

K: This is Verena Krausneker talking to Rabbi Gerald Friedman on February 22, 1996 in Hillel, Gainesville, Florida. My first question is your full name and if you could spell it for please.

F: My full name is Gerald Friedman.

K: No middle names?

F: No middle names. Many Yiddish names, Jewish names. I was born June 22, 1941 in Brooklyn, New York.

K: I was very impressed with the resume that you gave me to see all the different things that you have done. Maybe the first thing you could do is lead me from your birth, through your childhood to the decision of what you are going to study, it is comparative lit, right?

F: That was at one point, yes.

K: That is sort of the first chapter, maybe?

F: Yes.

K: Include if it is necessary your origins or your background.

F: O.k. I was born in **Brooklyn** in 1941. My father was a relatively recently-arrived **emigre** from **Hungary, from a** _____ family, _____. What was then Hungary is now Romania-Transylvania. My mother was an American Jewish Orthodox girl who was born in Poland but came here when she was a year old so she has no real connection to that world. My memories of my home was that they were very close. We always had a lot of people from both sides of the

family always visiting. My earliest memories relate to her brothers coming home from war and the celebrations and so on and so forth. There was a very big public street light. We stayed up late at night on stoops in Brooklyn, in **Williamsburg** of those years. Everyone was out living on the streets. You would go anywhere and see and talk to people. I remember spending so much time by my relative's, by my grandparent's. **Rodney Street** became a focus for my life because many, many, many of my relatives lived there, uncles, aunts and grandparents. Then again, streets which had friends were also very close and dear to me. I loved every inch of that part of Brooklyn. I went to _____ from earliest time, that was about five years old, until about the age of twenty, _____. Very famous, one of the mother _____ on the American Jewish scene which my family helped to build. We were intermarried with a lot of _____ and important Jewish families, such as the **Mendlitz's and the Linchners** and so on and so forth. So I always recall rich Jewish fabric to my life, both personally in terms of who my parents and relatives and friends and associates were, but also the streets were loaded with _____. Holiday was thick with Jewish environment. Every Friday _____ walked along **Bedford Avenue**. It was just a very rich organic Jewish community. People knew each other. There was not so much separation. I recall many Jews I was close to and friendly with who went to public school. We did not have this kind of triumphal distance, we are Orthodox and you are not, or, I am reform and you are not, or whatever. This was very important to me. I had a great sense of closeness to people. My memory also is

that is was very dramatic being Jewish. This was after all the time right after the Holocaust. You would see people on the streets crying and walking. When you started laughing, you would get shushed, shut up, you will get us shot. How could you laugh, _____ lost his wife, you know, whatever. They were crazy, they were walking, _____, like that. You did not know what was going on. Also, there was an uncle who just came from the war with walkie-talkies, he was going to **Stanton Island**, they were sending contraband or special shipments to Israel. It was the foundation, the formation of Israel. So people were involved in arguing; who and what and what is the good way and what is the bad way, which party? Immense drama of life which stayed with me. I read the newspaper and I know that some massive thing is going to be related to Jews. Either some poor **schnook** got caught and his hand was in the till and he robbed money and it is a Jew and I feel guilty. Or someone is a Jew and became a Nobel Prize winner. I am always involved with some drama. Not so with the young kids of today, they did not grow up with that immense set, like the whole world was one big Jewish set; a dramatic scene about to unfold. I grew up with that. I see the world that way, somehow. I had a very strong Jewish education, informally and formally. As you must have guessed, my father did not speak English so well, so he spoke Hungarian and **Yiddish**, my mother spoke English and **Yiddish**. So what could they speak initially? Yiddish. I learned how to speak Yiddish. I speak Yiddish to **Dora** a lot, my wife's first language is Yiddish.

K: That is so wonderful because I understand it.

F: It comes from German, I love it. It is so rich, it is so warm. It is like home, immediately. If you speak Yiddish, you are immediately home, no matter where you are. Even in public. So I had a good Jewish education, both from these informal elements. Shopping on **Lee Avenue** was a Jewish education, the foods, the languages, the sheer color of different Jews coming from all over the world. It was just massive. Also, just on a kind of, not just a breadth level, but in a depth level; the great rabbi's that were there. _____, the great world-class seminary that we had in our back yard. The wonderful _____ masters that lived in Williamsburg. That was the first place they came to, almost inevitably they came to great singing in _____ and the great story telling in _____ and the great public displays of almost marching-like Judaism of _____ and etc. Most _____ did not have this, most Jews did not have this at this time. _____ had it's own band and the great _____ that each of the dynasties the _____ dynasties had. _____ was loaded with song. I loved singing, I loved learning. I was very very lucky. I did well at it and I was rewarded. I kept getting to better and better classes and a higher and higher grade. I think very early on, mostly through my mother and even to some degree through my father, although he had other injuries too. My mother was a reader and she was always reading a novel. I started reading and developed a certain kind of romantic sensibility. I remember all the forties songs that you listen to on the radio, the big band songs. They became an important part of my consciousness. I caught my mother kind of dancing to some of the music, and I think that is where I learned how to be a dancer. In her real life, she had six kids

before she was twenty-five. She had six kids already, there was not much chance to do much dancing.

K: How many brothers and sisters?

F: I have four brothers. My mother died early, she died giving birth to her seventh child. That really killed our family in many ways but made us closer in other ways. My father remarried, but we were not close to them. He got divorced.

K: How is the succession?

F: I am the oldest, I am the first born, as is Dora, my wife. It is very strange, we have a lot in common as a result of that. I have four sisters after that who I am very close to and a brother who I am very close to. My brother is the youngest. We are sandwiched. The guys around four girls, four ladies. My brother is forty-one years old and not married. He is a lawyer in New York and just never had such a good-- He was engaged once to be married; a big love affair and something went wrong. He had another big love affair. When he came here to visit me for a week, he stayed for a year-and-a-half. He fell in love with one of his students. They lived together and they did not go out for air, I do not think. They were very passionate with each other, but she wanted to go to Israel and she did and he did not want to. Whatever it was, it just broke and I do not think he was ever able to find anything really. My sense is that even that engagement that he had was more, it is time to get married. I do not think it was really passionate. So he is not married. We are very close.

K: So that was a big household?

F: Cousins and uncles and we are going to cousins and uncles and always constant _____. My father comes from ten, my mother comes from ten. There have been a number of deaths since, you know and all that, but big families from all scores. I was close to two sets of grandparents. One, my mother's side, my grandmother lived to ninety-nine. My father's side died in the 1940s; my grandfather died about 1948, it was close to the time, I remember Babe Ruth the baseball player. My grandmother died about three years later in 1950 or 1951, something like that. My grandmother from my father's side. They were a little more distant, they were a little more proper, fancy. My grandmother was from the **Malimolar Society**, with her _____, with her wig and she was always dressed. She was the president of the **Malimolar Society**, she was very regal. My grandparents on my mother's side were very down to earth, simple polish people. So I am kind of a combination of a number of these very elitist and very common at the same time. I do not know what else you want me to say.

K: You mentioned that your mother died when you were young? How old were you?

F: I was about thirteen or fourteen. We were very close.

K: What was your role, because you were the oldest of the kids, what was your role after she died?

F: Just to walk around angry and miserable, I was so miserable and angry for a number of years.

K: Did you have to take care of your siblings?

F: Not really. A lot of that burden fell on my older sister. We had aunts and we had grandparents who came. We stayed together. At one point there was an option of shipping us off to different sets. We, I guess smartly, decided not to do that, to stay together. I was very involved in my school, I was in student government and learning and sports. I became a sports fanatic when I was about twelve or thirteen. I loved basketball and handball and everything, baseball. You did not have time. You go to _____, you are going from your _____ 7:45 to 8:45, you are eating, from 9:00 to 6:30 every day of your life, including Sunday, except _____, Friday you get out at 1:00. It is an immense amount of homework and so any ten minutes here you can shoot a few hoops or twenty minutes. I was like fanatic about it, but you are very disciplined. I got a little harsh, I guess, not giving time to other people, very selfish.

