

AJHS 4

Interviewee: Jacob Rader Marcus

Interviewer: Samuel Proctor

Date: September 14, 1985

P: Dr. Marcus, what is the address of this house?

M: 401-403 McAlpin Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio. This is a double house.

P: Have you been living here a long time?

M: Over fifty years.

P: Were you born here in Cincinnati?

M: No, I was born near the Youghiogheny River in Connellsville in southwestern Pennsylvania on March 5, 1896. I will be eighty-nine in March.

P: Congratulations.

M: Thank you, sir.

P: How long have you been living here in Cincinnati?

M: Since 1911. I've been with the college since 1911 and I have never been anywhere else.

P: Dr. Marcus, for the sake of the records, I want to get a little bit about your family background. Tell me about your parents. Who were they?

M: My father came here in the late 1880s from Russia. He was a Lithuanian Jew and he got married about 1892 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to a girl from the same village in Kovno.

P: Kovno, Guberniya, Poland. What was your father's name?

M: His name was Aaron Marcus. There are a lot of Aaron Marcuses floating around because it is always the grandchildren who take that name.

P: And what about your mother? What was her name?

M: Her name was Jennie Rader and I took that name. It is a different spelling. She came from a family of Talmudists and her father was a physician with better training in education than the average east European Jew. My father was a farmer.

P: Your father came over as a child?

M: No, he came over after he had served in the Russian army, and came over in his twenties. He was released from the Russian army after he served. He was a sharpshooter. That is a distinction and a rank in the army, and he could not go back to farming because after the May Laws of 1882 were issued, Jews were driven off their land. He came over here and became a mechanic and a worker and then became a peddler.

P: How did it happen that he settled in Pennsylvania?

M: I do not have the slightest idea. He had a lot of unhappy experiences in New York City, and I will not go into that. It would take the whole evening to detail those. He walked from New York City to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and got a job in a mill. As a matter of fact, it was a small mill, and the boss knew all of his workers, and one day the boss came to my dad and, he said, Marcus, you have got to quit. And my father turned to his boss and says, Mr. Westinghouse, he was George Westinghouse, are you firing me? And he said, no, but you're a Jew, and you will open a clothing store. He thought that was funny. Well, it was generally true. After about ten years father opened a clothing store in Homestead, Pennsylvania. But before that he lived in a village that is no longer in existence. I thought he was the only Jew there, but a researcher has discovered that it was a peddler's center, and a village called New Haven, Pennsylvania. They had their own congregation in the early 1890s with a charter and everything. My father was one of the charter members. So he peddled until he had some money saved and then he went to Homestead in 1900, and he was in Homestead until he retired from business. He finally moved to West Virginia. He made a small competence, enough to retire, and then returned to Pittsburgh, which was the core area for peddlers and for business people.

P: Where did you go to elementary and high school?

M: I went to elementary school in Homestead, Pennsylvania, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and I graduated from the public school in Wheeling, West Virginia. While still in high school, I transferred to the college here in 1911. In those days the college was a nine-year course with four years of high school, four years of university, and one year of graduate school. Your secular studies were pursued in the morning, and your seminary school and religious activities in the afternoon.

P: Was your family a Reform family?

M: Strictly Orthodox. Not strictly, but sensibly Orthodox because for years we lived in the mountains of West Virginia. There was no cultural food, so father would **sochet** his own chickens but buy trays of meat. We never ate any pork products.

P: How did it happen then that you came here to a Reform school?

M: I think I was the only student in the Sunday school who could read Hebrew. I was confirmed by a brilliant young rabbi who later became a famous rabbi in Wheeling, West Virginia, and who later became the chief Reform rabbi in Boston. I was confirmed there and he told my parents when I was thirteen years of age that I ought to be a rabbi.

P: Who was he?

M: Harry Levi [Rabbi Harry Levi, 1875-1944; Temple Israel, Boston], Congregation Temple Israel. He was a predecessor of Josh Liebman [Rabbi Joshua Loth Liebman, 1907-1948; instructor at Hebrew Union College; rabbi for Congregation Temple Israel, Boston 1939-1948] and my parents were on the Orthodox side. My father did some investigation and decided to send me to the Jewish Theological Seminary. Israel Davidson, then a young man [Israel Davidson 1870-1939; scholar of Hebrew literature, Jewish Theological Seminary, 1905-1939] and later on a very famous scholar, wrote a rather curt note saying, we do not take freshmen in high school; have him come back in eight years. Harry Levi then informed my parents that all your son has to do is go to Hebrew Union College when he graduates, and he can be an Orthodox rabbi or a Conservative rabbi. In 1899 I was confirmed. In 1911 I was sent to the college. I went out on my own and my father financed me and I had a little money of my own, and I have been here ever since. I have been at the college since 1911. I have been here for seventy-three years.

P: Tell me about the college when you came in 1911.

M: The college in 1911 was downtown in the slum district near the red light district.

P: It was then the red light district? It was a slum section even then?

M: Yes. That was the last year the college was downtown. That building had been purchased in 1883 and I came in 1911, the last year there. My schoolmates were Saul Freehof [Solomon B. Freehof, educator, rabbi, ordained HUC, 1915] and later on, Abba Hillel Silver [Abba Hillel Silver 1893-1963; American Zionist and Reform rabbi] and Ed Magnin, [Edgar Fogel Magnin, 1890-1984, rabbi] very distinguished people. Israel Kaplan was down there if that means anything to you.

P: I knew Rabbi Kaplan well [Israel Kaplan, 1889-1979; rabbi of Congregation Adavath Chesed, Jacksonville, Florida, 1916-1946, rabbi emeritus, 1946-1979].

M: I figured that.

P: I did an oral history interview with him before his death.

M: So, I was there for a year down in that slum district. Then we moved up on the hill to the college.

P: What kind of curriculum did you have then?

M: Well, a lot of Hebrew, a lot of Bible, and a lot of Rabbinics. More Hebrew and Bible than we get now.

P: But in the morning you took secular subjects?

M: Yes. We ran from the high school to the college to make it. The high school would let out at 2:15. All classes were 3:00 to 6:00, with no electives or anything like that; all classes were fixed. You went every day from 3:00 to 6:00.

P: What time did you start in the morning?

M: Since we did not have any money, we walked about two miles to school. We walked from Avondale, which was the genteel Jewish ghetto for the east European Jews. The German Jews lived north of a certain street, and ne'er the twain shall meet. You are not old enough to understand that sharp division.

P: I understand it. Even in the South we had that kind of a sharp division. Now, you came here then as a young boy?

M: I was fifteen years of age.

P: Who did you live with?

M: We all lived at kosher boarding houses because they always wanted to make a dollar. So I lived in one kosher boarding house for ten years. Mrs. Richerman was the only illiterate Jewess I ever met, and was a wonderful woman. She was a second mother to me. She had a son who became a famous American comedian. He called himself Harry Richman. That's where I lived. Some good people lived in the same house. One of the men who lived in the same house was a classmate of mine. His name is Jack Skirball [Jack H. Skirball, motion picture producer and investment company executive]. He is still living and is about my age. He is a zillionaire from movies and other investments, and he lives on the coast.

P: So you came here as a young boy . . .

M: Teenager.

P: . . . without any family . . .

M: That is right.

P: . . . and with limited resources.

M: Very limited.

P: You had an Eastern Jewish background.

M: **Yidden.**

P: That is right, and an Orthodox background. This must have been a completely different group to you.

M: No, sir. All the students came from the same background, and some still had the smell of the steerage on them. Half the professors came from where I came from in Europe. Galacia and those sort of places.

P: So you did not feel completely isolated?

M: When I started to teach as an instructor in 1920, most of the boys knew Yiddish. Today nobody knows Yiddish.

P: Yes, it is almost a completely lost language.

M: So we teach it now as a dead language.

P: Tell me about your secular curriculum. What did you study, first in high school and then in college?

M: In high school I was a freshman. I finished the sophomore class in Wheeling, West Virginia. I flunked quite a number of my courses. I flunked them because instruction was very bad; I am not altogether a stupid person. In those days, all that you needed to become a high school teacher was a normal school diploma. A normal school diploma required two years at a normal school after you came out of high school. I have a suspicion that some of the teachers never even went to a normal school. So I flunked in algebra and geometry. When I came to Cincinnati where instruction was much better, I had had no background at all in the sciences, so I flunked in chemistry. When I went to the university here, I did not have sufficient credit so they let me make up my credit in history. I borrowed a history of England, memorized the entire book, I am very good at that, and passed with flying colors. I had a miserable average at the university. It was somewhere in the seventies. The answer was very simple. I was taking fifteen hours at the university, and fifteen hours at the HUC. That is thirty hours a week.

