was like so wonderful, she was horrible, she expels all the Jews and the Muslims and that's it. They don't talk about that in school. And the same people that bring you the inquisition also bring you the complete destruction of the Native Americans and South Americans in the United States, right? So does anybody make the connection between Queen Isabella and her administration and the complete destruction of all of the Native Americans? No, but as a kinder shul kid, you know this stuff so you're kind of like living in this other world and it gives you such a broad picture of the world that you don't take things for face value.

SEVERAL

I mean you compared your education to people in the secular schools and regular schools, but as I am listening to you I am thinking how different it is from people who are in the regular Sunday school. They don't get this either.

EVANS

They didn't. They don't know anything.

SEVERAL

I guess they get the Bible stories.

EVANS

They get the Jewish holidays a lot. And because we didn't take the time really, we did talk about the holidays it was always something we did, we would learn songs about the holidays but they were always focused on the historical significance of them so we knew the history behind everything. The end story of Ester, you know the story of the Maccabees, the story of the Jews. We always looked at Passover from the fleeing to freedom and the parallel between American slaves and their passage to freedom, so things were seen in a very different way. It was never God's miracles that made things happen, it was always the struggle to be free or the struggle for religious freedom or the struggle for Ester's fighting for her people and fighting against tyranny of Hayman.

SEVERAL

What I am also struck by is how the education connected the Jewish history to modern day America with a fairly definite political orientation, which I can well imagine. At least in the Pasadena temple, if that were done, there would be plenty of people who would go into orbit over it.

EVANS

Right. You know its true. That's how we were different from like a synagogue, because we were all about the politics, we were all about the politics.

SEVERAL

Do you think it was good?

EVANS

I think it was wonderful. I think it was and I think if you look at the people who graduated, if we did a study and looked back at those kids, I would say that a lot of them went into public health, public education, public television, making the world better. I don't think there were a lot of us who went into the corporate world, really you know, but I think we did well. I think one of the reasons the shulas didn't really continue, and we had this discussion recently, was because when you think about it, it was kind of like they were struggling for the workers against the bosses, right? Well, you know that world has changed and we became the bosses. We became the...

SEVERAL

Managers.

EVANS

We became the managers, we became the supervisors and we became the intelligent ones and the academics, and you know the professional ones. So who are we going to fight? So we really we didn't see this same kind of class struggling with the advancement of the middle class in our lives. You know, we

really didn't see the oppression and because the unions got so strong, people lived a much better life until the 80s when it was all going downhill.

SEVERAL

Now there are some more specific issues, in terms of some of the subjects. You mentioned the arts and current events, music. Did you have an orchestra?

EVANS

We didn't have an orchestra. We had what the teacher called the clapping orchestra. So the little kids, all of the kids would have little things like triangles, maracas. I still remember so vividly her passing out all of the clapper instruments and she would teach us rhythm and she would have us doing the cymbals and the maracas and the triangles. Everybody had something and she would direct us to do that.

SEVERAL

Did you have notation?

EVANS

No, but we had our little song books and we would have all of the songs and they would be in English and they would be in Yiddish and they be in transliteration, most of the time in transliteration, not always. I learned a lot of vocabulary that way.

SEVERAL

How about crafts?

EVANS

Lots of crafts because that's how we would learn, right? I remember we would learn the Yiddish alphabet, right. So every week or so we would get a new letter and then we would have to draw a picture with the letter so if you had lamid you could draw a swan, whatever you were learning, you would learn by doing so we did we had crafts, we would make Hanukkah decorations and we would make little ____ torah flags which is very funny that we celebrated ____ because we didn't have the Torah, but we had flags and would dress up for _____. You know, we did all the Jewish kid things but not in a religious way so it's kind of...

SEVERAL

Did you deal with things like class struggle? Was that a subject, workers against management?

EVANS

Yes, it was all very integrated into the civil rights movement. That's how it really took form. The class struggle was the civil rights movement right, and then the anti war movement, but basically they, that whole struggle for civil rights for the African-Americans at that time and breaking down the Jim Crow laws, that whole integration era. People forget what it was all about, but it was a class struggle, it was huge.

SEVERAL

A couple of other issues. How was Israel treated?