K: In what way selfish?

F: You hang with your friends and to hell with your father if he wants you to come home early and clean up and do something for _____. I just felt angry and wanted to be my own. To get out of the house was too painful. I had to get out of the house.

K: Did your dad remarry very soon?

F: No, later. I was about seventeen or eighteen. I moved out of the house then.

K: That was not someone like a mother for you?

F: No, I could not connect. Nor did the kids, nor did he. I think he did it because he was kind of lonely and also wanted to do something for the kids. He had little kids, he had little babies. I am thirteen years older than my brother. He was just

born when our mother died. He _____. He kind of was floating around his whole life.

K: Could you tell me your parent's names? Your mother's maiden name?

F: My mother's maiden name was **Rosenbloom, Ida or Alta**. She was sickly. I understood afterwards why she was called Alta. That was a name given to her by _____. Alta means old one because she was close to death when she was born. He said that if we named her Alta, she would live. So she lived.

K: That was "ALTER?"

F: ALT, I do not know. _____. Ida was her name. I never spelled Alta, I never saw it in my life spelled English. It is a Yiddish name.

K: Did you call her--

F: I called her mom?

K: Not _____?

F: People called her Ida, her girlfriends, friends. Around us, Alta, **Yidle**, my father was called **Yidle**. I was called **Yussel**. No one was called Jerry. I did not even know my first name in English until I started working.

K: Really?

F: In that world, who ever called you Gerald or Jerry? Some crazy teacher who was looking down her roll book, is Gerald Friedman here? I did not even know who that was.

K: When was this transition from one name to the other? From one world to the other?

F: Much much later. In this world I was **Yussel, or Yussiful** or some demonition, **Yussie**. My boyfriends did not call me Yussel, they called me Yussie, Yuss. Hey Yuss, do you want to shoot some hoops?

_____. My sister was not called Marilyn, it was **Mendel**. It was not Sharon, it was **Sheindle**. It was not Rhonda, it was **Reizel**. It was not Stevie, it was **Sendie**. I do not call my sister now Marilyn, it is Mendy. It is, hey Men! Mendel! How are the kids? _____. My father's real name is Eugene. Who called him Eugene? I think a bank guy must have called him Eugene when he went in for a loan or whatever it was. His name was Yidle, _____ in Hebrew, mine is _____. We had different levels. The Hebrew or formal name, then you get it demintozed in a Yiddish way to make it more intimate. My mother did not have a Hebrew name, per say. It was always a Yiddish name given to her by the _____. That explains the name Alta. Alta means old one. _____ in English. In my life I never saw that word spelled in English. Turn it off for a second.

[pause]

F: Talking about my mother, my family, Yussle the name...

K: You were living at home until what age?

F: Until I was about eighteen.

K: When did you get out of school?

F: I started going to college at age seventeen, which was already a tension. My father did not want me to go to college. In my family, in the range of our family, especially from my father's side, I spoke English well. I loved language, I was a

reader, I was a public speaker. So presumably, I was there for them to be groomed to take over the family undertaking business, funeral business. I was supposed to go to some school in Pennsylvania to get licensed. You had to learn embalming. Of course I said, no. That was one plan. The other plan was that I was supposed to go to Israel to study to get my _____, to get my ordination. So I would be the Rabbi, the this the that. I said, no. I am the first male in the history of my father's side of my family to go to high school, much less almost get a Ph.D. You have to understand, they were angry that I was going to high school. That was for liberal Jews. That was for Jews who were irreligious.

K: The idea of the _____ did not occur to you back then?

F: No. I was going to stay on. I did not want to be a Rabbi, they do not mean Rabbi, become a **poped** Rabbi. In that world, they do not even become a rabbi, a practicing popped rabbi, you have a job in a congregation. It means you study. You take off and you spend four or five years just studying the holy books. You get a piece of paper, you get a certificate that you have mastered some of the material. So we kind of made a compromise that I would continue going to _____, we did not call it seminary. Where did you study? I would study in the _____ during the day and go to Brooklyn College at night. My goal at that point was not clear but I was thinking that I was going to do something with literature and English and writing and speaking. I was not worried about it. In the 1950s, the assumption somehow was different. If you are going to get a B.A., whatever it was, you would be o.k. The college kids are much more fear

and trembling about it. Uncertainty about careers, making a living, I never worried about making a living. I used to make \$2000 a summer. In 1955, I was fifteen years old, I was a waiter in the Catskills. I had money, I had anything I wanted, clothing. I always knew how to make a buck as a waiter, as a _____, as a caterer. We are all very good like that in my family and I never even thought about money. Money was totally unimportant to me. It still is. I mean I need money to take care of my son's bills, you need money to take care of your teeth, but I never make a decision based on money. I never took a job because these two jobs, one is really a great job but does not pay and the other one is a lousy job but it pays a lot of money. I never did that, nor does Dora. Here is Dora, she has no idea _____. We do not think in those terms. I am not saying that is good, necessarily, it is just the way we are. So it turned out that the tension also of living at home was getting to be too great. My father was about to remarry, I had already been to Brooklyn College _____ crazy. I never sat next to a girl in my life. I went to _____. I would go at night to Brooklyn College and oh the sweaters, I would go nuts. I could not concentrate, I was sitting around in a perpetual state of confusion. It was excitement. I _____, I was very bad. You are going and you are meeting people. They started wanting to go into the village, discovering New York, jazz. I started living, at eighteen, a double life. Meaning, I would go to _____ in a _____, Brooklyn College at night, which was all _____ kids, all I hung around with was the _____ world. All the other kids like myself who during the day were either working or studying in _____. Then

10:40, we would go into the village and go hear Woody Allen, Bill Cosby, I used to love the comics, _____ Santa Maria. I started dancing and learning latin and a whole bunch of things. I had to sleep. I had to get up the next day, I was not even doing homework. Some weekends I used to go to the catskills to work as a cater to make some money. I was really burning the candle from too many ends, living a double life, I was a miserable, nervous wreck half the time.

Excited. I met Dora. She was one of those. We had like a circle within Brooklyn College of people like myself, people who knew how to learn, who were part of the inner world of the _____ and loved, on the other hand, the village life of New York. Loved going to the Russian tea room. Loved the jazz.

K: You met her there?

F: She was part of the circle. I was dating someone else at the time. I had fallen in love with this tall, willowy gorgeous girl from _____. Dora was a friend, part of a large circle, we would all go to Port _____ and go to a belly dance club? Who does that _____? We go in at 10:40! By the time we got to the village it was 11:30. Of course, you can go to the village until 5:00. If not the Village, it would be 49th and 9th Avenue clubs or the west side. I was learning Israeli folk dancing. Life was endless with possibility. There was not enough time. I was very anxious to deal with time. I had always gotten "A's". All of a sudden I started getting a few "B's". My first two years I got all "A's". I went to Brooklyn or not, all of us, we were genius' compared to other kids. _____ joke. The rest is that you learn how to think, you learn how to tear apart, you

learn how to focus. We were all so bright, at least in the sense of school work bright. Some of us were very immature and unlived. It was all books and it was all intellectual. I was hungering for experience. It got to be very complicated in my life. I was cursing at the time and yelling at everyone and my family, so I moved out. I had the money. Shocking, you have to understand. I was always working, always studying, always running, but I had money in my pocket and I had gorgeous clothing. I had a great body, do not judge my this body, I was a wonderful basketball player; I used to play basketball at a certain point. I played handball for money at a certain point. I played \$25 a point in 1957 and 1958. You know what that means? You lose 21-16, what is five times twenty-five? You lost \$125, or you win. You have to know. If you are playing for money, you have to know. I was a ping-pong player. I had \$25 paddles in 1959, 1960 and various sponge-rubber paddles. I was on the circuit. I did not sleep very much, I was not disciplined and I was burning to many candles. During this time, I was studying literature and languages. In Brooklyn College, to get a B.A. in Comparative Literature, you had to take qualifying exams in two foreign languages. I took French and German. I was a fairly decent language student. To read, _____ . Not to speak. They never taught you, at least I never knew how to speak. You read, you had to read, because you had to read _____ or _____ . You had to read critical material or on _____ or on _____ . You had to read some French literary pieces. I could do that because I had comfort with text being a _____ student with languages, Yiddish, Hebrew, Aramaic, _____ . But I needed to