HUC required tremendous preparation. No monkey business. If I did not make a general average of ninety-four, I could not get a scholarship. If I made less, they would let me borrow some money. So I said to hell with the university, and I went through the college. In seven or eight years at the college, I got about three or four years of scholarships, and the other years I had to borrow money. At the university I did a miserable job. Thirty or forty years later I got an honorary degree at that same university and was made Phi Beta Kappa, but all honorary.

P: How did you get into history?

M: I am in history because of my maternal grandfather, whom I never met. He was born about 1830. I do not know if you know any Hebrew. He was an Eloi. Do you know what an Eloi is? He was a child prodigy. And a child prodigy is merely a person with big talk and a fine memory. So that is in my genes. I have an excellent memory, though it is not permitted according to Jewish tradition to brag. So when I was a child I read through most of the historical novels of an English novelist. They are very, very difficult incidentally. George A. Henty [George Alfred Henty, 1832-1902] wrote about a hundred novels. I retained a great deal that I read. At that same high school where I flunked out, I was the best student in the history class. At the HUC I was the top man in history, and I was a baccalaureate speaker for the class. Before I graduated I was offered a position as an instructor in Jewish history, not American Jewish history. And I was offered that, I do not lie. I always tell it the way it is. I was offered that not because I was a good historian, but I was not a bad historian. I was offered it also because I was a native boy who spoke English. Practically all the professors, with one or two exceptions, were foreigners with an accent. The professor of history was a very distinguished person but a lousy teacher. So that is how I got the appointment.

P: But you felt then that you moved into this area of history because of this inheritance from your grandfather?

M: And because I loved history. I loved Jewish history. And I had read voraciously.

P: Did you have a good library at home?

M: Yes. In those days you could buy a second-hand book for ten cents at the Jackson Bookstore downtown. Today the same book would be four or five dollars.

P: What about your father and mother? Did they push toward education?

M: I am deeply grateful to my father because he let me go to a Reform seminary. For the first two years he helped finance me. After the second year, I was on my

own, and never required a penny from my dad. Then after I taught at the college for two years, I got a leave of absence and went abroad to study for four years. He financed me out of a modest income. It was damned decent, and out of gratitude I became a sort of keystone of the family for the other siblings. I helped them. I supported my mother for thirty years after father died because she dissipated his estate. She wasn't very smart. She was intellectually smart but otherwise not smart. I still support a sister in comfort and in luxury because I get a very good salary.

P: Well, it is traditional for Jewish parents to push their children for education.

M: Some did and some did not. They yanked them out and put them in the business. I have no illusions about that. I do not deal in myth.

P: You are an honest man, Dr. Marcus. A very honest man, and is it myth that Jewish children do not take care of their parents?

M: There are a lot of sorry stories on the East Side. A lot of stories. Some that have gotten into literature. I speak from experience that most of the Jewish boys who made it, made it on their own. The one advantage that they did have is their parents did not compel them to go to work and help support the family. In many families they did. I have a secretary who is a very lovely woman. She is a grandmother, and she had to quit school to support the other children and help send them to school. At least two of them are college professors.

P: Dr. Marcus, was there anybody at the college that you considered your own special mentor?

M: No, no. Most of the professors were friendly. Some I detested. No, they did not take an interest in us.

P: Was there any special one or any special group that stand out in your memory?

M: They were all personalities because they were foreigners, and frequently they were kooks. They had idiosyncracies. The authorities wanted to get away from that and that is why they appointed me as a typical American. When I started to teach I said no monkey business. I said I know all the answers. You cannot screw me. You work.

P: Dr. Marcus, when did you graduate?

M: 1920. I lost a year. I was in the army for two years.

P: That is what I was getting ready to ask you about. Your experiences in World

War I.

M: I volunteered in April 1917 when war was declared, and was inducted into the service about May the first. I stayed for about two years, went over to France for a year, and I finally became the acting company commander of the company in which I started in as a buck private.

P: You were inducted here in Cincinnati?

M: First into the Ohio National Guard. Two or three months later I was sworn into federal service.

P: What motivated you to volunteer?

M: Get away from school. I was fed up and wanted some adventure. I read detective stories, adventure stories, and Indian stories.

P: So you looked forward then to your military service?

M: Yes.

P: Where did you go for training here in the United States?

M: I was a soldier in the rear rank. We went out to a fairground here in the Ohio National Guard, but they never gave me any military training because I was educated. In June 1917, after I had been in the Guard, I graduated from the university. So within a day or two after I was in the army, I had a high office. I became a battalion sergeant major. I always had office as a non-commissioned officer. Then when I was in France, because of a fluke, I decided to become a commissioned officer, though I never wanted to be a commissioned officer. Do you know what a dog robber is?

P: No.

M: Dog robber is a person who looks after you. He is a soldier who is your servant [an officer's orderly]. He superseded me because he was a trained mechanic. We were mechanized. We gave up our horses and mules, and went to automobiles. Bear in mind this is 1917 and 1918, and this mechanic superseded me. I said, I am not going to let that guy be my boss. So I went to the captain, and said, Captain, I am ready to get a commission. Send me to a training school. And he did.

P: Back to the United States?

M: No. I am a thirty-day wonder. I was commissioned in France at a fortress where

Caesar had fought some of the Gallic tribes.

P: Did you ever go into combat?

M: Yes and no. We were in a combat zone, but I was a battalion sergeant major. I was the second highest non-com in 5,000 people. Without me they could not eat. The colonel even treated me respectfully. The first man killed in my division was killed in my company during a bombardment. I did not have to carry a gun. I had my pistol which I still have. When I became a thirty-day wonder in thirty days I was given military training, but I never learned anything in the thirty days. Even before that, when I was being sent to the training camp to become an officer, there were half a dozen candidates to be sent to training camp, and these men were experienced fighters. They were real fighters. And I came in there. I had never gone over the top. It was trench warfare. I did not even know the manual of arms and I had been in the army for over a year. I was always an executive, and a very good one. When I walked in, all the other men were turned down. I was the only man with sense. They only asked me one question! Are you a college graduate? And I said yes. I was the only college graduate in 250 men in the company, including all the officers. That was the way officers were appointed. I was a gentleman despite the fact I was a Jew. When I walked in there, I was not even dressed properly. So they said to me, Sergeant, take your medical packet and put it in your pocket and button up your coat. But they sent me down to the camp. When I got to the camp, the first thing that happened was just by a fluke; they needed a camp supply officer, and they looked around and saw the records. So they went through one or two of the men who were supply sergeants, but they were out having a good time in the town, and I do not go out for a good time and was not interested in that. So I was the third man on the list. They asked if I was a regimental supply sergeant. And I answered, yes, sir. Then you are in charge of the camp. The reason they put me through is because I was the camp supply officer. That is the way history is made.

P: When were you discharged?

M: In May 1919, at Chillicothe I was company commander. It is Chillicothe, Ohio, at Camp Sherman.

P: I guess you did not have the chance to travel around France very much?

M: Never got to Paris. I was a busy boy. I had a job to do.

P: You were not a tourist then?

M: Oh, no.

P: You were a worker.

M: I was a worker. I had to work.

P: And you came back then and were discharged in May, 1919.

M: As lieutenant, 145th United States Infantry.

P: And obviously you had escaped the terrible flu epidemic.

M: Yes, we lost some wonderful people in 1918.

P: Any family?

M: We did not lose any family that I recall. That is before your time.

P: That is a little before my time.

M: But some wonderful people here died.

P: So you came back in May and then what?

M: That was May, 1919. At the college, I was two years behind because of the army. They forgave me a year and they put me back a year. I graduated with the class behind me, so I really belong to two classes. In April of the year in which I graduated, they put me on the faculty. It is a long, long story. There were machinations there. The professor of history had made enemies. He was a very wonderful man but he was very outspoken.

P: Who was he?

M: Gotthard Deutsch [Gotthard Deutsch 1859-1921, professor of history, Hebrew Union College] a very famous person. He had made enemies on the board. He was also pro-German during the war and they wanted to supplant him, so they figured that bringing an American boy would give him a rough time. So I became an instructor in the field. He was a little worried about it because the faculty decided at his request that I was not to teach post-biblical Jewish history, which was his field. I could teach only biblical history. The professor was insecure. Well, a year later he was dead and I was the whole department. There were only two of us. And then when I had the whole college to teach Jewish history, and I ain't no dummy, and I said, Marcus, you do not know your ass from a hole in the ground. You get yourself some education. So I left and spent four years abroad.

P: Where?

M: I spent most of it in Germany, some of it in Israel, Palestine, Mandate Palestine,

and some of it in Paris.

P: Tell me about Germany first of all.

