

A TEI Project

Interview of Sue Galpert

Contents

1. Transcript

1.1. Session 1 June 5, 2007

1. Transcript

1.1. Session 1 June 5, 2007

SIEGAL

Okay we're now recording, and I'm here with Sue Galpert, and the topic is the PJCC history, and the date is June 5th 2007, and Sue, I kinda wanna start out, would you tell us a little bit how you came to Pasadena and how you first got involved with the Temple.

GALPERT

I moved here in 1962 with my first husband, Dan Iver. We had lived in upstate New York for six years, having gone there after he completed a PhD here at USC. We moved here and came to Pasadena because he didn't want...he worked at County Hospital in USC, and he didn't want to drive to the San Fernando Valley. So we moved to Pasadena. We joined the Temple, I think, that first year and went to a Hanukah dinner, and at the Hanukah dinner Rabbi Galpert came over and tapped my husband on his shoulder, and he said, "Dan Iver. Dan Iver. You've gotta be Matt Iver's son." So what you need to understand is that I met Rabbi Galpert in 1948 as a newlywed, in Santa Ana. Santa Ana was his...his pulpit before he came to Pasadena, and his parents---my in-laws---gave a party there to introduce their son's new wife to the community, and they invited Rabbi Galpert and his wife, and then we didn't lay eyes on one another again until '62 or '63.

SIEGAL

Okay.

GALPERT

We joined the Temple. Of course, we had three children.

SIEGAL

Yeah.

GALPERT

We wanted them to have a religious education, and...

SIEGAL

Your husband was a physician at San Fo...

GALPERT

He was a medical microbiologist...

SIEGAL

Okay.

GALPERT

At USC. He died in 1976. Rabbi Galpert's wife, Edith, had died in 1972. So one thing led to another, and we decided, okay, this is...this is bashert. We're together.

SIEGAL

During the time when you were with your, you know, first husband and what were some of the activities you got involved with at the Temple? Was there anything specific?

GALPERT

I used to go to the Rabbi's lectures. I was on the board of directors of the Temple at that time, when Josh Haste was president of the congregation. I wasn't active...well I was active as a room parent, but I didn't belong to any other committee at that time.

SIEGAL

So you had three kids going to the Hebrew school, and what was your experiences with the Hebrew school?

GALPERT

Well, my sons went to the Hebrew school. I had a husband who didn't believe that women should...should have a bat mitzvah.

SIEGAL

Well that's interesting.

GALPERT

Yeah, so the boys went to the Hebrew school and were bar mitzvahed by Rabbi Galpert and Cantor... I've forgotten who...Cantor Greene.

SIEGAL

And were there any...what was it like being a Jew in Pasadena?

GALPERT

Well, one of the reasons that we settled in Hastings Ranch was because we had been told that there were more Jewish families there rather than anywhere else in Pasadena. At that time we were told don't go to San Marino. They're not happy to have to Jews. So we settled in Hastings, and we lived there for six years.

SIEGAL

So you grew up in this area, too...

GALPERT

I grew up in Los Angeles.

SIEGAL

And were there, for your kids, you know going to Hebrew school and balancing that with their secular school, were there any challenges there that...

GALPERT

I can't think of anything in particular. No. My son Jim, my eldest son, was a member of the Boy Scout Troop at the Temple which Hubert Weissman was the Scout leader.

SIEGAL

So you had your own Boy Scout troop.

GALPERT

Oh yeah. We did, and I think my daughter definitely was a member of the BBG. I know their son, Richard, did not get particularly involved.

SIEGAL

Did they have a Girl Scout troop as well?

GALPERT

No, but they just had the BBG.

SIEGAL

Did you use the pool? [Both voices overlap...difficult to make out the conversation]

GALPERT

We spent the summers at the pool and met lots of people who became good friends at that time. My kids did grow up in the pool

SIEGAL

So was it...was it like a community center for you?

GALPERT

Yes. Yes, it really was.

SIEGAL

And I've heard a lot about the Temple being reconstructionist.

GALPERT

Well Rabbi Galpert sort of tended to that. He was ordained as a Reformed Rabbi, not...not conservative. However, he'd gone all through yeshiva.

SIEGAL

Yeah.

GALPERT

So he had all the background that was necessary. As a matter of fact, he...his going into the rabbinate was a second choice. He wanted to be an English professor, university English professor, and he has degrees...had degrees...advanced degrees in English literature. However, at that time, at the time of the Second World War, the universities were not hiring Jewish

professors. So he thought, “Well, I have all this background. I’ll go to rabbinical seminary and become ordained.”

SIEGAL

During that sort of pre-Galpert period, let’s say, who were the big shots in the Temple? Who were really running the show, kinda? Do you remember?

GALPERT

Oh Steve Kaye, Mark Hoffman, Mickey Alpert, Mr. Silver was still a big shot in the Temple, and who else? I don’t remember.

SIEGAL

Okay.

GALPERT

I don’t remember.

SIEGAL

And from then til now, how were those early years---how has the role of women in the Temple changed in general?