integrate a life. I did not know if am religious, am I not religious, am I this, am I that? It all was going to fall to pieces and it soon did. At about age twenty, twenty-one, after I finished _____ I got my little pieces of paper. They protect you, they give you ordinations to get out of the Vietnam War, to get out of the Army, to get tax benefits, to get parking benefits, I had all kinds of little papers. I never intended to be a rabbi at that point, never. Even when I was studying when I was fully involved with the process of being Jewish and religious. I was religious, I was observant. Then, of course, as I entered college more and more, you could feel it, at age eighteen, that first cigarette on _____ or whatever. So you started eating french fries out. It is not officially unkosher. Then eventually a hamburger, then maybe even a cheeseburger _____. I never got to the point of ordering a ham sandwich or a lobster. Not because of religion, even later, when I was totally irreligious, I could not do it. I just, there was a certain point I could not pass. It was not rational. I was going out Friday night, I was going to a Chinese restaurant or whatever, but I never ordered those things. I was shocked once, I had been ordering won-ton soup. I was an adult, I was 25, 26, I remarried and someone told me, you are unkosher, right? Yes, I do not in kosher. Do you eat ham too? I said, no, I do not eat ham. Then why are you eating the won-ton soup? I said, why should I not eat it? What do you think is inside of that? I could never eat won-ton soup again. I did not know it was pig in there; I did not know what was in there. I was totally irreligious. I was not religious at all. I do not know where we end in this, where do we go with this.

K: So twenty-one, twenty-two there was a point when you could not go on with all of these things?

F: I had a little bit of a breakdown. I was getting failing grades in school, my life was ungluing. This lady broke up with me, she said, you are driving me crazy, I do not know what you are, you do not know what you are. I was beginning to feel I was unraveling myself. I had to kind of make some decisions. Am I a religious Jew or not? I tried not to be religious, I felt guilty so I went into therapy. During this time, after this break-up. I was about twenty-one, twenty-two.

K: Did you have your degree from the college yet?

F: No. I dropped out of school. I was supposed to graduate in 1962 with my class, but I graduated four years later in 1966.

K: You took care of yourself.

F: I did not too well, but started little bit by little bit trying to just calm myself down. I never went to the hospital, that kind of a breakdown, or took drugs, but I understood, hey, man, you are breaking down. I dropped out of _____, I did different things. I was a dance instructor. I made a living. I was a bar boy, I did catering, a lot of catering jobs. I continued working a lot of weekends in the summers in the Catskills. I was a basketball coach for a few places. I was a teacher in a number of _____ and private schools, and English teacher. I did it to survive.

K: The teaching--that was when you dropped out that you did various teaching jobs?

F: I had hundreds of jobs.

K: Did you enjoy teaching?

F: In 1964 I got a provisional degree so I could get substitute teaching jobs and I became an actual high school English teacher. I loved teaching. In my mind during this whole time, I am still thinking that I am going to get back on track; I always took literature courses at Brooklyn College. I never dropped out of college totally. I always took courses. Do you understand what I am saying? But my life was becoming different, I started from a youth worker, I was becoming more involved with people, basketball coach. In one part of my life, I am trying to sit back on this couch with an apple and consciously trying to relax myself and I became a medievalist, reading about the **Saw of Roland**. Roland's Saw became more important to me than my sister. I kind of was beginning to understand that I am escaping life through literature. I am more worried about what he was wearing around his _____ we had taken advanced courses; I was already taking advanced level courses because I got this provisional B.A. I had finished all my courses, I just did not finish science. I had to finish a science sequence. In the Brooklyn College Yearbook, I officially graduated in 1963. You see my picture and they actually give me the diploma, even though I did not have an official diploma until 1966 because I had to go back and take those courses that I did not take. They permitted me to take them; I took a whole bunch of courses in literature. I was beginning to lose my mind. It felt not real, like it was a protection from the real world.

K: And the real world was teaching English or being in touch with kids?

F: Teaching youth who are getting jobs, working with people, testing yourself out with gangs. I worked as a youth worker, a gang worker, I was a basketball coach, not just for Jews. In 1964, I got my first full-time job. It is a funny story; I just remembered this story. I went to an agency. There was an advertisement for a job writing for the high school edition New York Times News of the Week in Review. There was a high school version of that. I had been writing for different things and I will tell you. I was on the radio, I did a lot of different things. I did not tell you all the little details of my life, that is very large. I went to the place called the **Kenmore Personnel Agency**, I still remember it. It was like on 42nd Street in New York. A nice lady interviewed me. I knew I was a little weak, because it was really mostly social studies. They wanted someone with a background. Mine was mostly literature and poetry and short stories. My writing was more creative rather than social sciences. But we hit it off, it was a nice conversation, in the middle of the conversation, this little old lady who looked _____, she looked like a gentile, like an Irish. She had freckles, reddish hair. This was to me a typical _____. Nice lady, sweet lady and we had a very nice conversation. Coming to the end of our interview, I am about to leave, she gets a phone call and starts talking Yiddish. She starts talking Yiddish on the phone. After she finishes, I said, hold on. What is this, you are Jewish? Yes. My name is this and this and this, it was originally that and that and that. I am from Pennsylvania and we started talking Yiddish to each other. Then she said, why didn't you tell me you speak Yiddish? How was I supposed to know? Back and forth and we become very friendly and she hears me and says, you have such a big Jewish

heart, why don't you work with Jewish people, work in a Jewish setting? I said, well, what kind of thing, what do I know what to do? Work with young people, you like to dance, you like to have a good time. To make a long story short, the person she was speaking to on the phone was a guy called **Dan Gridosky**. He was the head of personnel services for the National Jewish Welfare Board, which is the consortium of all Jewish-wise and community centers (JCC'S). Two weeks later I am the youth director of the eastern _____ in Brooklyn. My first full-time job. I had never been a teen-director in a "Y" in Brooklyn. I had three interviews. I went on two and did not want to go to the third; I did not want to travel to Buffalo. I think it was in Buffalo, Newark, I do not remember. Before you know it, I have an office and I have a job, a full-time job! My first salary was \$5,500 a year, in 1964. I had never had a salary. By that time in the summer, you had to understand, \$3000. I did not take this job because it was going to make me rich, I did not take Hillel's job because it was going to me rich. It felt right at the time. At this point I almost knew for sure that I never was meant to go into literature and I had no idea what I was going to do.

K: Were you married already?

F: No, that is an important thing you should no.

K: Yes.