M: I went to Berlin and I spent about three years there. I studied at the Hochschule, which is the Jewish HUC. That is the school that owned the books that are so much in the news today. I studied under Elbogen [Ismar Elbogen, author of A Century of Jewish Life (1944)]. I did not learn anything at the Hochschule. Only very, very little. I did a lot of private tutoring. I tutored in medieval Latin with a man named Fritz Baer [Yitzhak (Fritz) Baer, 1888-?; professor, Hebrew University]. Later on he became one of the greatest living American Jewish historians, and an authority on Spanish history. I studied medieval German with another young man, an archivist. I studied Talmud privately. I started my whole life over again. And I read through the whole Mishna with the aid of a pony. I did not know anything. I took practically no courses at the Hochschule. They were worthless from my point of view. I put all my time in at the university. And I worked with the Royal Prussian Historiographer for William the Second who survived the Republic, and I got my degree under him.

P: What degree was that?

M: Ph.D.

P: You got your Ph.D. at the University of Berlin?

M: Yes. Magna Cum Laude.

P: When?

M: 1925.

P: Now you were in Berlin, Germany, at a tumultuous time.

M: That is right. I kept a diary and there were Nazis around and I kept records of these kooks. And I said, they are crazy and it does not mean anything. All my prognostications in history have always been one hundred per cent wrong.

P: Yes, you were there from 1922 to 1925.

M: Yes, 1922 to 1925. When the Nazi Party was born. In fact, there were pogroms three or four blocks away from me, but I did not run to look. It was just a riot. I was not interested in riots. I was not collecting historical data. I was sitting on my ass and trying to become an historian.

P: And nobody thought the Nazi movement was very important at all.

M: Marcus did not.

P: And I think that view was shared by the majority of people in Germany.

M: I would not be surprised.

P: Now from Germany you went to Palestine.

M: I went to Paris and got married in Paris. I married a girl I had met in Germany. She was an American girl, and I was married at the Kol Rabinique, the rabbinical school, and I was there only about three or four weeks. I got married and my wife went back to Germany to study music. She was a musician, and I remained to study, get some French, and learn a little French history or something. After three or four days, I sent a brilliant telegram to my bride: I can study French in Berlin as well as in Paris.

P: So you went home.

M: I went home to the boss.

P: Tell me who your wife was.

M: She was the daughter of a Russian Jew who had leftist ideas. He was a philosophical anarchist, and brilliant man from Kiev in the Ukraine, who came to America, and went to night school, and made Phi Beta Kappa in night school at New York University. He worked as a factory inspector under a police commissioner named Theodore Roosevelt. Then he went out on his own, became a builder and became quite wealthy. During the Depression he lost everything. He had a very substantial estate. His name was Joseph Brody; he was a brilliant, able, and cultured person.

P: What was your wife's name?

M: Her name was Antoinette [Antoinette Brody--married Dr. Marcus on December 30, 1925].

P: And did you have children?

M: I had a daughter who died. So we are four siblings in the Marcus branch, and nobody in the bloodline for an heir. When we three die, there will be no Marcii in this area from this branch of the family. But there are other Marcuses floating around, but a lot of them are Gentiles. There are a lot of Raders around. Like the sand on the shores of the sea and because they have the genes of Moshe

Duyuliway, they are all substantial people. College professors, important people.

P: Was your daughter married?

M: No, she never married. She was a graduate of Barnard College, [New York] and was the sales manager for the Sheraton Hotel Corporation in Los Angeles when she died. She died a young woman.

P: What was her name?

M: Her name was Merle [Merle Judith Marcus].

P: And your wife is deceased?

M: My wife is deceased. My wife died in 1953 and I never remarried. My daughter died in 1965.

P: So you have been alone then for many years now.

M: Yes, but I have five hundred sons.

P: I can understand that. I think everybody in the United States who knows anything about American Jewish history knows you.

M: They know me, and they are very close to me. I want to turn the goddamn machine off, the telephone, because I cannot work. It rings too often.

P: Dr. Marcus, what about Palestine in the 1920s?

M: I went there in 1926 and stayed about two or three months. It was during the Mandate. About ten percent of the people in the country were Jews. The rest were Arabs. The Arab kids ran after me screaming, "Jew, Jew, Jew," but in Arabic, "Yaoodi, Yaoodi," or something or that sort. Then the Jews walked softly with the Arabs, and I lived in a very small community in those days. Tel Aviv was a town of approximately 30,000.

P: Jerusalem was the big city.

M: Yes, and Magnes [Judah L. Magnes, founded the Hebrew University of Jerusalem] had just started a university. It was dedicated in 1925. All they had was one building, a private house on Mt. Scopus. And that is where I went to classes. I did not register. I just sat in as an auditor and listened to Joseph Klausner [Joseph Gedaliah Klausner, 1874-1958, literary critic, Zionist, professor at Hebrew University, Jerusalem] and tried to learn modern Hebrew. I never

learned modern Hebrew.

P: You were there with your wife?

M: Oh, no.

P: She stayed on in Germany?

M: Oh, she was determined to stay on. I stayed there for about three months, then I went back and met her in Marseille. Her mother was there and we sailed to America all together in 1926.

P: Your wife was a musician?

M: She was a pianist, an accompanist, and a singer.

P: Was she good?

M: She was not that good, but I encouraged her. She was an excellent pianist. When I was a kid there was a comedian named Nat Goodwin [Nat Goodwin, 1857-1919, American comedian]. That was long before your time or even before my time. He wanted to play Shakespeare. My wife wanted to be a musician, and a singer, when she should have remained a pianist. She was an excellent accompanist with excellent training. She went through the Damrosch place, at Juilliard in New York.

P: Leo Damrosch [Leopold Damrosch, 1832-1885, founded the New York Symphony of Society] organized it.

M: His name was not Leo. It was Frank [Frank Heino Damrosch, 1859-1937, founded the Institute of Musical Art in New York--now part of Juilliard School of Music] and there was another one, Walter Damrosch [Walter Johannes Damrosch, 1862-1950].

P: Leopold Damrosch.

M: He was a Jew who converted to Lutheranism.

P: I did not know that.

M: Yes.

P: I supposed that Damrosch had always remained Jewish.

M: Oh, no. When they had to take names, they took a German name which they did

not like, and they translated it to classical Hebrew. It sounds good, but it is not as bad as the German. The German name was Blutkopf. "Bloody Head." "Dam" which is blood, and "Rausch" is head. Damrosch.

P: That does sound better. You came back in 1926 to the United States.

M: Yes.

P: Where did you settle?

M: I settled in Cincinnati at another place. After two years I moved here in this house. I bought this house. I bought it because it is exactly one mile from the college. I wanted to walk.

P: You came back in 1926, and what was your position with the college?

M: I left the college an instructor. The understanding was that after I came back with a Ph.D., I would become an associate professor. When I came back they appointed me an assistant professor. In other words, I got what the French call a royal screwing. I did not like it but I loved my job, so I shut up.

P: How much did they pay you?

M: I started at \$2,000 year. I came back and they gave me \$5,000. During the Depression, they cut me. But afterward they raised me every year, but they did not raise me in rank. The president, whoever he was, and I know who he was, and there is no need to go into that, was slow to give me recognition.

P: Why?

M: I think because I said that I was psychiatrically-oriented. I would also say because he felt if he was tough with me I might quit. There was another professor here named Saul Frug. I think he was brilliant, and I feel that Saul was squeezed out. He was too damn good.

P: And you felt that was what they had in mind for you?

M: I would say subconsciously, but I would not leave.

P: When you came back what did you teach?

M: I taught everything because there was only a small faculty. I taught a lot of Hebrew, a lot of Bible, and a lot of commentary. I learned a hell of a lot. I have taught practically every book in the Bible in Hebrew. That is where I learned my

business. I taught Rashi [Solomon Isaac, 1040-1105, leading commentator on the Bible] for years, and I taught history. I came back, and got out of biblical history, though I still continued, and I taught Jewish history.

P: When did you make associate?

M: A long time. And finally I got fed up, so I went to see a very lovely gentleman. He is a fine gentleman named Rosenau, a rabbi in Baltimore [William Rosenau, rabbi, associate professor, Johns Hopkins University]. A powerful person. I said, Dr. Rosenau, I have been here for six or seven years. I am not getting any raise. He says, I will look into it. Next year I got a raise. It took me fourteen years to become a professor at the college.

P: You mean associate professor?

M: No, full professor. I do not know; I do not recall; I cannot say. It may be in my biography. When I came back, he made me assistant. Then they made me associate, and then a full professor. It took me fourteen years to make it. I had to see Rosenau to get my promotion. Rosenau was a wonderful human being and so good to me. He was known all over the country as the "Boss." He sent dozens of students to the college. Many of the most famous rabbis in American, including Frug, were sent here by him. He was an associate professor at Hopkins. One of the penalties for getting up in the eighties is that you do not remember the way you used to. The old gray mare is not what she used to be. I am thankful when I do remember things.

P: Now I notice your biography shows that you studied at Lane Theological Seminary, and the University of Chicago.

M: That is right.

P: Now we do not have that on the tape so let me hear about that.