GALPERT

Oh women are of course as you know [unclear] and not part of the minion and certainly the bat mitzvahs are no longer on Friday nights. They’ve been on Saturday mornings for a good many years.

SIEGAL

Do you remember when some of this stuff started to change? When it was?

GALPERT

No I really don’t. I don’t recall, Caroline. Some of the others would remember. I think...I think again I keep referring back to Shirley, but she’s been here the longest of anyone now and has all that information tucked away.

SIEGAL

Yeah. She did a great interview

GALPERT

I’m sure she did.

SIEGAL

Well, let’s talk a little bit about Rabbi Galpert. So, at that point you got married and you took on this other role. So how does that...what kinds of things did you start getting involved with then as a result of that?

GALPERT

Well, first of all you’ll have to remember that I came in as reticent, having been a member of the congregation for a long time. So I didn’t feel that the expectations of me were, “Oh her dress is too short,” or “Her make-up isn’t right,” or anything like that. I felt very much accepted as the person that I was, and I really enjoyed being the rabbi’s wife.

SIEGAL

Yeah. And what kinds of things does that entail?

GALPERT

Oh, I did a lot of the torahs and a lot of installations, and I did both services every Friday night, and that became a wonderful social thing because a group of us would gather in his office before services. The Hoffmans, the Paces, the Kayes, the Alperes...and we would have a little kind of coffee klatch before services, and then afterwards, we'd go out for a drink together.

SIEGAL

And sounds like Friday night was the big night?

GALPERT

Uhum..

SIEGAL

So were more people going to services Friday night than Saturday night?

GALPERT

Saturday morning?

SIEGAL

Saturday morning, I mean...

GALPERT

I didn't go on Saturday mornings. There was the bar mitzvah, so I can't answer you...

SIEGAL

Okay...I'm just trying to understand if that sort of shifted...

GALPERT

It may have. There were a lot of people who went on Friday night.

SIEGAL

And that was somewhere in the like the early '80s mostly?

GALPERT

Well, we were married in 1977. So it continued. It continued until he died in 1989.

SIEGAL

What do you think are some of the greatest contributions that Rabbi Galpert made to the congregation?

GALPERT

Oh my goodness. Does that make me Jewish?

SIEGAL

Well, that's okay. (LAUGHS)

GALPERT

He was very strong on a lay leadership of the Temple. He felt the Rabbi's role is the spiritual end and not the business end of it. So he encouraged that, and as you know, that was taken over by the group that became so active in the administration at that time.

SIEGAL

Like can you name some names?

GALPERT

Yes. Mickey Alpert. Bob Hoffman. Steve Kaye. I'm sure I'm leaving somebody out.

SIEGAL

Did we always have like a Gabbai? Or was that like something that he introduced?

GALPERT

Yes. Yes. Yes. Martin Suits was the Gabbai for many years, and before that, was it Mr. Silver? And he was always known as Mr. Silver. I don't even remember his first name. He may have been the Gabbai, but I don't recall. I'm trying to remember who was the cantor before Cantor Greene. I'm drawing a blank.

SIEGAL

What other kinds of accomplishments?

GALPERT

Well, as you know, he gave---I was telling Michael---I have tapes of all his...of many of his lecture series. The Wednesday night lectures were very well attended. He always chose the topics for the year that he pursued.

SIEGAL

Tell me a little bit more about the Wednesday night lectures. That's not something we knew about.

GALPERT

Well, he'd pick a topic such as comparative religions in the San Gabriel Valley. Something with current events. Whatever. And there would be a series of four to six lectures that he presented, and he researched them very, very carefully. He made very careful notes of everything.

SIEGAL

And were these well attended?

GALPERT

Very well attended. Oh yes.

SIEGAL

Do you feel the other programming that we used to have, that we no longer have, that were really successful, both social as well as, you know...

GALPERT

Well, the sisterhood used to meet in the daytime, because many women were not employed, and we had a number of daytime events for the women of the congregation...teas and fashion shows and welcome this and that and the other things. What other programs did we have? I don't recall.

SIEGAL

Okay. In general, how did the congregation participate in the overall community? Do you have any, like in the '60s, '70s, during that entire time there was a lot going on in our community at that time...

GALPERT

You mean outside the Jewish Temple?

SIEGAL

Yeah! We had things around the segregation of the schools and the segregation of our...you know, did the community, the Pasadena community get involved with that?

GALPERT

Not...not to any great extent. No. We talked about it, yes.

SIEGAL

Yeah.

GALPERT

And we were very much involved in the re-integration thing, needless to say, because all our kids were in school at that time.

SIEGAL

Involved like supporting it or?

GALPERT

Supporting it but having very mixed feelings at the same time. I was teaching in school in Pasadena during that period, and it was very difficult.

SIEGAL

What did you teach?

GALPERT

I taught first and second grade at Hale School, which is now Norma Queens, and then when integration happened, they moved us over to Willard School on Hargrove, and that was terrible!

SIEGAL

Were you a member---at the time we went from having a Hebrew name to becoming Pasadena Jewish Community Center...

GALPERT

No. No that was before my time.