F: I met Dora about 1961. I was already seeing this lady. In the summer of 1961, this lady broke up with me. I was miserable. Dora was part of the large circle;

she was one of the guys. She was a skinny runt, skinny. She weighed about ninety pounds, tiny. Now she has had babies and pills and her body has kind of--

But then she was a runt. Skinny. Smoking, bare, always smoking. Like her father, just like her father. Yiddish. I loved her sensibility. She could talk like anyone, Yiddish and Hebrew and everything was perfect with her. She was a literature major, so our ideas had so much in common. But there was not physical thing. I did not even know that she was girl; she was a guy, she was like one of the people. She was kind of taking care of me once and we kind of brushed up against each other. I was mad; we were eating lunch in my apartment, she liked that I had an apartment because she could get away from her cramped, family time. Lovely family, but small and no room, choking. I had a nice, big apartment. And uh-oh, something electrical happened. Nothing developed. Then I remember in Thanksgiving, 1961, we went out that weekend, it was about three or four couples. We went to see *splendor in the grass* with **Warren Beaty and Natalie Wood**. I was very uncomfortable. Here I was with this gorgeous, sexy broad, **Hei Rottenburg**, I remember, and I did not want to be with her. I was jealous, my friend **Yanke** was with Dora. I could not figure out why the hell-- It was very confusing to me. Because all of a sudden, Dora, she was wearing a black and white, remember it is checks. I saw her as a woman **in short**. And something changed in me toward her. About two weeks later I asked her to be my date for New Years. In those days, New Years, I do not know if it is now, was a very symbolic time. If you asked someone out for New Years, that was big time. In my apartment, there was a New Years party. It was a very

famous New Years party in the life of Brooklyn Jury. Eleven couples came, eleven couples came to that. All eleven got married. It is world renowned in this circle. There was an air in that apartment that night. To this day, only one couple has divorced. One out of eleven. **Carl and Beverly**, and they never should have gotten married. They must have caught the fever from that. They did not get married right away. Everyone speaks about this party to this day. We remember what we were wearing. Doris asks me, remember what you were wearing? It was a very famous night. We did not give each other over to ourselves, I knew Dora was going to go away for Israel, we were already talking, what were you doing, next year she was going to away for a year and a half to Israel to study at the university. So at this point we became boyfriend/girlfriend. We became a couple but I do not think we were exclusive. I do not think in my mind I was exclusive yet. I was not going to date anyone else or whatever. I remember distinctly that I did date someone else. Not date, you know go out. You went out with this one, you went out with that one. But something had clearly changed. We started writing and calling each other in Israel. After writing every week faithfully and getting them back, we knew something was going on between us that was very, very special. She came back, it was like toward the end of 1963, I had already started therapy about a half a year into that. I went to therapy for about two and a half years. The hard part about therapy, that I recognized is that it forced you not to make decisions. The particular therapist I had was so committed to keeping me seeing both sides, seeing this, seeing that, that all of a sudden, and I have such delight in remembering this story, one time

he switched his office from a pretty modest little thing in Brooklyn to a gorgeous office in the upper west side. When I got there that night, this is already in 1966, Dora had come back. In 1964 and 1965, we were seeing each other and had a kind of commitment to each other, both afraid to move. I did not know if I am going to be this, am I going to do that. I was working but is this my job? I had doubts about everything in my life. I went to the therapist, I felt so disappointed that my money was going to pay for this guy, I said, you know, Dr. **Adlin**, I am not coming back anymore. He said, no, do not make a rush decision. Think about this, we will talk about this. I said, you know, I have been a schmuck. I remember the words. I do not know a lot of things in my life. The only thing I know clearly, this was about April 1966, after going around with Dora for two and a half years, it was exclusive, I was not dating anyone else, nor was she. Two and a half years, we were going steady, are we engaged, what are we? We were afraid to say the words. I said the only thing I know for sure in my life is that I have the world's greatest lady. I want to get married. Do not rush into this! I said, I like you very much, but goodbye. That night, I go right to her home. She was still living with her parents. I said, Dora, I have a question to ask you, one simple question and you better give me a straight answer. Do you want a ring, do you want a car? Without a minutes' hesitation, she said, I want a car. I went out the next day and I bought her a gorgeous new Volvo and we set the wedding date. That was it. From that point on, I never looked back on that. That was such a good closure. I still did not know about religion, Jewish. We constantly talked and we wanted but did not know where. I had no model. When I grew up,

it was either the richest Orthodoxy, I never knew a conservative Jew and I never knew that. Over the years, I missed _____, I missed learning, I missed opening up a _____, something. I felt I could not do it because I was not totally _____. I learned over the years. That is what Hillel showed me.

K: As I see all these jobs were with Jewish people, Jewish young people and Jewish organizations.

F: Those are the big ones that I wrote down. I have worked in other settings, too. I worked with black kids, I worked with a lot of different settings.

K: That never included religious aspects?

F: No, because I was not religious then. I worked in secular agencies. At a certain point, I started getting positive feedback. People started asking me to work for them, meaning I was pretty good as a group worker. Then people started saying, I will hire you, be our programmer, the department director, then as the service director, the agency program director then as the whole agency director. I was getting to be pushed up the ladder. Eventually people were telling me, you have to go to school.

K: Did the job mainly include organizing stuff, arranging things?

F: Yes. I never understood myself to be a case-worker, to work one-on-one therapist. I always wanted to build programs. To me the most exciting thing was six or seven people in a room, nothing was there, and before you knew, we had planned a whole festival or trip or a boat ride. I loved what people could do with ideas. Nothing, _____. Something from nothing. A paper, a few notes. Before you know it, six months later, [noise]. I love that.

K: Then people told you, you have to go to school?

F: Yes.

K: Who?

F: The people in the field. They said, if you want to advance and you want to become an executive and you want to make a decent living. I was already thinking of a family. **Shira** was born and I had to make a living. One of the reasons I did not go to graduate school right away in social group or my masters is in groupwork and community organization, was I did not know how we were going to pay for it. I had to put together a package that would allow me to live and I had a family already. Shira was born in the 1960s.

K: That is your first kid?

F: My daughter.

K: Your daughter. When was she born?

F: 1969, September 1969. So I had to work hard to get a package together and I did. At the time I think I had the highest amount of money, I had something like \$25,000 of scholarship money. I did not have to pay a penny. It turned out to be \$17,000, \$8,000 was mutually exclusive. I could not commit to this and give them a year. I could commit, for example, and I _____ \$4000 because they did not tell me where I had to work. But I also got \$4000 from Community Center Field. So, those were not mutually pleasing. I could work, do elderly work in the Jewish Community Center, but I could not get to work with youth and the elderly. So eventually, I went to school with about \$17,000, not having to pay a penny. I got money to pay for NYU.

[end side 1]

F: I was living in New Jersey when I went to school in the Village in NYU for my masters in social work.

K: That you got in how many years?

F: Two years. Two full years. Very hard. Not so much the intellectual classes study, it was the internships, the practicum. Very rigorous name. Made you go through hell. Why did you do this, why did you do that? Maybe you had these needs. Did you examine what you were after? Back then, you had to write records, I did, she said, I did, they said, you know. You had to process everything you did and did not do and why to make visible to yourself your needs, the client's needs, how you think, the difference between the way you think and the way the client thinks. When are you being prompted by your own needs and when are you being prompted by the client. How do read a situation, when do you make an intervention, when do you not make an intervention? It was very hard for me to be conscious that way. I was impulse, I was instinct. I moved out of flow, you know? It was very hard for me.

K: Was it worth it?

F: I think so. It helped me become a more thoughtful human being, more thoughtful professional.

K: What difference did it make that you got that degree in your professional career?

F: I could go almost anywhere in a Jewish **communal light**, with the experience and learning I had. Now I had the professional credentialing, a skill. I was like

flying all over the place. This put it through a certain blender and a certain process. But I never learned how to be a teacher. I never took education courses.

K: But you taught.

F: I taught. I never learned how to be a dance instructor, but I taught. I never learned how to be a basketball coach or a caterer, you just did it. You learned.

K: So the next chapter I see here is Pennsylvania.

F: Pennsylvania was a crucial experience for me.

K: Did you get called to there?

F: I was invited to apply. I was not the only one. It was a very, very big job. It was the biggest move from middle management, I was already in middle management to almost upper level management to be the assistant director of a branch, of a huge, 15,000 _____ brand new, gorgeous, huge plant and the job would be totally different. It was my test to see if I could become an administrator. I was directly working with people. I may have had, as director of youth service, I had a teen supervisor and junior high supervisor working on me, but I still had direct contact with clients. I had my own groups, I had my own teen council. I worked with lots of people. But here, I was going to be supervising the staff that worked with the staff that worked with the people. I supervised the cultural arts director. He had five full-time professionals underneath him, a dance professional, a t.v. technical director. I worked with the supervisor of physical education. Underneath him he had a swimming director, aquatics and you know whatever, whatever. You understand?