M: When I was a freshman at the university, despite the fact that I was carrying thirty hours, I was eager to learn church history. So I walked about two miles over to Lane Seminary. That was the seminary of the Beechers and the Stowes. Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote Uncle Tom's Cabin in this town. This was the crossing point for the underground railroad. Where I went to high school there was a man who helped build that high school, and was the head of the underground railroads in Cincinnati. So I took church history there and was the best in class. I was the Hebrew, and surreptitiously that made conversationalist literature my thing. I also took a course at the university from a Lane Seminary professor who taught at the university. He taught Old and New Testament. I have forgotten his name. He was a fine gentleman.

P: So you took thirty hours of work plus what you were taking at the seminary.

M: Yes, that was about three hours a week I guess.

P: So you were a busy man.

M: I was a busy man and a very ambitious man.

P: You must have had a mind like a sponge to take all of that in.

M: I had a good mind for as far as absorption is concerned, yes.

P: What about the University of Chicago?

M: I went there the summer of 1915 to study history. I studied history under Breasted [James Henry Breasted, 1865-1935, American Egyptologist and director of University of Chicago Oriental Institute]. I studied Arabic because I already knew I was going to be an American historian and I wanted to know enough Arabic in order to read Arabic sources. That was the second course. And I took a third course in Bible with John Merle Powers Smith. He was a Welshman. I never forgot his Hebrew accent. I used to laugh at it. I read the Deutero Isaiah, the second part of Isaiah, chapter forty with him. I studied some Arabic with a man who annoyed me and was no damn good. Breasted was an interesting lecturer, but he was a damn fool in one respect. He used to assign a thousand pages a week. I am a lip reader coming out of West Virginia, so I could read fifty to seventy-five pages because I did not have that much time. I worked for my meals at the University Commons. I had to work three hours a day to get twenty cents worth of food. They probably paid me about seven or eight cents an hour because it was 1915. That was a going rate in the factories in those days.

P: That was before the unions.

M: B & G was paying eight cents an hour or something like that.

P: You have your honorary degrees from what universities?

M: From Brandeis, University of Cincinnati, Spertus College of Judaica, Dropsie and Gratz.

P: How did you ever get into American Jewish history, which has become your great special area?

M: I have a printed bibliography. The first thing I ever wrote was an essay in 1913. I

was a teenage kid, and in that essay I said that America was going to exercise hegemony over world Jewry, and would be the center of world Jewry. I was maybe a year off. I was always interested but had no intention of being an American historian. I was going to be a German historian because all the culture was in Germany. And so when I went abroad to study, I went to the Hochschule in 1922. Is that clear?

P: That is clear, because that is what many Americans were doing. So what you were doing was going to the source in Germany, and that became the philosophy of the major graduate schools here in the United States.

M: That was characteristic of our college because practically all our teachers were German Ph.D.s. They were Russians and Poles, but there were German Ph.D.s.

P: Well, what moved you away from your interest and concentration on European and German history?

M: I was a German and European historian, and in the summer of 1942, when we were preparing men to become chaplains, I gave the first graduate course in American Jewish history at an academic institution in America. Then I do not know what happened. I am very honest, and I cannot tell. Almost overnight I dropped all European history, and became an American historian. I had been working in the field beforehand. I had published a mimeograph volume, one or two mimeograph things that had never been published, but they were mimeographed on American history.

P: American Jewish history?

M: American Jewish history only. In 1926 I gave a public lecture at the college; it is called the Isaac M. Wise Memorial lecture [Isaac Mayer Wise, 1819-1900, Reform rabbi, founded Hebrew Union College (1875)]. I gave it on Isaac M. Wise called the Americanization of Isaac M. Wise. I have copies of it. It was printed.

P: Would you say that was your first important publication in American Jewish history?

M: I would say so. And then sometime in the 1930s I put out a bibliography of modern world history with a big section on American history. Then I gave a seminar one summer on anti-Semitism in America, and we mimeographed some of the stuff. And then one summer I gave a seminar on American Jewish history. Now I was still in European history, and it was mimeographed. I still have a copy of it, and it was a source book.

P: Had you been publishing in European history up until 1942?

M: In 1934 I had my printed bibliography. I had written some articles in various places and I cannot recall all of them. There were not that many. Maybe a half a dozen. Then in 1934, I wrote The Rise and Destiny of the German Jew, which was considered a good book in its day. In 1939 or 1940, I published a textbook which is still in use after forty years and sells a thousand copies a year. It is called The Jew in the Medieval World (1938). Then about the same time, I published a book on European history called Communal Sick-Care in the German Ghetto (1947). It was a good book and it has been well-received. In other words, I was publishing into the 1940s.

P: And this was on the eve of your conversion to American Jewish history.

M: And I do not know why. I could extrapolate. The Holocaust was not yet out. But the Jews were taking a terrible beating. That is number one. Number two: I must have realized subconsciously that after World War I, that Jews were suffering. This was going to be the only great Jewry, and so this was the place to study.

P: That came in that paper that you did when you were a teenager.

M: Yes, as early as 1913 or 1914. And then there was another factor. I never wanted to teach in any area where I could not be the top dog. You hear me?

P: I understand.

M: I knew I would never be the top dog in European history because I was limited to German and English. My French was passable but not good.

P: But your German was good.

M: I was over there four years. I still speak German to my housekeeper; I have a housekeeper here three days a week. Bad German but I speak German to her. Then I knew no Slavonic language. An historian has to know the languages. But the most important thing, I knew no Talmud. Medieval Rabbinic literature is a tremendous field. The little rabbinic text I had learned in Germany and at college, had been a struggle. Men like Baron [Salomon Wittmayer Baron, professor of Jewish history, Columbia University] went to Yeshiva University. These people at Gratz were taught Talmud.

P: So they had a strong foundation which you lacked. That was part of the reason then that you knew you would have to get out of European history.

M: Subconsciously, I am analyzing.

P: I understand, but it was part of this desire to develop yourself and your own reputation.

M: That is right, and I said, this will not do. For instance, if I had to analyze the Hebrew document, it would take hours, and I can scan an English document in minutes.

P: Dr. Marcus, you were saying that the Holocaust was not out yet, and it is true the world did not yet know the full horror of that story.

M: That is right.

P: The Jews were taking a beating.

M: That is right.

P: What do you mean by that?

M: I can explain things to you. There were rumors of the Holocaust in 1942. I wrote the article on Jews for the Britannica. At that time there were rumors but I did not believe them. When I wrote this article in 1942, I said the Jews were grossly mistreated, but I did not say anything about a Holocaust. Well, it was not out until 1943 as you know. I think that Stephen Wise [Stephen Samuel Wise, 1874-1949, Zionist leader, founded American Jewish Congress (1917)] had mentioned that they were killing Jews. Well, you do not believe these people. They are always crying wolf. You do not believe those people, and I was a critical historian.

P: You knew the people who had been coming out of Germany in the 1930s, though.

M: They were put in my charge. When the people came to this town, I was chairman of the community relations committee. Because I was a Ph.D. from Germany, and they had respect for me, they told me that I was to talk to them and welcome them and make them feel at home here, which I did. I was also told to tell them certain things, which I would not tell them. They wanted me to bawl them out because they were reading German newspapers in the streetcars. So I turned to one of the outstanding elite Jews in this town, a man named Hersch. A very fine gentleman, and a millionaire social worker. This town has always had them. I said, Max, you see those people out there? He said, certainly I see them. I said, Max, they are the grandparents of your grandchildren. Let them read their newspapers.

P: Well, weren't they bringing these terrible stories out of Germany?

- M: No, they were not. They had not been in camps. They had got their visa when they fled. In 1936, five students came here from Hochschule, all of whom made a great career. Plaut [W. Gunther Plaut, author of The Growth of Reform Judaism (1966)] was on. They were put in my charge. So I put them to work. They respected me because I was a German Ph.D., and what I had, and that I was an American. So I put them to work reading European newspapers and excerpting all the Americana items. We have those excerpts; it is a very valuable collection.
- P: So they were bringing the stories about rising anti-Semitism and the destruction of synagogues.
- M: When they came in 1936 there was no destruction.
- P: But in 1939 there was.
- M: Yes, but they came in 1936.
- P: But you had other people who came into Cincinnati after 1936, didn't you?
- M: Yes, sure. I had written a book, The Rise and Destiny of the German Jew (1934), which the *London Times* said was the best book on the subject. But who could imagine they were going to kill them? An historian can only extrapolate what has happened.
- P: It was hard for you to believe this after the years you had spent in Berlin?
- M: That is right, I never believed it. I saw the head of the *New York Times* bureau in Berlin, and he said they are going to kill the Jews. Oh, I forgot to tell you, I went back in 1937, after I had already written my anti-German book.
- P: Why?
- M: I was not interested in Germany, though I looked around. I wanted to go to eastern Europe and see what the great Russian experiment was. So I stayed in Germany for a few days, but I moved around. I went to the National Library and saw that they had a copy of The Rise and Destiny of the German Jew. They had a copy with the notation, "not to be issued."
- P: Well, of course the Nazis were in complete control by then.
- M: They were since 1933.
- P: Could you see and feel that tension against the Jews?