SIEGAL

Okay. Let's see. When you look back now, I mean, here we are in 2007, if you can look back, you know, if you can look back forty years or so, overall what are some of the things you've seen change the most, if you think about?

GALPERT

Oh, the role of women of course is a huge one. The religious school has become so outstanding. It was...it was okay when my kids were there, but it was...it doesn't have the stature that it has now.

SIEGAL

What was it like---more like back then...and...who ran the school?

GALPERT

Well, at one point, Betty Fisher ran it, and then...I don't recall who preceded her, but the teaching staff was not as professional as it is now, and I don't think that our children learned as much. They didn't do as much at a bar or bat mitzvah as we do now.

SIEGAL

What did they do?

GALPERT

Oh, just a little bit here and there. They did some Torah portions, but they didn't lead services as they do now. I think some of the...

SIEGAL

You kept a kosher home with Rabbi Galpert.

GALPERT

No, I did not.

SIEGAL

You did not? That's interesting. So was he not kosher?

GALPERT

No.

SIEGAL

He was not kosher. Okay.

GALPERT

He grew up in a kosher home, but he was sent away to school, actually a boarding school at age 12. He had outgrown---he grew up in Canton, Ohio, and he had outgrown the Hebrew yeshivah there. I guess it was a yeshivah because he was so far beyond them. I mean this was a man who could tell you what page and paragraph any quotation from the Bible.

SIEGAL

So it was almost like he had a photographic memory?

GALPERT

He did have a photographic memory, and as an adult they call it something else, but he did have exactly that, and his parents realized, even though they were not educated people, realized that he needed a great deal more in the way of stimulation and education.

SIEGAL

And that boarding school, was it a Jewish boarding school?

GALPERT

It wasn't. He boarded with a Jewish family and went to Yeshivah in Chicago for a good many years, and his younger brother joined him there.

SIEGAL

Yeah.

GALPERT

I don't know how long they were there.

SIEGAL

So was that controversial at all within the congregation that he wasn't kosher given that it was, technically I guess, a conservative synagogue?

GALPERT

We were not that rigid. We've never been that rigid about kosher, and I know it keeps coming up...

SIEGAL

It keeps coming up now, right.

GALPERT

It's coming up now, and we're at it once again. I was on the [unclear] committee in 1992, and we went through it over and over and over again. It really depends on the leadership in the Temple. Rabbi Colin was more conservative. It was...it was what I'm sure you heard that we were more concerned with the feelings of community. Let people bring in things they've done at home. Let's help one another...and that brings up controversy, unfortunately.

SIEGAL

Yeah. Well were there any other controversies?

GALPERT

I don't recall any, no.

SIEGAL

Okay. I heard a lot when I first joined because Rabbi Colin was the rabbi about...well, sort of like Rabbi Galpert was so much more inspirational. We would hear that a lot.

GALPERT

Yeah.

SIEGAL

Why do people say that?

GALPERT

Because he was!

SIEGAL

Was it his style of speaking or...

GALPERT

It was his knowledge and his...his...not so much his knowledge and vocabulary but the way he presented things. He was just a fantastic sermon giver and speaker.

SIEGAL

Did he have like a really good one-on-one connection with people as well?

GALPERT

Yes, very much so. Very much so, and it...it was cute. I can remember several occasions when, he'd be on the pulpit giving his sermon, and someone whom he knew well would be coming in in the back, and he'd stop, and he'd wave at them. He was very...he was very down to earth...very much so, but he had little patience for fools. He was fun to be with. He really was, and I'm sure you've read in Midrush and you read the introduction that Debbie wrote and what Gene wrote.

SIEGAL

What did it say?

GALPERT

Little things about him, such as the fact that we'd go to the Hollywood Bowl with a group of us and would sit there, and maybe some symphony would come on, and before it would start, he was humming all the themes of every movement, and this was part of his fantastic memory.

SIEGAL

On that, can we bring up the cantors just a little bit. It seems like we had part-time cantors, is that true? Or it has always been the case?

GALPERT

Oh yeah. Oh yeah. We never...we never could afford or I guess we didn't even need a full time cantor, but they always came out to the Hebrew school.

SIEGAL

How'd the facilities themselves change? You know, do you have a bigger sanctuary now?

GALPERT

No, it's not larger. It's just been re-configured to a certain extent. Were you here when...?

SIEGAL

Yeah...yeah. So do you feel that it's safe to let's say now that things are what we have...

GALPERT

Oh it's much nicer...it's much nicer. I think there's a serenity about it that...

SIEGAL

We're at the same location.

GALPERT

Oh yes. Oh yes.

SIEGAL

What kinds of positions have you held? Besides, you know, like what kinds...you said you were on the board at one time...You have a list there?

GALPERT

I have it all written down because I knew you were gonna ask that. Okay. I've been VP Membership, VP Education. I was Executive VP for Program. I've

shared the nominating committee several times around for the Temple Board. I was on the board for something like 15 years. (LAUGHS) I've been around for a long time. What else did I do?

SIEGAL

Were women always on the board?

GALPERT

Oh yes. I think so. I was on the board, as I told you, when Josh Haste was president. There were other women there.