EVANS

Good question. We kind of had a very romanticized view of Israel, and maybe at that time that is what it was. _____ and Golda Meir, we were supporters of Israel especially coming out of the ashes of the holocaust, because remember Israel was established in 1948 and we were in kinder shul less than 10 years later, so that was a very short period of time so we were very supportive of Israel, but we were not militaristic in any way. We were very non-violent, so we were not for an offensive Israel. I think we were very happy when Israel was in its early years of being very democratic and very socialistic and _____ and all of that stuff and I think we got very unhappy when it started to become more militaristic. You know, I think we were very frustrated with the Palestinian situation because we felt that Israel has a right to exist, the Palestinians have a right to exist, but Palestinians were so corrupt and the whole Yasser Arafat his unwillingness to really make things better when he could and they could have resolved it so many times.

SEVERAL

So you were 14 in 1967. The war, what do you remember about that? So you were in the middle shula at that time?

EVANS

I was. I think we were stunned and I think we were proud that they were able to defend themselves and you know I think we were proud and stunned. We always supported Israel, but we were not, it wasn't a big focus like it is with the synagogues. We don't remember buying Israeli bonds or collecting _____ for the Jews, but we may have. I always remember that during _____ we would support the tree planting in Israel. That was something we always supported and I remember that, but I don't remember, we were really not in favor of the religious extremists ever.

SEVERAL

Do you recall those _____ fund containers. Did you have those in your schools?

EVANS

What I remember more than that is trick or treating for UNICEF. Every year we would get boxes and we would trick or treat for UNICEF and I would go around and that was for kinder shul. I remember people saying what's UNICEF and I would tell them and we did that. We were very supportive of the United Nations probably because of their role in helping Israel and just because of our whole nonviolence and helping the world and helping the children. There was so much misery then and there is now.

SEVERAL

Projecting ahead, were there people in your school who later immigrated to Israel.

EVANS

SEVERAL

What you say, I think it would be minimal, but there may have been some.

EVANS

That's a good question. I am sure a lot of us have grown up and joined temples and some of us have become more involved and some of us have become less involved, but I don't think that there was ever a sense and I know a lot of us were very unhappy with that whole militarism and that real ridiculousness that Israel has pulled back from being a progressive society to being more of a right wing society so...

SEVERAL

Have you been to Israel?

EVANS

I haven't been to Israel.

SEVERAL

How about the Soviet Union and the Cold War, what were some of the?

EVANS

You know that's a really excellent question because we always had the sense that we didn't really want to believe it was so bad and we didn't have the strong support of the _____, you know, the Jews that wanted to leave the Soviet Union to come. We didn't think they had it so bad. We thought they had free education, they had free healthcare, maybe they had to keep their mouth shut but they weren't doing so bad. We figured they just wanted to get out so they could have more money, go to here and really the truth is a lot of them were real crooks, but on the other hand, you know, Jews should have a right to get out and a lot of them went to Israel and a lot of them came here. A lot of people that never were Jews in their lives became Jews. They found somebody somewhere in some place and all of a sudden everybody was a Jew so they could get out.

SEVERAL

And now they're in Israel putting up Christmas decorations.

EVANS

Running the prostitution rings. It's true, really. Really, a lot of criminals came out. So we were a little bit lukewarm about that, we didn't support them in a big way. I think also we felt very betrayed by Stalin and the bad situation in the Soviet Union because they figured these Jews they wanted, they believed in socialism, they believed that we should have those kinds of rights, that everyone should be educated and everyone should have healthcare and

everyone should have a job, but you are dealing with human nature and things have changed.

SEVERAL

Did your school have clubs?

EVANS

No. We didn't have time for that. We had social activities that we would do as groups. We would go camping or we would go on these demonstrations or we had parties, but we didn't have like clubs.

SEVERAL

Did you have football teams?

EVANS

No, nothing like that.

SEVERAL

Just kidding.

EVANS

Yeah, me too. I don't think there were too many athletic individuals that I can remember in this crowd.

SEVERAL

Did the schools have any relationships to other Jewish organizations like ORT or National Counsel of Jewish Women or?

EVANS

You know, that's a good question. We didn't. There were a couple of groups that supported us. There was the ____ club that was a group of women, progressive Jewish women, who supported us.

SEVERAL

Was that a national thing or was it?

EVANS

I don't know. It was probably a group of women that were like you know, I just remember them being a lot of older ladies who would get together and love us.

SEVERAL

Was that in the kinder shul?

EVANS

The kinder shul and the middle shul. Every year we would come to like I said, City Terrace Cultural Club and they had this ____ club and it was probably a Jewish women's group who supported us and probably their philanthropy was to help the kinder shuls and they probably raised money for us and they probably helped the teachers and provided scholarships for the kids. You know, these were not rich people. They came from the labor movement so they were not really rich people and I am sure that there were other groups that supported the shuls.

SEVERAL

How much did it cost do you recall, the fees for going to this school?