M: No, except I went to see my Jewish friends who were still there, and they said this will pass.

P: Even three or four years later they were still optimistic.

M: Well, not when I came during 1937.

P: I say, but from 1933 to 1937 they were still optimistic.

M: Yes. How can you believe it is going to happen? It can happen here. You get this Reagan with his crap. Huey Long flirted with ideas like Reagan. I met a man who once told me that Huey Long flirted with becoming an anti-Semite. He was told it would get him no votes so he did not do it.

P: So you went from Berlin to Russia.

M: I went from Berlin to Rumania and to Russia. I traveled around Russia and kept a diary on Russia.

P: Did you try to go back to where your ancestors had come from?

M: Yes, I went there, and saw the village and saw the country. It was very interesting.

P: Any relatives left?

M: No, nobody. The cemetery had been destroyed in World War I. It was not destroyed, but practically destroyed. I could not even find the tombstone of my grandfather, who was the son of Moshe _____. I imagine that Moshe _____ is buried there, too. But I could not find anything.

P: Well, what was your reaction to Russia?

M: Worse than Germany. There was more fear in Russia than Germany. It was Stalin's time. People who I called would not talk to me. I believe all those Yiddish writers were assassinated.

P: This was the time of the great trials.

M: I was there in 1937.

P: So the people that you had contact with were exterminated?

M: Yes, though I did not have contact, they would not talk to me. I did not meet any

of them, but I came with good letters and the JDC people took me all over western Russia. I saw a great deal of Russia and Poland. I wanted to go to Birobidzhan, [colloquial name of the region in Siberia, for which the official designation is the "Jewish Autonomous Region"] the new Jewish state. But after traveling in Germany and in Russia for about ten days or two weeks, I was exhausted. It was fifteen or twenty days by slow train to Siberia, making a hundred miles a day. It is thousands of miles away. So I did not go to Birobidzhan on the edge of the Amur River to the north of China.

P: So when you left Russia you came back where?

M: I left Russia. I do not recall how I came back.

P: But you must have moved into western Europe and then sailed from there.

M: I suspect so. I have no recollection. There are a lot of things I do not remember.

P: Then you went back to Cincinnati and resumed your teaching?

M: I was there only in the summer. The money that I had to go on, and you should have asked that, was my bonus money from the army. I did all of that on a thousand dollars. I lived in Europe for thirty or forty days, traveled back and forth, and I did not go to hotels at night. I went from town to town, and sat up all night in a third class coach and slept that way.

P: You were a younger man in those days.

M: I had the strength of an ox. My father was a farmer. I had good genes and I still have them.

P: And then World War II came. What did you do during the war?

M: I had ambitions to go back. And a friend of mine, Phil Bernstein [Philip Sidney Bernstein, 1901-1969, rabbi, Congregation B'rith Kodesh in Rochester, New York; executive director of the committee on army and navy religious activities of the Jewish Welfare Board during the Second World War] had a big position in the D.P. camps. He had the simulated rank of brigadier general, and was the intermediary liaison between the Jews in the camp and the army at the end of the war. This may have been during the war. It would be in 1945, I guess. I wanted that job after he came back. I had influence and they finally said they would use me and give me the rank of major, which meant nothing. I would be under some kook who was a riveting clerk in Texas, and who was a nobody. So I refused to take it.

P: What do you mean you had influence?

M: I knew a man who was a personal friend of Eisenhower. He was a close friend and a Jew from the Philippines. He wrote to Eisenhower, and Eisenhower saw that I was invited to come to Washington for an interview. They as much as said you can have this job. You will be under this man, and I would have no authority. Well, on the other hand, the men who preceded me, like Phil Bernstein, were generals and had authority. They could do things.

P: During the war itself . . .

M: I did nothing.

P: You continued teaching?

M: I continued teaching.

P: But you lost your student body. They were all in the service.

M: During World War I, yes, everybody went. During World War II, nobody went.

P: Not even with the draft?

M: You cannot draft a rabbinical student.

P: Well, what about when they graduated? Did they not have to join the chaplaincy?

[End of side A1]

M: That is right. That they were willing to do because they had rank and position. So they all went into the chaplaincy. There were a lot of them that went in. It was a good position.

P: Did any of the faculty go to war?

M: No.

P: So the college remained intact during World War II, and you continued your normal operations.

M: That is right. I trained men in a way for the chaplaincy. That is why we had this summer class of 1942 where I taught American history.

P: That is when you changed your interests, and your main emphasis from that

point on was in the field of American Jewish history.

M: That is right. American history. It was overnight, almost. I do not know when, why, or what. I am not conscious of it. It is like a dream.

P: Has your special area in American Jewish history been the colonial period?

M: No. I was going to study and write on American history, so you start at the beginning. I decided I would spend a year or two on colonial history. Fifteen years later I published The Colonial American Jew (three volumes, 1970). I read all the sources I could get my hands on. Not every historian can do that for the simple reason it is too much. But the Jews were only one-tenth of one-percent of the population. And they left very few artifacts behind. I read practically all of the records that were available.

P: Where did you do your research?

M: I traveled around and got a lot of photostats. There was not much xeroxing in those days. I still have my records upstairs in huge cabinets. I have a three-floor house here.

P: You worked mainly in the Boston-New York-Philadelphia areas?

M: Well, I went to Rhode Island. There is a lot in Rhode Island. Rhode Island is important. And I worked in New York, and I think I was in South Carolina.

P: I was going to ask you if you came to Charleston and Savannah, and if you worked in the South?

M: I do not recall. Sooner or later I saw most resource material.

P: Tell me about your writings in American Jewish history. I know that you have them listed in the bibliography, but tell me about them if you will.

M: Well, I never fooled around with articles. I always advised historians to not write articles. In the time you write three or four articles you could write a book. There was a strategy in advancing yourself as an historian. And I say do not write articles. Write books. So I avoided articles.

P: Books get you promotions and raises.

M: That is right. I always had an eye on the main chance. That is why I am a Litvak, by descent. I make myself clear, I hope. So I always opted for books. And now, in the last fifteen years, I have been working on a history of the

American Jew, four volumes. Three, four volumes. It will be the first scientific history of American Jewry. Now I understand that Abe Karp [Abraham Joseph Karp, president, AJHS, 1972-1975] has got a history out. And it is probably more scientific than any other history that has been published. I have not seen it, I cannot say. But I will say that my history, whether it is interesting or not, whether it is good or not, will be scientific. It is accurate. It is the way things actually happened without any crap.

P: And based on primary sources?

M: As far as I can do it. When you write a general history of American Jewry, and you may have twenty million pages of primary material to go through, you do not deal with primary sources. You deal with the best secondary sources. Of course sometimes the secondary sources are primary sources. A man named Isaac Markens [Isaac Markens, 1848-1948, historian] wrote a history of the Jews in America in 1888. That book is a primary source. He is telling you what he saw and what he believes is important.

P: How far along is your work?

M: I am hoping by December 1986. It will be about seventeen years. We are here today and gone tomorrow. I lost four friends in the last four weeks. Three students and a schoolmate. They are all dying like flies. I have survived to eighty-eight, going on eighty-nine. These men are in their seventies, and they are all dead yesterday. Yesterday I discovered one of my students died. Leon Feuer was a prominent rabbi [Leon I. Feuer, 1903-1984, Reform rabbi, Collingwood Avenue Temple, Toledo, Ohio]. Edgar Magnin is gone. He was in the nineties. Herbert Rutherford was down in Beaumont, Texas. Harry Joshua Stern in Montreal [Rabbi Emeritus, Temple Emanu-El-Beth Shalom, Montreal, Quebec]. They all died in the last four weeks. What was that last question you asked me?

P: I asked you how far along you were with your work.

M: I am hoping by December 1986 I will have a draft finished for publication.

P: Dr. Marcus, during these years that you were teaching and doing your research and your writing, how were your students doing? What influence did you have over your students in these areas?

M: I do not know. There are very few people that have taken up American history. You cannot make a living from American Jewish history. I made a lot of friends, and that is why my friends took care of me. I was the first academician in American Jewish history to become the president of a rabbinical conference.

That was in 1950, I guess. I was the president of Central Council for American Rabbis. I never held a congregation.

P: You were not a rabbi?

M: Oh, yes. When I graduated I was ordained.

P: Oh, you were ordained.

M: Yes, everybody who graduates gets ordained.

P: So you officially went through the ordination.

M: Yes, with the laying on of hands.

P: But you have never practiced as a rabbi? You have never had a congregation?