SIEGAL

Were there certain women that were the more like rabble-rousers, really trying to get the feminist thing going?

GALPERT

Good question. I don't have an answer for it. I don't feel anybody was...

SIEGAL

Yeah. I should think somebody had to be pushing for the change that occurred.

GALPERT

I don't know when it occurred.

SIEGAL

Yeah.

GALPERT

Michael, do you have any questions that you'd like to throw in...

SEVERAL

Do you know when the pool was built?

GALPERT

No, I don't know when it was built.

SEVERAL

Do you know when it was taken out?

GALPERT

Yes, but I can't...I don't know what year it was.

SIEGAL

Yeah, I was here when that happened.

GALPERT

Yeah, and how long have you been here?

SIEGAL

At least ten years.

GALPERT

Okay, so probably...

SIEGAL

It was here when we got to the Temple, so I'm guessing it was taken out around 8, 9 years ago.

GALPERT

Around 8 years ago. We...we...we debated should we fill it in, or should we repair it? But there were so few people using it that it didn't pay to...

SIEGAL

Well, was it there in the '60s when you joined?

GALPERT

Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

SEVERAL

When did the use of the pool or the focus seem to die? I mean, was it a gradual...

GALPERT

It probably was gradual as more and more women were working, working mothers, because we used to bring our children during the summer, because none of us were working, and just what years those were---hmmm...

SIEGAL

If you can think of something else going on at that time or the kids' age---that's what I do.

GALPERT

Yeah.

SIEGAL

How old were your kids at that time?

GALPERT

Yeah that's what I'm trying to remember. (LAUGHS) My oldest son is 55 years old, so that's yeah...that's a little challenging. I had a grandson get married just last month, and that's really...

SIEGAL

Was there a Day Camp when you joined the Temple?

GALPERT

Yes there was a Day Camp. Steve Spencer used to run it. I think one or two of my kids went to it, and it was on the grounds. We had the pool. So it worked out very well.

SEVERAL

...my kids...well, both of the kids went to the Summer Camp at the Temple.

GALPERT

Yeah, well there were several.

SEVERAL

Yeah, and there was...

GALPERT

And there was some years when there was no camp, and then the Federation took it over, and it ran that after the Temple for a while.

SIEGAL

Yeah, and was the Federation always active? Do you remember?

GALPERT

No, because it was Los Angeles Federation, and we really felt like poor...poor relations.

SIEGAL

And when did the San Gabriel get its own chapter?

GALPERT

Oooh...was that maybe ten years ago? Somewhere...somewhere in that ballpark?

SIEGAL

Okay.

SEVERAL

What was yours and Rabbi Galpert's reaction or relationship to Zionism? There was...you were at the Temple in the '60s, the Six Day War, and the holy war--- what...

GALPERT

Well he was very, very, very concerned with Israel and what was going on there. I can't...my...my concern with it came when my daughter moved to Israel, where she spent a couple of years, but I can't say that either of us were Zionist.

SEVERAL

Yeah.

GALPERT

Did you know that Rabbi Galpert had two children and lost one.

SIEGAL

No.

GALPERT

Oh, okay. We were married in 1977. His son graduated from medical school at USC that summer, and six weeks later he died, and we're not quite sure what happened.

SIEGAL

And when was...was it a medical emergency or he was in a location where something happened?

GALPERT

No, he...I don't know how much I wanna say about this.

SIEGAL

Yeah.

GALPERT

But he was found dead in his apartment.

SIEGAL

Okay.

GALPERT

And that really took a terrible toll.

SIEGAL

Yeah.

GALPERT

It really did, and...and...he had a heart attack. After that, he had a heart attack a year or two later and seemed to recover fairly well, but then in the early '70s...because he died in seventy---no he died in '88, so it would have been in the '80s probably...we were set to go to the Orient, and he went for a routine physical, and they gave him a stress test, which he did not pass. So they did an angiogram and discovered that he was a walking heart attack again, and the trip was cancelled, and that was when he had bypass surgery from which he never recovered.

SIEGAL

How old was he when he passed on?

GALPERT

Seventy-one. A day after his seventy-first birthday.

SIEGAL

Very young.

GALPERT

Yeah. Too young. Too young. Well, that was...that was really tragic. It was totally unexpected. There was no reason to feel that he wouldn't come through with the surgery.

SEVERAL

Right.

GALPERT

What's his name? I can picture him, president of the congregation at the time. He lives up North now. I'm lacking ---he was a lawyer, I think. Do read the prologues in the [unclear]. Do you have a copy of it?

SIEGAL

Yes I'm sure.

GALPERT

Because it gives a lot of insights into him that I think are important.

SIEGAL

When you, you know, when he was widowed, was it kinda controversial that you were dating, though?

GALPERT

Well, at first we didn't let anybody know, (LAUGHS) and this is off the record okay? We were going out, and he was making, taking the trips to A1, and I decided I would go with him, and we didn't tell people in the congregation we were not married at that time, and this was at the time of the plane trips that you'd charter a plane...and we were going out of West Imperial terminal, and

we got there that night for our flight, and who walked in but Steve and Ruth Kaye? To see somebody off... Wow! (LAUGHTER). Please don't put that in.