EVANS

No, I don't think it was that expensive. I wouldn't know especially in those days, those dollars but I don't think it was that much and I know they had scholarships for kids who couldn't afford it.

SEVERAL

What high school did you go to?

EVANS

I went to Montebello High.

SEVERAL

Montebello High. You graduated and then where did you go?

EVANS

I went to UCLA. I started at UCLA as a pre-nursing major, but realized I was not going to be a nurse so I changed to dietetics and moved to Cal State LA, ended up in a coordinated program in dietetics and that's when I met Ruth Layman.

SEVERAL

How did you meet Ruth Layman?

EVANS

Well when I realized that I wasn't going to be a nurse, I remember very clearly I was coming back, I was at the dorms at UCLA and I remembered that on Thursdays was the food section and I always loved food and I always loved cooking and I always loved nutrition, so I saw in the food section was about a dietitian who was from Pasadena. They had a picture of her and they talked about her and this was in the spring and I wrote her a letter because in those days we didn't e-mail. I wrote her a letter and I asked if I could come and see her and meet her and like shadow her and also I was looking for a job for the summer when I would come home. So she wrote back to me and said of course you are welcome to come and see the clinic that I run and I will show you what I do with my patients. I went to meet her we just became very, very close. She became my mentor, got me involved in ORT, and we just became very close, very good friends for many years and when she passed away, I was working with her on projects.

SEVERAL

You've got a Masters in?

EVANS

I finished my Bachelors at Cal State LA with what is called a coordinated program, which is an internship and academic program together and then I did a Masters in public health at UCLA after that.

SEVERAL

And then what? What is your career after that?

EVANS

Well I worked, so when I graduated, I started working for a nutrition program called the WIC program, Women, Infants and Children, public health.

SEVERAL

Is that with the county?

EVANS

It's actually a private non-profit foundation and I've worked there all my professional life so I worked as, I worked in the clinics providing direct service and then just as an area manager and deputy director, and now I direct the dietetic internship for the program.

SEVERAL

After you graduated from the middle shula, going to UCLA and Cal State Los Angeles, did you have any contact with the Jewish community? Either a temple or?

EVANS

You know what is interesting, when I was at UCLA, I took a Yiddish class and I reconnected with, I don't remember how I found this class, but it was a Yiddish class and the teacher was Dr. Zeigelbon and was very famous although I didn't know that. I don't know how I found this class, but it was at night, it was like extracurricular, and I just wanted to take this class, it was wonderful. So I took that for a while and he was amazed that I knew Yiddish and I could understand him and he was like whoa, I was a young person and not from the _____, so he was like amazed that I could read Yiddish and I understood Yiddish that I had a background in Yiddish, so I did that for a while and I was not really connected to the Jewish community in a formal way, but I always lived a Jewish life. Then when I got married and we had our kids, we decided it was time to get them started in a temple or something. I just was very lucky that the temple is very close to my house and is a very progressive reformed synagogue and very welcoming and wonderful, so I felt very comfortable there.

SEVERAL

So when did you move to?

EVANS

Temple City?

SEVERAL

Yeah.

EVANS

Well, when we got married which was in 1974. We moved back to UCLA, that's where we met and then we moved back to Alhambra to go to school, I went to Cal State LA, so that's when we moved back.

SEVERAL

And when you were going to Cal State LA, it wasn't until the birth of your?

EVANS

My son, right. Started to get back into a formal kind of a religious upbringing.

SEVERAL

When was that?

EVANS

Probably 1995.

SEVERAL

So rather recent then.

EVANS

Yeah, 16 years. I never stepped inside a synagogue except for two of my cousins who had bar mitzvahs.

SEVERAL

Well let's see, you did mention that you did go to PJTC.

EVANS

Yeah, but that was with Ruth sometimes on the High Holidays. She would take me during the High Holiday, which yes that's true, so probably in the 80s. I went a few times. Yeah, because in the late 70s and 80s I went with her and I would go with her, which was very sweet.

SEVERAL

When you got reconnected to formal Jewish institutions, you mentioned Ruth got you into ORT you said. Now was that prior to joining the Temple City?

EVANS

Oh yes. I joined ORT probably in 1970 right when I got to know her, which was probably '77, '78 or '76.

SEVERAL

Is that chapter still going?

EVANS

Well it was the Pasadena chapter and then that folded and they joined the San Marino chapter. And yes, the San Marino chapter is still going and its very lovely ladies.

SEVERAL

And you are still involved in that? I think I saw your name show up on something rather recently.

EVANS

Yes, I'm their re-enrollment person.