M: Never practiced, except for the high holidays. I would go out and help them during Yom Kippur.

P: Have any of your students produced in the way of writing?

M: Well, I have had five or six students; one of them was positively brilliant. That is Bert Korn [Bertram Wallace Korn, president, AJHS, 1958-1961]. He was my student, my disciple. Allan Tarshish [Allan Tarshish, rabbi, Temple Jeremiah, Northfield, Illinois; earned first doctorate in American Jewish History at HUC under Professor Marcus] was very good. He was from Charleston. Stanley Chyet was brilliant, but he is gone into another field. Sefton Temkin [Sefton Temkin, professor of Jewish history and chairman of the Department of Jewish Studies, State University of New York at Albany] was not my student but he is my Ph.D. Malcolm Stern [Malcolm Henry Stern, director emeritus of placement, Central Conference of American Rabbis; author of First American Jewish Families: 600 Genealogies, 1654-1977] was my student and he has bilked the whole field of Jewish genealogy. I have had six or seven students, and most of them are damn good. Joe Rosenbloom [Joseph R. Rosenbloom, professor of classics, Washington University] is a professor at Washington. He is also a rabbi and he has written a lot of books. He is one of my students.

P: Would you classify Bert Korn as your best student?

M: Yes.

P: And his death was a real loss to the American Jewish community.

M: You have no idea. Without going into record because this is being recorded,

there was an important assignment that I had to give. It was an assignment that Bert Korn should have done but he was dead. So I gave it to another rabbi, and it was nowhere near satisfactory when it was published. It should have been an important piece of work, but it is inadequate in my opinion. Bert Korn would have written a beautiful piece of work.

P: I knew Bert Korn and admired him and his work very much.

M: Oh yes. He was a brain. He had ideas and an imagination. He wrote well.

P: His study of the Early Jews of New Orleans [American Jewish Historical Society, 1969] is really a masterpiece.

M: Well, I can tell you sir, that nobody wanted to publish it. It's a bore, we do not want it. I pushed like hell and it was finally published.

P: It really has served me very well. I use it often.

M: Of course. It is first-class scientific work.

P: And also his smaller study on the Jews of Mobile ["The Jews of Mobile, Alabama, Prior to the Organization of the First Congregation, in 1841," 469-502].

M: That is right.

P: And American Jewry and the Civil War [Jewish Publication Society, 1951].

M: Civil War was his thesis with me and I sweated that out with him. He would come over here; I was already a widower. He would come over here and we would go out in his car to a hamburger joint, eat hamburgers, and talk over the day's work. I worked with him on it.

P: Well, that was a tragic loss because he died a relatively young man.

M: Right.

P: Dr. Marcus, when did you become interested in the American Jewish Historical Society?

M: I do not know. But I can tell you how I did.

P: Please.

M: The man who brought me in was Max Kohler [Max James Kohler, 1871-1934,

jurist and historian, early founder of the AJHS along with Adler and Straus]. I want to put this on record. He was a fine historian and brilliant lawyer. He was Kaplan Kohler's son. He has written for the Society and written books. He is a brilliant lawyer. He sensed that I was the man who should be brought in the field. He worked on me and I went to meetings. I met Rosenbach afterward. I do not know whether that was after 1942 or not. I have no way of knowing. I do not have my correspondence and I could probably research it. Some of my correspondence might be left. Max Kohler pushed me to work in the Society. When I went to the Society, Rosenbach, [Dr. A. S. W. Rosenbach, president, AJHS, 1921-1948] who could be a bore, was cordial to me, and Lee Friedman [Lee M. Friedman, Boston attorney, president, AJHS, 1948-1952] took a shine to me. Do you know who he is?

P: Yes.

M: I vetted all of Lee Friedman's books. I have them here with beautiful encomia thanking me. You know what I mean by vetting them?

P: Tell us for the tape.

M: Vet is a technical term among book people. You read the book by another man and you make comments on it. You watch it for errors and the like. You see that it is done right. When Friedman died, he left me some money in his will. One other thing that is an anecdote to the Historical Society is that after I started the archives here, we had become a big organization, and he came to me, and said, you have killed the Society. And I said, Mr. Friedman, I always called him Mr. Friedman, the Society is dead, and it has always been that way. It was in two little rooms in the Jewish Theological Seminary, and he was furious mad at me because he saw the Society would be bypassed by the American Jewish Archives, and he left all of his money to the Society. The Society owes me the \$2 million they got. I am serious.

P: When was the first Society meeting that you attended that you can remember?

M: I cannot remember. I can tell you it was under Rosenbach, and it was something for the book. It was a rich man's club. They did not want other people to come in. A half a dozen people would be there, maybe a dozen people. When Rosenbach got impatient with a man, he would shut him up in the middle of a paper and dismiss him. You have no idea what went on.

P: Who were the rich men?

M: Rosenbach, and Lee Friedman was a millionaire, and Kohler. These were aristocrats. It was a very snooty club.

P: A Jewish elite organization.

M: That is what it was. That is the way it began in 1892 with Oscar Straus [Oscar S. Straus, president, AJHS, 1892-1898] and a half a dozen other people, and a few goyim, who they wanted to flatter. They brought in Herbert Adams [Herbert Baxter Adams, 1850-1901; American historian and founder of the American Historical Society] of John Hopkins, the man who introduced a German message. I guess that was Herbert Adams.

P: Obermayer [Leon J. Obermayer, president, AJHS, 1964-1967] became involved in the Society in the 1920s.

M: Later, I guess he did after me. He is the man who saved the Society. I want to put this on the record very briefly. I will not say too much because some people are living. There was a coterie of people in New York who wanted to capture the Society after Friedman died. There was \$2 million in cash lying around. They would have taken that \$2 million. They would not have abused it, but they would have used that \$2 million as a club. They would not have built the building. They would have had the income on \$2 million which would have been somewhere between twelve thousand dollars and fifteen thousand dollars a year. At six percent, that million dollars would bring between one hundred twenty thousand dollars and one hundred fifty thousand dollars. With that they could have owned America. And I am talking to you intelligently. I know what I am talking about. I will not spell it out because some of the people are living. They were desperate to win the Society and they got people and paid their dues to join the Society and vote.

P: They were rich men.

M: Who?

P: These people who wanted to keep the organization in New York. Were they not rich men?

M: They had rich men behind them. Mrs. Hendrix was one of them. She is dead now so I can talk about it. They sent her down to Charleston, and they electioneered like hell. But the Society knew if it went to New York, that they would pay the dues on twenty-five or fifty people, they could take over the Society. That is all there was. So we never met in New York.

P: Was there not an effort to locate the Society in Philadelphia?

M: Oh, a very strong effort because evidently there was a group wanted it there.

And that was no good either.

P: Why not?

M: Because the people behind it were no good.

P: Who was behind it?

M: One man. He is dead; I can mention his name. The others are living. Solis-Cohen [Dr. Solomon de Silva Solis-Cohen, 1857-1948; physician and poet; professor of clinical medicine, Jefferson Medical College, 1904-1927]. I have forgotten his name. I never liked him.

P: Was he a rabbi?

M: I do not like the man, he was no good.

P: Was he a rabbi?

M: No. He was a businessman, and married a Gimble.

P: So he had a lot of money.

M: No, he did not. He was well-fixed. He married some money. He was not poor. But there were other people there. People were trying to capture the Society, and if they captured the Society, they would have been able to control scholarships in America.

P: What is the oldest synagogue in Philadelphia?

M: The oldest synagogue is Mikveh Israel which dedicated its first building, built in 1782, around Rosh Hashana. It had been established in the 1740s.

P: Was there not an effort to locate the Society in Philadelphia in order to enhance Mikveh Israel?

M: Mikveh Israel was the center of all that. Mikveh Israel is now part of a complex near Independence Hall, I think. I have never seen it.

P: But what was this effort to bring the American Jewish Historical Society to Philadelphia?

M: That was all part of the scheme on the part of certain individuals. They wanted it. Incidentally, Mikveh Israel today will not open its archives to researchers. I have

a first class Ph.D. student, Lance Sussman. They would not let him in.

P: Why?

M: They do not want to let you in. I have most of those records. In the day when I could get in, I got in and got records.

P: Mikveh Israel has declined in importance?

M: It is nothing; it never was anything. It was a mean, bastardly institution. Keep it on the record. Mean to Leeser [Isaac Leeser, 1806-1868; rabbi, translator, leader of American Jewry]. They forced him out in 1850. It was made up of petty nobodies.

P: And yet there was this effort to capture the American Jewish Historical Society.

M: Oh, yes, but not as strong as the New York crowd. It would have been calamitous in either case. If the New York crowd had captured it, they would not have built an institution. They would have put the money away, and they would have doled out the money. If you can dole out one hundred fifty thousand dollars a year to young scholars, you can own them, body and soul.

P: I thought Mr. Friedman wanted a building and a separate institution.