SEVERAL

Well, you'll have a chance to edit it.

GALPERT

Okay.

SIEGAL

Well it seems like whatever that controversy might have been, it certainly passed the time.

GALPERT

Oh yes. Yes. I mean people knew we were seeing one another. We did go to some Temple events, but that was a very difficult evening.

SIEGAL

Anything else about the Temple you'd like to share with us? Or any specific memories that really stand out when you think back?

GALPERT

You probably know they gave him a 36th anniversary?

SIEGAL

No.

GALPERT

Oh, they gave a 36th anniversary dinner-dance, which was heavily attended. It was just wonderful. I have a video of it.

SEVERAL

Oh really?

GALPERT

Yes.

SEVERAL

Oh good!

GALPERT

They did video it.

GALPERT

Well it should be put on DVD because it's on regular tape, but I'll most certainly share it with you when I get back.

SIEGAL

Is that the anniversary of him as a rabbi? Oh that would be interesting!

GALPERT

It was held at the Temple, and it was a lovely gala event, and he died a few months later.

SIEGAL

Wow. Were there speeches there too that were captured?

GALPERT

Yes. It's all on there. Josh spoke and I've forgotten who else spoke.

SIEGAL

Because there is this other history project that Michael's working on for the [unclear] museum and something like that might be interesting.

SEVERAL

Yeah.

GALPERT

Yeah. That was...that was a lovely, lovely evening.

SIEGAL

I know you don't keep kosher, but do you remember a kosher butcher? Was there one in Pasadena?

GALPERT

No. No...people used to go down to Boyle Heights or over at Fairfax.

SIEGAL

Okay there's been some questions about that.

SEVERAL

Yeah and she was after, a little more to the '40s, there was one Minovitz, was it?

GALPERT

Oh Minovitz may have had it.

SEVERAL

He apparently...apparently he used to go into Boyle Heights daily...

GALPERT

Oh I see and try to sell it out here?

SEVERAL

Yeah. Well I don't know. Maybe into the 50s...

GALPERT

Yeah. That I...that I had no knowledge of. I know it was always a problem. My in-laws living in Santa Ana used to go down to Boyle Heights for their kosher meat.

SIEGAL

When you first joined PJCC, why did you choose that Temple? There were other temples to choose at that time? Was there not one in Alhambra?

GALPERT

Oh, there may have been, but we settled here in Pasadena, and it just seemed like the obvious place to go. We didn't know anyone at the Temple. My parents lived in Beverly Hills, and they had checked everything out for us. They came house hunting and talked to realtors and all that sort of thing and got us a lot of information ahead of time, so we knew that this was where we would settle, and there were a fair number of Jewish families in Upper Hastings at the time. We lived on Pine Bluff, and you know how they decorate...

SIEGAL

Yes, for Christmas...

GALPERT

Well Pine Bluff has huge pine trees. So their thing was to light the pine trees, and that first year, my first husband had a terrible time, he went and [unclear].

SEVERAL

How did you deal with that? That whole thing. I mean. I remember when our kids were young...

GALPERT

Yes.

SEVERAL

We went up there one or two years...

GALPERT

Sure.

SEVERAL

I mean it was very pretty for little kids...

GALPERT

They're a nuisance, frankly.

SEVERAL

You know if I were Jewish and had to put up all the Christmas decorations, even though it wasn't the religious stuff, you know, not the Jesus in the manger...

GALPERT

No. No. Nevertheless it was that holiday we were...well, a number of families would put up a menorah or a...or a star of David...or would not trim altogether, but the feeling in the Ranch was that it was a community thing. Let's observe it, but I'm sure it was hard for a lot of people.

SIEGAL

Yeah, and I want to go back just a little bit again to the community center-type aspects of the Temple. If there is anything else you could share about that, because that seems like something a little different that was going on at that time...your social life, how much of it was really at the Temple?

GALPERT

Well, before Rabbi Galpert and I were married, our social life was not at the Temple. My husband was more concerned with the university and the medical school, so that took up more of our time. After we were married, we became very involved socially at the Temple. I told you about the Friday night thing, when we became good friends with that whole group of people, and we did see them, we did... oh, you probably don't know about the football minion.

SIEGAL

No I don't know about the football minion...

GALPERT

Well, twenty-some odd years ago...now Rabbi Galpert's been gone nineteen years, so it's gotta be maybe twenty-five years at least...a group of the men got together to watch Monday night football, and they would go to one another's homes, and whoever was in charge would prepare dinner, and the women went out to dinner.

SIEGAL

Oh?

GALPERT

Okay. Well, this is still in effect.

SIEGAL

And was the Rabbi part of the Monday night minion?

GALPERT

Oh yes, he was part of the Monday night minion. Absolutely, and he loved it. He was a great sports fan, and as I say, it has continued to this day. That again with that same group, Steve Kaye, Bob Hoffman, Mickey Alpetr, Hy Vego, Gene Fingerhut. Oh yeah, Gene was a member of that whole...that whole group. They have invited more men to take part in it in the years that we lost a lot of people unfortunately. The widows among us, among that group has grown.