K: Yes.

F: And each of those full-time professionals had part-time specialists working on the event. My office was like a battle zone. Like you know, where rooms are, room use and staff duties. Occasionally, I would meet with a person who had some problem with the way he was being treated, so I had some direct contact with a client who did not like the amount of time he was spending on the handball courts, or whatever, or that his kid did not have a good experience in day camp. I did not even supervise the day camp director. I supervised the director of group services who supervised the childhood education director or whatever it was, who supervised the day camp director. I was layers-removed from direct contact. I think I understood that I did not want to work in that kind of organization. Then I just did not know where I was going to work and earn living. All of a sudden, back again. I cannot go back to being a team worker because they were earning beans. What am I going to do? I did not know what I was going to do after that. I had a bad experience in Philadelphia.

K: Do you have your second child by now?

F: Yes, 1974, **Kiber** was born.

K: So you have two children now?

F: I came to Hillel. Also, something terrible was happening to me in Philadelphia. I was pushing Jewish stuff down my staff's throat without having an understanding of what I was doing [whisper]. I was getting more Jewish, I missed it. I started teaching at _____ College, which is a Jewish teacher training college. All of a sudden, I feel less _____. It was coming up very strongly in my life, not

because of my kids. I wanted it and Dora simultaneously too wanted something. Probably she did not want it in Gainesville. That was the job I decided to take for a year.

K: There was a decision to get rabbinic ordination, though. Is that what you call it?

F: Yes. Not to get rabbinic ordination, to re-get it. The guy who gave it to me then, regave it to me. He had known me since I was a kid. _____, _____. He knows my family. I know him, I visit him now. He is an older man, he is a lovely guy.

K: But at that point you decided you want--

F: I decided in Philadelphia already, even maybe to the end of West Orange that I gotta do something, I gotta do something about being more Jewish. I have to be Jewish in a different way, I knew I could never go back. I could never go back to the narrow world of _____ that I come from. I can never go back; I cannot make believe that I do not know **Tito Puente, Tito Rodriguez**, or that I do not care about movies and culture that way. Dora was starting to teach more Hebrew in East Orange and West Orange and our circle of friends were more and more Jewish educators, Jewish professors. And in Philadelphia she was teaching in **Grat's College in Jewish Education**. She was what is called the model teacher, the teacher trainer. The teachers that were going to train, she was the head teacher of SOOP School, School of Observation and Practice. They would watch Dora teach; she was the living example of what a good teacher is. She was always a marvelous teacher, lively and energized, full of energy and ideas. All of a sudden, back again, everyone coming to my home

was a professor of education, professor of religion. That was in Philadelphia. I kind of felt I needed to restore some study in my life, so I started going part time. The _____ is now located in Brooklyn, then it was located in the Wall Street Synagogue. I go in summers and I go in on occasional weekends. It was not a regular course. I was not trying to learn to be a rabbi. I wanted to learn how to learn; to get back into the rhythm of some Jewish life. I was not Sabbath-observant at this time; I will try to have a little Sabbath, but never quite did it. I could not figure out what I wanted to do. There were two guys in Philadelphia who were pushing me to consider Hillel and I never take, as a professional, never took Hillel seriously. Hillel? Hillel is a joke. Who works in Hillel? I come from multi-service staff situations, JCCs, million-dollar budgets. Hillel was a little pimple. One guy particularly, **Joel Paul** who was the director of Hillel in Philadelphia and **Micheal Munson**, the director of Hillel at the University of Pennsylvania, who used to be an old director here said, why not go to Gainesville, get some good people there. Go for a year, see if you like it. What else you got to do? You have nothing else to do, you do not know what you want to do. So I came for a year. Nineteen years ago.

K: You came here as a _____.

F: I was embarrassed. I never told anyone I was a rabbi. I came here as director. I did not wear a _____, I was ashamed to say I was _____. What did I know? I do not know nothing as a rabbi, except that I was in the field and after a few years and I saw what other rabbis knew. What I knew at age ten, they did not know. I come from _____. You do not know what I learned. At age twenty-

one, they went to seminary. They started and went to seminary. They did not even open up a book. They did not know how to crack open the holy text. I got more involved in it and I learned, and I learned a little more. Eventually I pulled out a shingle. You have to understand, this whole time, I did know where my papers were, I did not know where anything was. I had nothing to show.

Mendel, do you have my papers? My sister Mendel had all m pictures. You could not locate any papers. Eventually it all came together.

K: So how long did you spend here in Gainesville just as a director?

F: I think the first three years I was here as a just plain Jew.

K: Tell me more. Why Gainesville? Did they need somebody here?

F: They had have four Hillel directors in five years previous. This guy Michael Musnon was very close with a guy called **Barry Mesh**. Barry Mesh, I think, was the president of the board at the time. Michael Munson was the Hillel director from **1970-1973**. He was pressuring me. Come on, consider it, go, do see. What is the difference? Your are pretty young. I was not so young. I was thirty-four and thirty-five years old already.

K: You broke up your tents and everything in Philadelphia and you moved here?

F: It was very hard on our marriage. My wife was having a great experience in Philadelphia. She loved it. She was at the center of the most exciting Jewish things and I could not locate myself there. I did not know what I wanted to do. I could not stand Jewish _____ because I hated the executives at the various organizations. They were so harsh. The very first interview I had as a new young executive, the overall executive calls me in. The first question he asked

me after I was on the job two weeks was, so who is loyal? He was a paranoid. He kept firing people left and right, including me eventually else. He just cleared slates of people. If you asked a question, he viewed it as deserving of punishment. I had never met that; I came from a lovely, wonderful, warm, large agency in West Orange. It was very elegant, I loved it there. I am still friends with the people there. _____ was so harsh and so small and so punitive. I did not have a good experience in Philadelphia. I did not like my job, I did not like the agency, I did not like the clients. I did not like it that I was not doing something that I liked.

K: What situation did you find here in coming to Gainesville, the community situation, campus life?

F: It was primitive. The building was a black hole. We had to remodel the whole building. The first two months were miserable. I could not locate a bill. I would get calls, hey, _____, where is the money? You owe me \$10,000. What about for the food? It is _____ three years. I did not know what he was talking about. It was such chaos. It was a terrible board; they told me, we need to get rid of the board.

K: Did they have services here?

F: They had services but it was rotten. The whole building was rotting. We had to clean up and paint. We remodeled; everything was remodeled.

K: Was everything you remodeled done the way you imagined it should be?

F: No, the process was started earlier. I kind of completed it. I remodeled the inner part, the inner framework. Those are the old days of Hillel, in which, what was

Hillel? Hillel was a club. So you had thirty or forty people, that was Hillel. It did not matter that there were 2,500 or 2,600 Jewish students out there. We did not know exactly. Those thirty people, if you walked in, you were looked over. I created a totally different structure. There is no one group. We have multiple groups. Every group has its own structure. We will have a council made up of members. That was way ahead of the thinking of the field of the time.

K: The students were not aware that there was something like Hillel?

F: They were, and they disliked it. It had a very bad reputation.

K: Looking back before we talk about Gainesville, which was your favorite period so far? You call it West Orange? Philadelphia you did not like very much.

F: I loved West Orange. The only thing I did not like about West Orange is that I was a little distant from Judaism. I loved the people, I loved the agency I worked for, I loved that it was so close to New York. My favorite was still New York. I wanted to be close to New York. It was a half of an hour away. I popped right into Manhattan. I was forty-five minutes away from my family in Brooklyn. Forty minutes.

K: After the ordination, or after coming back to Judaism, you could not imagine that you would have a community. Was that uncommon in _____, when the rabbi has his community?

F: A _____, you mean a congregational job?

K: Yes.