M: Well, whatever it may be, but that is what he got. That was a great mistake. He left \$2 million, and three quarters of a million was spent for a building. The American Jewish Historical Society has always been on the verge of bankruptcy. Am I right?

P: You are right. Did he want a building or not?

M: I do not know.

P: Did Mr. Friedman ever discuss with you his plans for the American Jewish Historical Society?

M: No, for one simple reason: though he was very fond of me, and depended upon me to a degree, Gimble's never talks to Macy's. I built an organization here from nothing and without a nickle budget. Not due to money, the thing grew like wildfire. We now have over a three hundred thousand dollar budget. We are a huge organization with twelve million pieces of paper. We are well-organized. We are one of the very few archives in the world that has a printed catalog.

P: When were you president of the American Jewish Historical Society?

M: From 1955 to 1958.

P: How did it happen that you became president?

M: They had no choice but to put me in because I was the only historical scientist in America working in the field.

P: Was this already after the organization had relocated in Waltham?

M: Yes, long after.

P: How about Wax? [Bernard Wax, historian; director, AJHS]

M: I am friendly with everybody. I do not hate anybody. Just let me alone to sit on my ass and do my work. I like Wax. He is a decent guy, and gets along with Kaganoff [Nathan M. Kaganoff, librarian, American Jewish History]. I got along with him and now they have two or three new people. It is a multi-headed monster. They have no money and they have five executives.

P: How good are their archives?

M: They are good. They are not organized. They have got some good collections. I think we have more paper than they have. We just got the World Jewish Congress. I was not so hot to get it. The authorities here wanted it. It has an American section. There are over a million pieces of paper there.

P: Tell me about the organization of the archives. How did that come about?

M: It just grew. I walked in to the librarian, Walter Rothman [Dr. Walter Rothman, librarian of HUC, 1938-1944]. It was in 1946 or 1947. It was after I had become an American historian. I said, Walter, we have got to collect Americana. This is the greatest Jewry in the world. We are going to be different than any other archives in the world. All other archives are antiquity archives. They collect what people give them. We are going to collect what we know is necessary for historians. We will plan an archive and go after what the historian needs. And that is what I did. So I start writing to the congregations that we wanted their minutes. They were so glad to get rid of that crap. That stuff poured in, and after five or ten years, they became history conscious. They will not even send them by mail to be microfilmed at our expense.

P: They will not?

M: Everybody is history conscious today. When I started there was not a single

historical society locally. Now there are about fifty of them. Most of them are moribund, but they are there. So I said all of this to Walter Rothman, and he said, go ahead, I will be glad to cooperate with you.

P: Where did the money come from?

M: There was no money. Not a penny. We just got documents. I wrote and got them. Then the old library building, the present archives, was vacated by the people to whom we had rented it--the Union of American Hebrew Congregation. I went to Nelson Glueck [Nelson Glueck, archaeologist and rabbi; 1900-1971; president of Hebrew Union College, 1957-1971] had become the president of the college. He was one of my students, and he was a close friend. I said, Nelson, I want to use the empty building for an American Jewish archives. You just take the building. It is yours.

Now I had a building. Then there was a woman who was a great German historian. She was on their hands and she was a refugee--Selma Stern-Taebler [Selma Stern-Taebler 1890-1957; German historian, first archivist for the American Jewish Archives, 1947-1957]. Her husband was a professor at one time. They gave her to me. They paid her salary and she became my archivist. Then there was another guy who nobody cared for, but was a very decent person, a physician. He saw what I was doing and he went to the board and said, we have got ten thousand dollars that is not spent. Here is a man building an archive. It is terribly important. The board says, all right, he can have ten thousand dollars.

P: Who was this guy?

M: J. Victor Greenbaum.

P: So you had a building, you had an archivist, and you had ten thousand dollars.

M: Ten thousand, and I was in business.

P: That was a pretty good start.

M: That was a pretty good start. And the stuff just poured in, and we set it up very simply. I can give you the organization in a simple way. We collect manuscripts of any type. We start collecting biographies and we set up a biographical form. We have got a lot of very important people like Admiral Strauss [Lewis Lichtenstein Strauss, 1896-1974; navy rear admiral, banker, U.S. Government official] and so on and so forth. But I realized that the most important material is not books. It is not a personal letter here and there. It is the material in between. We coined the word, "near-print." It included brochures, throwaways, and

mimeographed stuff. We finally organized all mimeographed materials into three areas. It is either geography, or biography, or institutions. We have a huge near-print collection because we realized that was a basic source. Not the books, not a personal letter here and there, but the stuff in between. So we have this huge near-print collection. We also have the largest collection of pictures. That is not so significant.

P: Why aren't pictures significant?

M: They are interesting, but there are no action pictures in Jewish life. Very few. It is mostly faces, and few synagogues. They gave me a picture of a Jewish farmer or a Jew driving a stagecoach. They are hard to get hold of. We do not have those pictures. They are around all right, but hard to get hold of. There was one thing else that we did that was very significant. We put out posters and this was propaganda. We have about thirty-five colored posters that go all over the country. They were done by fine artists and are scenes from Jewish history. There are five or six from the Civil War. If you want any of those, I will be glad to send them to you. In the last fifteen years, we set up seminars. We start by giving fellowships. You come here and we give you a fellowship for a month, two months, or three months, and we give you money. I raise the money.

P: I was going to say you have come a long way since your ten thousand dollars.

M: That is right. I have about six or seven endowments. That is to say, for fellowships. We get people from all over the world, top scholars.

P: Where is your money coming from, Dr. Marcus?

M: For the fellowships?

P: For everything.

M: The budget is about three hundred thousand dollars. I may have endowments for fifty thousand dollars a year. So there is two hundred fifty thousand dollars a year that has to be raised. I do not raise it. The college picks up the tab. So I have no financial problems.

P: So the college supports this now. Do they pay the salaries?

M: They pay everything.

P: Do you have a good building or are you using the same building?

M: We are using the same building, but it is stuffed. I have been after them now to

give me a new building. It will cost a million or two, and they are dragging their feet. They would rather build a building in Palestine which the Arabs will take over someday. I am not being cynical. I am just being prophetic. So we have the fellowships. We have the magazine.

P: Who are some of the scholars who have come to work under fellowships with you?

M: Well, we have a Gentile girl from Oxford University. She is very good. We have a professor--we had a professor. I have forgotten his name. Wechsler [Professor Harold S. Wechsler, Department of Education] from the University of Chicago was here last year. This year we have a man named Bromberg, who is from New York. He was an historian at CCNY, or one of those places. Then we have two people who are yiddishists.

P: Are these people working on their Ph.D. or just doing research?

M: Most of them have Ph.D.s. We only take all but dissertation Ph.D. students. They have to have history or we will not take them.

P: Do they all have to be young scholars?

M: No. Most of them are married men with families, but they have to be working in the field of American Jewish history. They have to have a graduate degree or have to be ABD in American history.

P: Do they have to be working on a specific project or a book as part of the requirements?

M: We prefer the latter because if you come here, and spend a month or two, you cannot screw around for a month or so. You have to be working on something specific. We brought over from Israel the chief biographer of Ben Gurion because Ben Gurion lived in America for a while. He worked on the American end. Arthur Goren, [Arthur Aryeh Goren, historian and lecturer, Hebrew University, Israel] who wrote the big book on the Kehillah Experiment [New York Jews and the Quest for Community, 1908-1922 (1970)], was here as a fellow. Evyatar Friesel [professor of modern Jewish history, Ben Gurion University of the Negev and Hebrew University, Jerusalem] was here this summer. He is a professor at the Hebrew University.

P: And now you have Dr. Peck [Dr. Abraham Joseph Peck; historian, college administrator; Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio; associate director and assistant editor for the American Jewish Archives] working with you on your staff?

M: He is on my staff and I hope he will succeed me. I have told the president I want him to succeed me. That does not mean the president will listen to me, but I have designated him as my successor. He does most of the work running the archives. I only go in at the most once a week, and I am in touch every day by the telephone. I know everything that goes on but I give him absolute leeway. I have never fooled myself. So we are yokels out here in the back country, in the hinterlands. I had to have a magazine. I started a magazine. I started a magazine almost simultaneously. I do not know where the hell I got the money, but I did.

P: You know where you got the money, it is through your contacts.

M: Yes, I have contacts. I put Bert Korn in charge of the magazine. And I did not like what he did. I am pretty good with that sort of thing. I know what is what. You bear in mind, when I started the archives I was over fifty years of age, and had a lot of experience in this world. And I said, it's no good. I changed the format immediately. Now we are doing a damn good job with that magazine. You ask, what is behind your magazine? Two things: it must be absolutely scholarly, but under no sense pedantic. That is one of the criticisms that I have with the AJHS. They have long articles with an immense amount of detail. It is unnecessary. Historians should get the basic facts and present them pleasantly. Frequently the editions of the Historical Society are heavy reading, even though the core material might be important. I always insist on well-written material, interesting data, but absolutely accurate.