SEVERAL

Tell me about the ORT, your involvement. Not only your involvement, but tell me about ORT. I mean this is an organization; again, not the synagogue, this is a non synagogue affiliated organization and it has been going on for decades.

EVANS

Yes, since I think 1922. ORT was called the Organization for Rehabilitation and Training, but what it was and still is, which is amazing, is the educational training of children and young adults all over the world. So they have ORT institutes, but it came out of _____, I think it was _____, and it was to help the _____ dwellers really. Basically I think it was pretty much after World War I, to learn a trade and to give them an education, but specifically to learn a trade. It was technical skills so they could make a living. So they have these amazing technical institutes all over the world. We have one here in LA called Layoti and it is for education and they have these schools and they have them all over the world. It used to have Women's American ORT and Men's American ORT, but they merged recently like within 2 or 3 years and now it is just ORT America.

SEVERAL

Now the ORT chapters, what are they? Primarily just money raising?

EVANS

They raise money to support the students in these ORT institutes and basically that is what they do, they raise money. The San Marino chapter is amazing. They have a book group, and they have a movie group, they have a lot of activities. They get together a lot and they have wonderful programs and they have social events and things like that. It's a great organization.

SEVERAL

Where do they hold these functions? I mean, they do not hold them at the synagogues.

EVANS

Sometimes they have them at synagogues, but sometimes they have them at the member's houses and things like that, I would be happy to give you the person who does the newsletter, his name is Norman Ackerman and I would be happy to give you that information.

SEVERAL

Yeah, it's been around for a long time and the name keeps coming up. Carol Sofer is a member of it, but in terms of, it does not seem to me to have a lot of outreach. I have run in to people who are members of it, but in terms of, I am always surprised that they are still around.

EVANS

Yes. It's not like Hadassah. It does not have that ring to it.

SEVERAL

Oh Hadassah. I don't think there is a Hadassah in this area to my knowledge.

EVANS

Well, I think there is one in the San Gabriel, Pomona Valley, there is one. They have a big one in Los Angeles. Hadassah is big.

SEVERAL

I remember them being big, but they don't seem to be intruding into my experiences. I mean, I don't see their name in the Jewish Journal. I don't see activities they are doing.

EVANS

You know, I think it is really interesting. I think it has been really kind of a result of the women's movement that philanthropic organizations have really declined and women of my generation don't belong to these things, they don't support them. I think even like in the Red Cross and things like that where women used to take a lot of pride in being in these organizations and they would get their social needs met and they would get their, they would feel like they would be doing good work in the world and since so many of us are working full time and raising children, they just became so overwhelmed with things and had all their social needs met and had all their philanthropic needs met at work that they felt like you know, I can't do this and I think it is really bad. I know in my profession we have also had this problem. It is hard to get people committed to do things and people are very commitment phobic. I am thinking the younger people because of their social media networking they are communicating so much better that I think I see a trend more towards those people being involved.

SEVERAL

Interesting.

EVANS

I kind of see the young people taking things on because they don't have to go to meetings. They can just go to meetings by texting each other or at lunch they can text each other and take care of business or on their way home they can talk on the phone.

SEVERAL

Or during work they can do it.

EVANS

During work they take a break and do it. So I do see the young people kind of maybe reinventing the way that these organizations used to work. You know, I'm involved in a lot of these things and I do them because I like them, but I don't know what it is, but I definitely think it is kind of a fallout of some of the women's movement that we don't need those things. Sisterhoods aren't as big as they used to be.

SEVERAL

I have heard this from several sources. I seem to recall talking to somebody who had some connection at one time or still with the City of Hope and apparently there were some Jewish groups in the San Gabriel Valley who were very involved.

EVANS

There is one. We have one called Partners for Hope. It meets at our temple every 4th Monday of the month and they have a very big group. Yeah, it's called Partners for Hope and they support City of Hope, that is not only a Jewish group but they really started pretty much as a Jewish group. But again, most of them are very elderly.

SEVERAL

Yeah. How many people are in the ORT that you are?

EVANS

Oh I think they probably have 150 members.

SEVERAL

Really? Wow.

EVANS

They used to have 350 I would say. I used to do the mailings for them, so I know. I would say they probably have 120 on their list, but it covers San Marino, Sierra Madre, Arcadia, Temple City, you know, Pasadena.

SEVERAL

Are you recruiting younger people?

EVANS

They are always trying to get people.

SEVERAL

But are they succeeding?

EVANS

No, not really.

SEVERAL

So let's see, you have been a member of temple Beth David since when? 1995?