F: Well, that is not true. When it hit the early 1980s and the mid-1980s, I started just for salary negotiation and a whole bunch of other things. I wanted to know

my worth. I wanted to see what I was worth on the market. I interviewed. I did not like interviewing for congregational jobs. I found that most of the lay people who interviewed me out to lunch, angry at rabbis, angry at themselves, bickering. They got a very uncomplimentary view of Jewish life. I sensed that any person who worked synagogue, especially in conservative synagogues, where they _____ know what the hell they were about and what they wanted to accomplish would have to be a very good politician. I knew that I was not. I knew that I was essentially a program person; a person to make excitement happen, enthusiasm happen. I would be dealing with constant bickering and constant small-minded. I would have to first win that battle before I could win the battle of substance and content and I did not feel it was worth it. I have seen too many congregations not work by the way I deal with the products of those congregations. Not very Jewish, the kids that I get. The products not only of the congregation, of the families that belong to those congregations. Both reform and conservative, we have very few Orthodox.

K: How did your decision happen concerning which branch of Judaism you wanted to belong to?

F: I never even thought about it. I stayed with the only branch I knew, which was Orthodox. I never even thought about it. I never could imagine myself going to a reformed seminary or a conservative seminary. Never in a million years; I still cannot. It does not mean that I am Orthodox. I am not. I am a mixed bag. I am not one thing or another. If I had not found Hillel, there would be no way I could be a rabbi; I would not fit in anywhere. In Hillel I do not have to be "X" or "Y" or

"Z". I can be a mixed bag because this is a pluralistic environment. We have all kinds of people; people searching. What I want to be is a model for being a serious Jew. Serious does not mean deadly and boring. It can be fun. Someone is trying to grow, someone is trying to explore, trying to learn something **Jewishly**.

K: When you came here as a director though, I do not think you had that picture. When did that happen that you realized that you could be a model and you could live a model for these young people that are here?

F: Much later. When I had confidence in myself.

K: Why do you think that confidence came?

F: Doing it. And also meeting others who were very high up and did not know _____. I could _____ better than they, I could teach better than they, I could study better than they, I could write better than they. All of a sudden it hit me, my god, what a blessing my education was. So rich. Not just a formal education. The whole thing I talked to you about earlier. People wanted to be around me as a Jew. Not just people who knew, people with Ph.D.s and rabbis enjoyed me and Dora. They just wanted to hang out with us because of who we were. You have to understand, in my view of things, I am not a rabbi, I am a joke. I know real rabbis, the _____. Great teachers, great scholars, great Jews and their personal lives. By that level, I am a joke, but I know it. That silly little rabbi who grabs that degree from reform seminary or the conservative seminary thinks he is something special. I will give you an example.

When I was about eighteen or nineteen my old math teacher, **Rocy Burman**, I think his name was, he came to me and said, Yussle, listen, Gerry. Gerald, he did not call me that. When he wanted to get my attention he called me Gerald. No one knew me as Gerry then. Gerald because that is what was said on the **delaney** card, on the card that you mark in the book if you are present or absent. Gerald Friedman. Friedman, Gerald. Gerald, how about going out to **Belmar, New Jersey**? I want you to lead the congregation for me this Sabbath. I cannot make it. I need someone, they are having a special Sabbath. It was _____, I think between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, something like that; a very important _____. Come on, what do I know? I do not know how to do this. Just think of the _____ of our Torah. _____ prepare a little of this and have this and you will do it. I cannot, it takes time, I do not know enough to do that. Do not worry, do not worry, you will prepare. Why did I say do not know enough? Every one of us knew. In that little dinky little congregation, if it was Orthodox, somewhere in the back of the room was sitting a little Jew who was a jeweler or a taxi driver who was from _____ or one of the great _____ who studied for eighteen or nineteen hours a day and somewhere along the line, he could learn you under the table. What he knew already here, you did not know in your whole body. So I let myself, like a schmuck, be talked into it and sure enough, I prepare, I write, I give this talk, _____ I am happy. Then at the end, in the back of the room, I still get the feeling. Excuse me, rabbi-like you schmuck, you are a rabbi, and he proceeds to dismantle, to throw up how you do not know what you are talking about, you got it all wrong. Of course

he was right. Those of us who grew up in that real world of _____, who learned it, learned it from their grandmothers, learned it from their mother's milk, learned it from the air of _____, of _____, of the great centers of Jewish learning. We know what we do not know _____. We are no where near it. Some yutz who grew up somewhere in New Jersey or in Pennsylvania and went to seminary for four years, you do not know what a kid eight, nine, ten years old already knows in some of the classic _____. Has packed away so much by heart and then there is this building and it starts pulling together. These guys do not have nothing; they are empty-headed. They are career Jews. Some people become lawyers, they become rabbis. It took me a while to learn that. I did not know who was a rabbi and who was not. I literally met other Hillel professionals who did not know how to read the text. Even with the _____, even with the _____.

K: How sad.

F: Sad and frightening. This is what American Jury has settled for because we are so third-rate in so many ways.

K: What do you think is the most important ability a rabbi should have or acquire to make him a good rabbi?

F: That is a very hard question because I used to think I knew. What is the function of a rabbi? It is to be a teacher of the texts, a teacher of the tradition. A teacher of the depth and breadth of what we are.

K: How much time do you really spend doing that?

F: That is the problem. How many people really come to me for that? How many people seek out, have a question that they need an answer? Help me develop a _____ . Get me some process to work this out. How can I begin thinking about it? Who does that? So the question still has great worth. Then I used to think, well if I did the ceremonies of Jewish life properly, if I showed them the ritual and celebration and modeled that, that surely got to be important. In some measure it is, but not quite the way I imagined it. I now know that there is no one way. American Jewry does not have the intensity. You know what we do here, Verena, on Friday night. _____, some stay for dinner, some will even sing afterward--and then they go to Congo Craig's for a wet t-shirt contest. It blows my mind. They want everything. They do not know how to say no. Nothing is coherent and there is not such thing as _____. Friday night, two hours here, or come for _____ service. There is no such thing as twenty-five, twenty-six hours. There is no intensity and breadth and depth in Jews. They want everything. They want to be Americans, they want to be sex goddesses, they want to be very rich, successful lawyers, and they want to be Jewish too, yes. I do not know how to model any coherent role other than to be who I am. For some, that is good. The inherent contradictions of a little country, a little rock 'n roll, a little basketball, a little _____, this represents me. Look at my picture of myself. This is my self-representation. The holy books, the basketball, _____, sometimes I dive in every morning, sometimes I do not dive in for months at a time. I do not have a certain consistency. That is why I could never be an Orthodox rabbi. But I take seriously all the _____. That

is why I could never be a conservative or reformer, because I do not think those movements do. Maybe I am wrong; that is my personal opinion. So where do you fit in? Somehow or another, whatever something or nothing that I am or whatever combination has to be there and displayed in some way.

K: Dora left _____ here. We were joking a little bit and she said, well, we have the papa so I have to be the mama. So she called you the papa here. Do you feel that is true?