SIEGAL

There weren't any widows' activities though particularly.

GALPERT

Except that we get together...

SIEGAL

You do?

GALPERT

Oh yes. We have our Monday night dinners. We have a yearly birthday celebration that would go between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and we'd celebrate whose ever birthday happened during the year, and if it ended in a zero or a five, you get a flower or a disc, and we have a lunch bunch...the same group of women.

SIEGAL

How long has this been going on?

GALPERT

Many, many years...

SIEGAL

Okay.

GALPERT

Many, many years, and it's been wonderful.

SIEGAL

Oh great. Anything else, Michael?

SEVERAL

I'd like to know more about you.

GALPERT

What would you like to know?

SEVERAL

Well, if you don't mind telling, when were you born? Where were you born?

GALPERT

I was born in Buffalo, New York, and I'm seventy-nine years old. I was born 1927.

SEVERAL

Okay, and what Jewish education did you have?

GALPERT

None. Almost none.

SEVERAL

Really?

GALPERT

My parents were New Yorkers. They moved to Buffalo right after they were married. They did join a Temple when I became kindergarten age. I had a younger brother, and my dad was on the board of directors. It was a Reformed Temple. Now we belonged to that, and we were involved with that for maybe three years when we moved to California, to Los Angeles. We...my parents rented a furnished home for six months, so they didn't join a Temple. When we moved, I was eleven. My brother was eight. That six month period lasted four years by which time it was too late, they felt, to join the Temple. Their friends' kids didn't have bar mitzvahs or anything so...

SEVERAL

Where did you...when you moved to Los Angeles...

GALPERT

We lived near Wilshire and La Brea first, and then we bought a home in Perfect Circle. You know where that is? Yeah I went to Fairfax High, and my brother went to...we both went to junior high.

SEVERAL

What did your dad do?

GALPERT

My dad had several businesses. He, when we moved out here, he had a tire company down on Figueroa, and he was a wholesale tire dealer during the Second World War, and he felt that the bottom went out of the tire business a few years after the War ended, so he sold out, and went with---what was it---Golden Eagle Oil company, and that lasted a few years. He retired three times, and then he bought a small business that manufactured bookkeeping systems

for small businesses called...oh gee, what was it called? I forgot already...well anyway, which he ran for seven or eight years, and he sold out to Dymo systems. I was their advertisement... he liked the way I looked, so he had pictures taken of me that they used in their ads.

SEVERAL

Were they bathing suits?

GALPERT

No. No. No. I'll show you a very funny one who was a beauty... this is the joke... (LAUGHS)

SIEGAL

When you joined in the '50s, were the most of the men...were they...what kind of professions did they have? Were they running their own businesses or were they doctors?

GALPERT

There were a lot of businessmen, yeah, and there were doctors. There've always been doctors and lawyers, but there were a lot of small businessmen and they...

SEVERAL

Where did you go to ...? You went to the university...

GALPERT

I went to USC. Yeah, I came out with this degree in English literature...very, very useful. In later years after my youngest son went to kindergarten or first grade, I went back to school, to L.A. to [unclear] to get my teaching credentials.

SEVERAL

And how long did you teach?

GALPERT

Well I taught in the public school for just a few years, but I opened a remedial teaching service in Pasadena that ran, in fact Rabbi Galpert helped me through that, and it ran for seventeen years. We have offices down on Madison, and it was not a tutoring service. It was really remedial work, and we did very, very well. I had a partner, and we did very, very well, and then when the economy cooled and we found we were paying our rent, and that was all we were doing, we closed it down, and that's when we started working at the day school. I did the same work at the Day School. I was on staff there for eight years. So I would call up the kids who were having difficulty and evaluate them and then work with them individually.

SIEGAL

When did the Day School start?

GALPERT

Well, they had a bar mitzvah when I was still on staff there. In fact, it was while I was sisterhood president. I was sisterhood president. Let's see, I was sisterhood president 7 or 8 years ago, and I had four years of that. Two two-year terms.

SIEGAL

I was just checking on the genesis of the Day School---how did that get started, and that was all about fifteen, I'm guessing, it's gotta be at least, right. We were here fifteen years...and it was in business when we moved here...

GALPERT

Okay, it's at least twenty years then.

SIEGAL

And how did it get started?

GALPERT

I think a group of parents got together and decided on it. Don't forget the school system here already was integrated.

SIEGAL

Was it as a result of that?

GALPERT

I'm sure that had some bearing on it, but I think they also wanted a Jewish school, and I can remember being called in. I don't recall who the first principal was. David Blancher was active. Alan Whitman was active. They were in that group that put it together, and I was called in to evaluate it at one point when I still had the remedial teaching service in Pasadena. It was good from the beginning. It really was, but it really bothers me to see that their enrollment has declined just enormously.

SIEGAL

I didn't know that.

GALPERT

Yes. Yes. It was over a hundred students when I was there and it's down to like forty-five. And I understand [unclear] Day School is closing...

SEVERAL

In fact, Ruth was expected to get a full-time teaching position last year, two years ago, but she ended up getting a long term sub position because they 'overhired' for her position because they had such a drop in enrollment.