EVANS

I would say.

SEVERAL

And what has been your involvement with the temple?

EVANS

Well I have been the Sisterhood president for about 10 years.

SEVERAL

Really?

EVANS

Yeah, I am mostly involved in Sisterhood. I taught Sunday school there for 10 years. I taught the kindergarten class and then I had been involved in Sisterhood, so that's what I do.

SEVERAL

In some ways I'm a little surprise. I think of Sisterhood as having this kind of conservative types

EVANS

Not even. In fact, women of reformed Judaism, they are a very progressive group.

SEVERAL

Are they really?

EVANS

Very progressive. Very involved in women's rights, very involved in gay and lesbian rights, very involved in healthcare for everybody. They are very progressive. We have a religious action committee for progressive Judaism, women rabbis, very, very supportive.

SEVERAL

So unlike the Sisterhood, the PJTC, which has not had any kind of political involvement that I know of since probably the 1960s, the Sisterhood and reformed Judaism is very politically involved.

EVANS

Yeah we don't get too politically involved in terms of action because we are just so busy with everything else, but it is a very progressive group. I think we have one Republican and we give her a really bad time. She has a good sense of humor. We'll say something and we will look at her.

SEVERAL

Do you have any affiliation or any connection with other political groups like the Progressive Jewish Alliance?

EVANS

No, not really, because we just don't have, we don't take time to do that.

SEVERAL

I mean you personally.

EVANS

Oh no, no.

SEVERAL

It is kind of a general question, how would you going to the Yiddish _____ school affected you?

EVANS

Well I think it gave me such a broad appreciation for other people in the world. It gave me a very broad perspective of how politics really plays a role in people's lives. Being politically active and involved is something that most people don't realize. It gave me a lot of compassion for low income people, you know an awareness that not everybody has it so good and just at a very early age we have always understood the plight of the disadvantaged and worked hard. I know it pushed me into my profession, which is public health nutrition. My degree is in maternal and child health and population and family. I didn't go into corporate dietetics, I went into public health. I am sure that was a big factor in my life. Even how I raised my kids, to be very accepting of

people and non judgmental. I think it gave me a very broad appreciation for who we are. I have had this discussion with others about how we really saw the world differently, especially at the time when things were going on and we just had so much more knowledge and historical insight into why things are the way they are. I think it gives us, when we look at a situation, we know we need to see all the sides of a story. We were very into brotherhood and humanism and even this whole idea of ecology and taking care of the earth just at a very early age when we talk about that. All of that was important to us, concern for the world, concern for people.

SEVERAL

Well let me just check and make sure. Just as a follow-up to where you are now, you don't keep a kosher home, do you?

EVANS

No.

SEVERAL

You go to services?

EVANS

I go to services a lot. I do, almost every Friday night. I think one of the reasons is my friends are there. It helps me to kind of take some time out from the week to kind of mark time. I love the music. I love the sense that this is a special time, that you can just be quiet and think about life and how I want to make the next week better than the last week and what I am happy about, what I am not happy about. I think that is what we as Jews have that other traditions don't have, we allow the time to look at ourselves and to make the choices for how we want to live as opposed to being told how we have to live, what we have to do, especially in the progressive Judaism. And I think it's good. It has been a great comfort to me going through situations that are difficult, like the death of parents and struggles with family and things like that, so I have kind of embraced that.

SEVERAL

I share that feeling. Personally, I am astounded, considering where I was that I should even have a connection with a synagogue at the end of my life. And to share, what you are saying rings a bell. I don't go often on Friday nights, but when I do... Actually, I have changed my life in the sense that I don't do any work on Friday. I will read on the computer, I don't work on the computer. I spend some time basically reading, studying and so on, but it's a separate time.

EVANS

Yeah, it takes time out to separate and reflect and just to pause in our life. I find that sometimes it's late, I'm tired from work, but you walk in and you just are calm and it's a good feeling and I think we need that in our crazy life.

SEVERAL

I think I remember the last question. Have you maintained contact with any former students in the kinder and middle shula?

EVANS

You know, I haven't. I maintain contact my two teachers, but I really haven't. We have kind of moved far and wide and I don't do Facebook, I don't like that. I don't have time or interest in tracking down a bunch of people because I don't think I give my current friends enough time, so I don't. I think it would be nice if we all got together. I just recently met up with somebody that when we were visiting our teacher who had a former student and that was really nice, but you know, I haven't. I mean, I know a few of them and I have seen them, but we aren't friends and they live far wide and things like that.

SEVERAL

The timing is perfect. This was the last question. I really want to thank you so much.

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