F: No. For those who want me to be there, I am there in that way. I have multiple masks, or self-presentations. Underneath it all, I guess there is some coherence, some self. I am not an unserious person, I am pretty serious. I dress it up to myself, not even to the outside world in humor and certain kinds of _____ style. You know, little performance, _____. It takes the distance from the intensity that I really would love and cannot summon, the passion and the commitment and the regularity that I just cannot manage. My whole life, _____ . Yussel, you always danced at every wedding, and we all know, but there _____ if you would only dance at one wedding, but I kind of wanted to dance at a lot of different weddings and I will never resolve that. It is something in my soul has that split. It used to be worse. I could be in _____ dreaming about being in the **Palladium** with **Killer Joe Piero** on the dance floor learning the newest mambo steps. And during the mambo steps I would be thinking about something else. Now at least when I am in the mambo, I am thinking mambo. When I am studying with my

students, I am thinking studying. It used to be a lot worse. Almost to the point of schizophrenia. Now it is well, o.k., I am doing this, let me enjoy this. That is the me growth. The me. I do not think my rabbis in the _____ would consider that. At a certain point in that world, at a certain point, you are already whole. The guys I went to the _____ with have beards and they have eleven kids, they are _____, they are heads of seminaries. I grew a beard in Israel. When I grow a beard, I look like that, a middle-aged child. It does not come in right; it does not come in like, _____ rabbi now. It just does not fit. I have a chubby face. I look like a middle-aged kid. I do not mean it to be that way, that is just the way it is. I do not have that kind of depth to me. It used to bother me; I cannot let it bother me. Evidently I was chosen. I think it fits in this kind of a setting to be someone who is a little screwier than the average rabbi. On the other hand, someone who has some hard learning under his belt, who can give, for those who want, a taste of flavor, an insider's view. Occasionally there is a kid who will say that to me. We would be studying _____ after and someone will say, I always thought it was _____, thank you. I always knew it was stronger and deeper. I always knew there was something there more than what I managed in that silly little Hebrew school or whatever. You opened up for me the depth, _____, _____. Few want from me _____ and I do not know how to give them _____. _____ means full stature of truth. Full extension of one's _____. I do that because I cannot summon it from myself. I have made peace with that. But I know how to get a certain kid who wants that and needs that, I know where to send it; I know who has _____, greatness,

grandeur as a Jew. Not me, not Dora; we are too contemporary. You want someone who has kind of an eternal aspect to him, something that he is already inhabiting. In his face you can already see Sinai, or her face. I am not that person, but I care enough to bring to the two or three people a year who need that level.

K: You deal with many, many other things too. Last time we had to postpone it because you had an emergency meeting.

F: I am first and foremost an administrator. I am a director, a fund raiser. I deal with board development, I deal with financial management, I deal with a building that rots that needs attention.

K: How are the connections with UF? Are there any ties?

F: Yes, strong.

K: On what level?

F: Mutually respectful. In some instances warm with many UF administrators and professors, including the top line. We have a line to Lombardi, to Hemp, to Sorensen, to Sandeen and various chief administrators responsible.

K: Does UF perceive it as part of campus life?

F: I think so. I think so. We are called upon, we call upon them. I think there is always going to be more integration and greater impact as we get more staff that will happen. We will be more integrated with housing, with multicultural affairs. It is happening. We cannot give the leadership we want to various elements of the university and make it a more responsive community until we have the staff capable of doing that. That means expanding staff. That is my next job.

K: That is in the plan?

F: We are in a development plan.

K: One other question. Coming from far up north, as we Floridians say, are there differences in people? Have you had to deal with differences in people and how things work?

F: Yes.

K: Nineteen years back, when you came here, what was your impression?

F: It was amazingly different. The lack of a coherent street culture. Difference was not exhibited. There was no Greek life, there was no Jewish life, Italian life like in the city. Neighborhoods ripe with Jewish, if it was a Jewish neighborhood, or Greek or Italian or Salsa, Spanish flavorings and expressions. That is number one. I missed it terribly. It was very dull. On the surface Gainesville was very dull. The lack of a nightlife.

K: It was still **hogtown**.

F: It really is. Once you get into it, you know that in this house, there is going to be this little recycling, then you can get a little more action. The surface of things is very dull, and still is. There simply is not enough restaurant variety. I do not mean just another national chain store opens up. There is nothing to eat, there is not enough interesting places to go to. Two, the style of talking is slower, not as colorful, not as flavorful as I find up north. Three, the Jews are so boring. For lack of an interesting Jewish articulation, Jewish expression, lack of language, of Yiddish, of Hebrew. A few Israelis speak Hebrew. Frighteningly, there is no

Jewish culture. You have to import it, an act or entertainment, a poet, a speaker or there is a film. There is nothing indigenous.

K: Sam Proctor told me yesterday that the oldest Jewish graveyard in Florida is located here in Gainesville.

F: Well that tells you something. What other thing is old and established. We have a library here, one of the best in the south. Who uses it? There are not enough people who know how to use it to take advantage of it. Judaic library, wonderful.

K: Why do you think that is?

F: There is not enough bulk of Jews who want that, who come to Gainesville. You are probably a certain Jew in the first place if you come to Gainesville and select Gainesville as a place to live. Orthodox people would never come here. It does not have the infrastructure that they need. So right away there is a limiting factor.

K: Were there times when you just wanted to take off?

F: Yes. For me those times were associated with a loss of a friendship, people moving away. There was a kind of fabled group of seven families; we were always in the Gainesville Sun. You can always see us lighting our **Hanukkah** candles and we all kind of raised our kids together and so on and so forth. About five years ago, we were devastated, four out of the seven left. My wife said, that is it, this sucks. It was devastating. I lost my best friend. He moved to Boston, this one moved to New Jersey, that one moved to wherever. It was very hard and I almost took a job in _____ New York. A few members of this congregation know this particular _____, sisters and brothers and relatives in

New Jersey. I was offered another job. I really wanted to get out. At one point I was going to make a _____. Our family went for a whole summer on a pilot tour. We lived in a development town in a _____ in an absorption center. We thought maybe, but I was never offered the job and I got chickened out. I was frightened to stay on, we looked at money.

K: Your kids at that point were here, still with you?

F: Everyone was here, yes. That was in 1982. They were eight and thirteen years old. That was the last serious time I thought about _____. I came with resumes and we were ready to consider _____. It did not materialize. But I have thought about leaving a few times. Dora has helped me.

K: Thinking of leaving?

F: Yes. Dora does not like Gainesville as much as I do. She misses friends and family. We go to New York twice a year and see everyone. It is expensive to do it.

K: Have you become emotionally attached to Gainesville?

F: No. I have no emotional connection to Gainesville. I like it, I am aware of its good qualities. Coming out in the morning, going in at night, sitting on the **lawn, it's quiet**. That is nice, but that could be anywhere. The flavor of Gainesville has not yielded itself to me, its strengths in any significant way that I should internalize it to make it an emotional connection. I am aware; it is nice, clean, safer than New York. There is no jazz, you know. I does not move in my insides.

K: Can you imagine something else in the future, another place for you to be?

F: Yes, I do not know how I am going to make it happen. This summer was going to be an investment in that. I was invited to a job for the first time, I am fifty-five years old, for God's sake, you should have offered me this twenty years ago.

K: The next thing I was going to ask you: I see you have been to Israel many times.

F: Many times.

K: It is an important part in your life?

F: It is the center of my spiritual and emotional life as a Jew.

K: Have you thought about moving there?

F: Not seriously. My task has been to figure out a way of going there at least once every two years. Save the money, get a grant, to do a something, to get a gig so I can get paid. I have some very good luck with that. I have been to Israel three or four times which I did not pay a penny. I got the best appointments and the best experiences free. I was there for two months at a time. I organized that very well. This is in the time I got immense money to go to graduate school. When I put my mind to things, to get money, I know how to do it.

K: That program, a very good offer for students to go over there for the summer, when was that started, the Gainesville Israel connection? Has it always been one of the tasks of Hillel?

F: Yes. We cannot follow through on it because we did not have the money to help. I have to kind of direct them to help them get money. It is not as simple.

K: A few more questions.

F: I have a 4:30 appointment.

K: What time is it?

F: Twenty after, do not worry about it. That person can wait a little, as you did. I am going to Israel this summer on a job trial in a place I did not think I would want to work when I was younger. Now after Gainesville, maybe I do want it. I always dreamed of living in _____. It is too expensive, it is impossible. Now I am thinking maybe I should live at the tip of _____.

I was invited to a job when I arrived. I could not take it. I had to say, listen, I am too nervous and too anxious. I cannot breathe, I cannot swallow, I cannot sleep at night. _____, give me a three or two-monther. Let me try it, you try me out, maybe you do not want me. We will try it out and then we will see. We will take one step at a time. He agreed. Dora and I are going to live in _____ this summer. This is a fun story, you should have it on the tape. Want to hear a fun story?

K: Yes.