GALPERT

Well, I know there was a big drop back when they integrated.

SEVERAL

Yeah. Yeah. Well actually...there seems to be some movement back by the white middle class into the area, into Pasadena...

GALPERT

And I know they've been working very hard to upgrade the schools and the morale of the teachers was simply awful. After the first year of integration I was over at Willards at that time. I had first grade children and no aide in the classroom. Half of them came from Lincoln elementary and half of them from Chapman North, and they came together like that. It was a horrendous year, and my family---that was my first marriage---they all got after me to quit. And that's what I did, at the end of that first year. It was just an awful, awful year. And it took a good many years before it began to settle down. Much.

SEVERAL

When I hear 32, wow, now with the limit on 20.

GALPERT

Not only did I have 32 children, I had three completely non-English speaking---they were Spanish speaking---and I had two emotionally disturbed children in the classroom. It was a zoo.

SIEGAL

I think maybe I will stop recording, and then if you have specific questions you wanna ask...there might be a few more things.

SEVERAL

Actually, what---maybe this was asked but---what changes in rituals did Rabbi Galpert bring here?

GALPERT

I don't know what he brought in. I wasn't there when he came in.

SEVERAL

Oh okay.

SIEGAL

Well, what did he introduce that you know about? During your marriage, what things did you see him change?

SEVERAL

(GARBLED) For example, Rabbi Graber tried different things....did Rabbi Galpert do some experimentation? Or was it...?

GALPERT

I don't recall... He was very active as I said, and of course there's always a faction who's not satisfied, but he was very well-liked, and he was very personable. He was not. He didn't forget names. No names have been mentioned, but he didn't forget names, and he had a very lively sense of humor...he was wonderful.

SEVERAL

Now there was a split...

GALPERT

Yeah. Yeah. There was a man named Frank Ackerman, whom I never knew, who was not pleased with I don't know what in the Temple, and he started the

one in [unclear]. He broke off and took a group with him. And I don't know who those people might have been. It was long before I came.

SIEGAL

What happened to them?

GALPERT

Well, that Temple...it was a shul. It wasn't a temple. It lasted for a while. I think that ultimately morphed into what became the Arcadia Temple, but I didn't know any of the group.

SEVERAL

To be specific, you were on the board for fifteen years—what years were those?

GALPERT

Well, it ended when Mark Echensten was president, and I had been on the board prior to that for just a few years, but it was during the time that my husband was ill and died—my first husband.

SIEGAL

Do you know when women started wearing [unclear]?

GALPERT

I don't remember, but I'm sure it was when they started being permitted to come up on the [unclear]...it must have been...

SEVERAL

Well, I can't think of anything more...looking at the transcripts...in any case, we have a substantive amount....oh, actually, the musicals? Did you have any involvement in those?

GALPERT

Oh, the plays!

SEVERAL

The plays.

GALPERT

No, I really didn't get involved in those because it was during my first marriage, and there was not a lot of involvement. At one point, a man named Joe Behar came in as our---I don't know whether he was activity director or what---but he had a dramatic group going, and I did get involved with that. When that was, I don't know--you can find out when he was here, and I think that was... I know that was before Morrie and I were married.

SEVERAL

And what kind of a group was that?

GALPERT

It was a drama club.

SEVERAL

At the Temple. And they would do what, a play every year?

GALPERT

I don't think we did every year, but we did have a lot of fun. We put on stuff.
Yeah. I was involved with the choir during all those years also.

SIEGAL

Before Cantor Sopher, who led the choir?

GALPERT

Cantor Greene. No no, Cantor Julian.

SIEGAL

You had a question about Cantor Julian, Michael?

SEVERAL

Well, what do you (mumbles) Cantor Sopher ... Cantor Greene, can you suggest some things that we should ask him about...

GALPERT

I hope you can get him to talk. He has almost no voice.

SEVERAL

Does he... He was the cantor for the entire time you were ... ?

GALPERT

No. No. There was another cantor when my son Jim was bar mitzvahed and...what was his name? I should remember because he gave Jim a very hard time. The night before his bar mitzvah, when Jim went for a last rehearsal. All of a sudden he said, you have [unclear]. The night before! And Jim came home in pieces. And I said listen, you do it fine. Don't worry about it. If the cantor doesn't like it, nobody else is going to know. It doesn't matter. What was his name? It escapes me right now... So I don't know when... I'm trying to remember when he left and when Cantor Greene came. I know it was before, I'm sure it was before Morrie and I were married.

SEVERAL

People have said that they liked him, that he was very personable and...

GALPERT

Very. And he had a beautiful voice, a beautiful tenor voice. He was an insurance agent on the side. I think he strained his voice. And little by little, it just went, and now he can barely speak. We see him every so often, and it's very difficult for him to talk. He led the choir, and I was in the choir at the time. That was, that was... did I join it after Morrie and I were married? I think so. But I left it after he died, because we had a special relationship when we were at [unclear] and I just couldn't stand his not being there. It was very difficult. It was very much better for me to be in the synagogue after it was remodeled, because it didn't look the same. And in fact, I didn't come back for a full year after he died, and when I did come, I didn't sit in the same place. I went to another area so that the view was different. And it's ok now, but it took a long time. We were married almost eleven years.