F: _____ is an old friend of mine, _____. Kind of over the years we have been bantering with each other. _____, if I ever become a director of a _____, you are going to be my associate director. Gerry, he called me Gerry, if I ever become a director of a _____, an institute in Israel, you are going to come. Back and forth, back and forth. It is not going to happen. A few months ago, I get the call. Hello Gerry, this is head director, _____. I know already what he was saying in his voice. I knew I am in trouble. I am the new director of _____. I have my whole campus and I am looking for staff. Meanwhile I am thinking, oh God, I have five more years until retirement

and until my pension. How can I do this? I have to pay for my son to stay in college. How am I going to afford--what, where what, who? When am I going to get another opportunity? You know the old joke, _____ used to say, we have met the enemy and it is us. I have seen the chicken, and it is me. I am the chicken. I could not sleep at night. What am I going to do, what am I going to say? I will fax you back. A week goes by and I did not write him. I did not know what I was going to say. Where now I am maneuvering in the direction of, if I can get National Hillel to see this as a means of cementing a relationship of all Hillels in Israel and I can become their point manager organizing faculty retreats and staff training things and student contacts with who knows what, maybe then I can have my cake and eat it. Maybe I can keep my American salary, continue my retirement plan, you know the pension? So it is a possibility, right? It is. They are examining it. We are working on it. Here is the next letter. Here is the official invitation in writing. I am _____. There is the resume, the same thing you got. Here is Dora's thing, one to Dora. This is exactly what I am working on. My boss is coming in. If I can get my boss to approve it, the regional director. I cannot just go to National, I have to get it processed through the system. If he agrees to it, maybe we can get both and show what we can do in our region of Florida to make a connection between Israel and American Jewry. It is _____. All of a sudden, a possibility. I am beginning to feel more positive, I am able to breathe. If you cannot breathe, you cannot think and you get panicky and you just worried. So who knows, who knows? I can have my cake and eat it. Watch this, he will tell me that he really hired me because he

wants me to be the fund raiser. That is what I am doing now, 70 percent of my time is fund raising.

K: I was going to ask you, is working with people the central theme?

F: No.

K: What is it?

F: That is important--

K: But not the central theme?

[interruption]

F: The central theme in my life is the dance and the song. The dance and the song from Jewishness to Jews and to the world. The links of all that from my own background tradition, from my own soul, to touch others. I am really not a social worker, that is a device I have to use. It is a credentialing so I can get work. I am really not a rabbi. It is a device. It is a tool, a mechanism, sets of interactions and expectations and devices that you can mobilize. The real thing is the enthusiasms and excitements for energizing Jewish life and through Jewish life the whole world. I truly believe that without Jews in the world, the world would be boring. Much more boring. But the right kind of Jews, not just Jews. Jews who have a certain zest for **imagination**, for bringing together their own rich culture with other rich cultures.

[end of tape]

F: They do not sing the way Jews should sing.

K: Everything is very self-conscious, they could use a big party.

F: They have no place. They have no place in them from which it is emanating. _____, you can sing, _____. There is no yearning, there is no passion, there is no hope. It is all so Christian. _____.

K: Maybe _____ to learn that from watching her and you.

F: Some can, others feel it is in their position, it is an intrusion. Oh, they are so loud, they are so noisy. Stop throwing yourself around so much. Too many words, too much singing, too much banging, too much. Enough of it. They are so modest, these people.

[interruption]

K: Shall we finish now?

[interruption--got a letter from **Ricki**]

F: Can you believe it? Ricki, Ricki was a sex-pot. Gorgeous. She had energy, a tornado. Stevie is blond and calming. He needs to calm himself, right? She took over his life and she gave it color and she scared the shit out of him, excuse my french. She scared him with her energy, her life force. Of course he responded. I saw him blooming. He started wearing sandals. He let loose! You are not going to pick up any of these things because they do not see my facial expressions.

K: That is what I was thinking.

F: You have been privy to so much and it is all on my desk. My whole life as we are talking is right here. I cannot believe this, Ricki. My wife is going to go crazy, we are crazy about her. We used to visit her more often when she was in _____, but she is such a pioneer, she moved to a _____.

K: What is that?

F: A _____ is an overlook point. A temporary settlement among Arabs so there is a Jewish presence in **Galilee**. It is owned by Israel and the government subsidizes housing so you do not have living with ten or twelve families. She had so much pioneering spirit in her.

K: [inaudible] traveling, have you been to Europe? We have not covered that at all?

F: I do not really go to Europe. I have been, but I go because it is a stopover so I stay in London for a day or two. It is on my way to Israel. I cannot go to Europe. Europe to me is a cemetery. We have had opportunities to lead groups and to be involved in _____ marches. I do not want to go to **Auschwitz**. I am not ready to go yet, to see what to me is a devastation. I am not over that yet. Jews who did not know what we lost, I know what we lost. Not just numbers, we lost the best, our brightest, our sweetest, our world that we still have not recovered. We really do not know what is going on with us.

K: Do you feel that what you just expressed is important to teach? Is that one of the things you could teach the young kids here?

F: I try to but it is very hard. You cannot teach it the way you teach a subject. They have no organic connection to it; it may as well be the War of 1812. The truth of the matter is, we are required religiously, one of the commandments is to create memory. You are supposed to remember the day you left your-- I did not go out. You are supposed to remember the day that God created Sabbath, stopped creation of _____. How could you do that? It requires a certain imagination to be a serious Jew because the goal is not to live in Gainesville or **Vienna**, that

would be a sin. You are supposed to be a citizen of all time and of all the universe. Good Jewish education gives you an up-front seat across time and space. I am a citizen of all of life, because if you belong to _____, the eternity of Israel, you got to be in some way a little eternal. You cannot just inhabit your little, in Hebrew we way, your _____. That is what I hate about some of Gainesville Jewry. It is so settled in, and so comfy with it's own narrowness. It is barely aware that they are missing out on so much. They have no model. They have not seen or lived with Jews who train their young to have a conversation with _____ in Greece. Good Jews, through music, through language patterns, through memory build-up, through association with individual Jews, when I studied _____, my _____ opened up to a page that has twelve other Jews on it in conversation with each other. They are talking about the same _____, the same sentence, from their own period. This is one set, one _____. They had five lines of text and _____, that is thirteenth century _____ in French. This is from **Frankfort** in the fifteenth century. Take what you got now, if you need more, you can call back another time.

K: O.k.

F: Unless you have one quick wrap-up type of question and you want to try to do that.

K: Two more minutes.

F: Go ahead.

K: So many of the things you have described, I know only from one person and that is _____ and his books and knowing what _____ is, for example. I know only from that source. I wanted to ask you, do you still read? If you have any free time, what do you like to do? Is literature still--

F: Not as much as this.

K: I mean literature.

F: No, not world literature. I have since consigned it. It was a substitute for me. If I can get access to _____ which deals with the richest exploration of the human potential, the human imagination, I prefer doing that. I read fitfully and only during the summer so I reabsorb myself at doing the Times crossword puzzle or other puzzles that have more times. Part of my vacation now, to read, not my regular. I have to spend so much time on required reading for my work and the reading that I have to do in preparation for my teaching that I really do not have the luxury to read _____.

K: How much teaching do you do?

F: I teach three courses every term.

K: I did not know that.

F: Sure, you should come. Thursday night, I have a class tonight.

K: You do?

F: Yes. I teach on _____ afternoons and I teach Wednesday afternoons. Wednesday is faculty _____ class. Tonight I teach a kind of introduction to Judaism to beginners, many of them _____, people who are about to convert.

K: I remember about taking a class.

F: If you do not want to--it is up to you.

F: So it is an option.

K: Thank you so much.

F: You will call me if this does not come out clear.

K: I am sure it has.

F: There are slivers of things that I just had to quickly tell you, like every life. How could you adjust a life in two hours?

K: Impossible.

F: This is a flavoring. I am willing to sit with you again if it helps get it to where you need it to be.

K: It was a great picture that you drew for me.

F: Thank you much.

[end]