SEVERAL

Your children: are they Jewish? Are they active...?

GALPERT

Only my daughter is actively Jewish. Very much so. She taught at the Sunday school for a number of years. She taught the leadership--

SIEGAL

Stephanie, right?

GALPERT

Stephanie, yeah!

SIEGAL

Because she has a daughter--

GALPERT

Talia

SIEGAL

that's in Sandy's bat mitzvah class. Where's Talia now?

GALPERT

Talia's finished her junior year at Berkeley.

SIEGAL

Oh! Great!

GALPERT

Stephanie's in Santa Clara. My sons were bar mitzvahed and they were all confirmed. My older son married a non-Jewish woman, and the children were not raised as Jews. It upset me, but what can I say? They live up north, also. But I have to say, when my grandson was married this past June, he said—and he married a non-Jewish girl—he said, “I will not be married in a church. I won't do that to my family.”

SIEGAL

Your children were all grown when you married Rabbi Galpert?

GALPERT

Uh, no. Richard was in high school, my youngest, was in high school. Stephanie was at USC, and Jim was already married.

SIEGAL

What about Rabbi Galpert? Did he have children?

GALPERT

He had the two. His daughter Melanie and I are very good friends. Her son Justin and my grandson who was just married are the same age. They live in Scottsdale, and they just had the one child. Melanie is a lovely, dynamic young woman, well she's not so young anymore, but she's very much like her dad, very bubbly and outgoing and terribly bright. She's very much involved with the Arizona. But you know, she lost her entire immediate family. Her mom died in 1972 when she was just a teenager. No I guess she was a little bit older

than that. Then her brother died right after she was married. Then she watched her dad. It was really tragic. We've become very good friends and she and Stephanie are good friends. His son Arnie was married, but he had been separated from his wife, and there was a lot of trauma involved, and we feel that something happened there that caused his death. I mean, nobody killed him—it wasn't that—but we're not sure what happened. And I remember when we got the call that he was found dead I immediately called Bob Hoffman and Norma Schiffer, who had been good friends, and they were [tape gets really quiet]. And her mother was 47 when she died. ... I'll give you that video. [Start of mseveral-sue-galpert-2]

SIEGAL

Okay. So...

SEVERAL

Several people talked about how Rabbi Galpert loved music.

GALPERT

He wrote a book on music appreciation when he was in his twenties. I don't believe it was ever published, and he did not play an instrument, I don't know that he ever did, but he...his knowledge of classical music was quite phenomenal. I have a good musical background, but I never liked chamber music. He introduced me to chamber music, and I love it at this point.

SIEGAL

Did he institute musical changes at the Temple?

GALPERT

I think he probably did. I know that they went over the...I think we had a cello at the High Holidays several times during his tenure. Yes, the [unclear] and any music that he could bring in, he did. I mean...and...and concerts at the Hollywood Bowl, and one thing and another. We were always very much involved with the Coleman concert over at Caltech, and as I said earlier, he could ruin a concert for you by humming all the themes before you even heard them (LAUGHS). Yeah, he really had an encyclopedic knowledge and love for music. You can see up there in the oak case that he collected. I don't have the heart to get rid of it.

SEVERAL

Do you still go to the Coleman concerts?

GALPERT

No I don't go to the Coleman concerts now. No, I don't. I did for years and I go to the music hall now and I did go to the for a number of years.

SEVERAL

Did you have season tickets at the [unclear]?

GALPERT

Oh yeah, and I have classical music going almost nonstop at home and in the car. Absolutely.

SEVERAL

I heard his favorite composer was Mozart.

GALPERT

Yes, yes it was.

SEVERAL

I think maybe Gene quoted him as saying [unclear][LOOKING AT AND DISCUSSING PICTURES].

GALPERT

You know what he used to do? This is kinda fun to know. He was...he was a prolific writer, and he would, in the afternoons---he'd be at the Temple in the morning as you know---and in the afternoons he'd take the bus someplace, and he'd go into a deli or he'd go into a Pizza Hut, or somewhere, and he'd sit there, and he'd write. He would write his Midrush or he would write his sermons. He loved being out among people, and he used to say that he knew all the rest stops between downtown L.A. and the beach because he'd take the bus, and he'd make all these stops on the way.

SEVERAL

Wow! Who takes the bus?

GALPERT

He loved to takes the bus.

SIEGAL

As opposed to driving?

GALPERT

As opposed to driving. He never had a ticket, but I couldn't stand to drive with him because he'd have the radio going to classical music and he'd be going along. Because he was so involved in the music, it wasn't about the driving. So when we went anywhere, I drove. He was a very interesting man, fun to be with. He had his depressive side too, but people didn't see too much of that.

SIEGAL

Okay, well, thank you so much.

GALPERT

You're very welcome.

[Parent Institution](#) | [TEI](#) | [Search](#) | [Feedback](#)

Date:

This page is copyrighted