P: Who edits the magazine?

M: Peck. But every article is submitted to me.

P: Do you make the selection of articles?

M: No. He selects the material for me, and I frequently reject material.

P: Will he publish something that you are unresponsive to?

M: No. I run the show. But I never interfere with him and we get along beautifully. Occasionally he beats me down. I also determine the order of the articles in the journal. I have a good sense for that sort of thing. Our magazine is interesting and important. He comes to me frequently with ideas, and I tell him where to get the material. We want to put out a pretty big issue soon, and at first I was not excited about it. Finally, I agreed with him. Then I went to work and I sent him a memo about where to find the material. I know where the bodies are buried after eighty-some years.

P: What is your circulation?

M: Five thousand.

P: And you do not charge for it?

M: Do not charge for it. I have trouble with the administration. They see everything in dollars and cents. I happen to know that one thing that American Jewry resents is that everybody comes with an outstretched arm. Give, give, give. There are at least fifty or a hundred Israeli institutions that are constantly asking for money: this yeshiva, this particular place, the forestry business, the university business, haifa business. I say, no, that is not the way to operate. You give to people and you hope that ultimately, "Cast thy bread upon the waters and thou shalt find it after many days." So we raise about fifty thousand dollars a year in gifts and the like.

P: Is that easy?

M: Nothing is easy, but the administration is always on my neck to charge, charge, charge. They charge for everything.

P: Dr. Marcus, you are able to raise the money to support the magazine because you are Dr. Marcus.

M: Yes.

P: Now when you are gone, your successor, Abe Peck or whoever it might be, is not going to have those same contacts. What is going to happen to this empire that you have built?

M: I have no idea.

P: What do you think?

M: I do not know.

P: You are a prognosticator and prophesier.

M: I have been a hundred percent wrong on all my prognostications.

P: Well, you were not with that one that you made when you were a teenager in 1913.

M: That is right. I was then seventeen years of age.

P: Are you optimistic about being able to maintain this program?

M: The American Jewish Archives is a very important institution. We have a better reputation, I will say this frankly, than the Historical Society. We are known all over the world. It is a tribute to our program getting people from the Hebrew University, Oxford, and London, wherever they come in. We get people from Oregon, and university professors from a lot of colleges. We had a girl come in here recently from Columbia, Missouri. That is not Columbia University. The archives are such an institution that it could go along on its own momentum for a while. The authorities here may want to do things that I think will hurt the institution. But they will not do it as long as I live. The president was a student of mine. Do I make myself clear?

P: I understand what you are saying and that is why for the record I wanted you to say the things that you are doing.

M: I do not know what is going to happen.

P: Now I want to talk candidly with you about the American Jewish Historical Society.

M: Right.

P: I want you to try to reflect on the period that you served as an officer.

M: I do not recall.

P: Do not recall the specific dates, but recall your experiences. Do not draw a blank on that period in your life, try to think about the problems you encountered.

M: Well, ask me something specific.

P: Well, what I would like to find out is, did you hold any other offices as you built toward the presidency? Were you pressured into taking the presidency?

M: No. They probably should have asked me beforehand. I was the only academician in a post-graduate school who was competent in the field. But other people, for reasons which I will not go into, were given precedence over me. After they got the kudos, they had to come to me because I was the top man in the field, and the only man in the field.

P: I do not mean to be disrespectful, but did you go into the office with a chip on your shoulder?

M: No. When I went to the office I was not particularly elated. The minute my office was over, I continued to go back for many years until the nature of the meetings changed. When I went into the American Jewish Historical Society, it was an institution dedicated to serious study of American Jewish history by amateurs, but frequently by gifted amateurs like Friedman. Today's whole direction, that is the annual meetings, is toward furthering a popular study of the science. That is why there are thirty or forty societies, and most of them are affiliated with the national society. But they do not do anything for it, and it does not do anything for them, as far as I know. They do not pay any dues or anything as far as I know.

P: Dr. Marcus, why do you think the Society changed its focus with its annual meetings?

M: Because people were elected who had no scientific caliber.

P: Is this an effort just to attract people with affluence who can support it?

M: They are not getting affluent people. They are getting pennies. I doubt if there is a person on the board who gives more than a thousand dollars a year. In any other academic institution they could not remain on the board.

P: In other professional organizations, like the American Historical Association, and others that you and I are members of, we do not have to give anything.

M: That is very true, but you give your expertise. You are somebody. I would say that ninety percent of members of the board are not American historians.

P: That is right. They are lawyers and social workers and people who have done no research, writing, or studying of American Jewish history. And who know very little about it.

M: I will not go into that.

P: You are supposed to be saying that on the tape. Not me.

M: That is right. I can say this, and I do not care that it is on the tape. I do not go back to the meetings anymore. I have nothing to learn. My time is valuable with one foot in the grave.

P: Are you active in other professional organizations?

M: No.

P: Like the American Historical Association?

M: No. I got still less there. What was the attitude of John Brown in 1860 before he went down into Virginia to storm Harper's Ferry?

P: That is right.

M: Well, to hell with that.

P: You are not going to change the world. You are going to stay here in your study and do what you want to do.

M: My time is precious. I mean it.

P: Dr. Marcus, when you went into the Society, was its financial base stronger than it is now?

M: It had no financial base. Rosenbach paid Meyer [Isidore S. Meyer, librarian, editor, AJHS, 1940-1968] fifty dollars a week, and that was a lot of money in those days, he owned the Society. Lee Friedman did the same thing I guess when he came in, though he tried to be more businesslike.

P: He was a Boston attorney?

M: Yes.

P: How did you first get to know him?

M: Max induced me to go to meetings. Then I met Lee Friedman. Lee Friedman started sending me his manuscripts and I vetted them for him. He was a fine gentleman. When I went to Boston, I stayed at his house. He was a millionaire, but lived very simply. He was a fine gentleman. His father was an officer in the Civil War. They were shoe manufacturers and tanners.

P: He was an art collector, too, I understand.

M: He was a collector of many fine things. A beautiful home with beautiful pictures, and very much the gentleman.

P: So you got to know him professionally then?

M: Professionally and personally. We would talk and I would give him the benefit of my expertise. I am a trained historian, though I have not much training. I have

trained myself, but the years that I spent in Germany would have been a loss were it not for the fact that I developed methodology. The only thing I got in Germany was methodology. I know when a statement is right, and I know when it is wrong, or I know that we do not know.

P: Dr. Marcus, were you at the famous Charleston meeting?

M: Oh, yes.

P: Tell me about that.

M: All I could remember is they turned heaven and hell loose to get members, and I think, though I do not know, they paid dues for people to go and vote.

P: I hear there was almost a fistfight there.

M: I do not recall.

P: Do you know Saul Viener [Saul Viener, president AJHS, 1979-1982]?

M: Yes.

P: Is he a friend?

M: We know each other.

P: How about you and Leon Obermayer? [Leon J. Obermayer, president AJHS, 1964-1967]

M: We are very close friends.

P: He is not a trained historian. He is an attorney.

M: He does not write history. But he was determined to save the Society and he saved it.

P: How?

M: By preventing the New York crowd from capturing the organization and capturing the \$2 million.

P: How was he able to do that?

M: Because he is a brilliant Philadelphia lawyer. Maneuvering, maneuvering,

maneuvering.

P: He represented the Society?

M: He represented the Society without pay.

P: He supported the move to Brandeis?

M: Yes. He wanted the Society to be a society, and not to be an endowment in the pocket of a group of New York Jews.

P: So he supported the move to Brandeis in order to prevent it from being either in Philadelphia or New York.

M: That I do not know. But definitely not in New York. That is why we never went to a meeting in New York. If we had a regular meeting in New York and if somebody would pay ten dollars for a membership or twenty-five dollars for a membership, and get fifty people at twenty-five dollars, they could take over the whole Society. It would be like taking over IBM if you had \$15 billion.

P: Did you think that it was wrong to put the Society on a university campus like Brandeis?

M: No, it is a good thing because you have to have good library facilities, and there is a different atmosphere on a university.

P: Is there any threat of Brandeis taking over the Society? Did that worry you?

M: I think there's something in the constitution that they cannot. No, that does not worry me. I would like to see it. I think they will be good for the Society. I think the Society is always going to be on the verge of bankruptcy.

P: Was Dr. Sachar [Abram L. Sachar, chancellor, Brandeis University, 1968-present] a good friend to the Society?

M: He did them no harm. He was friendly.

P: Are you a friend of Sachar's?

M: An intimate friend. I knew him when he was a young instructor at Illinois.

P: And you have remained close friends over the years?

M: Close friends. I sent him some material which he had never seen on an

Orthodox rabbi named Abramowitz. He was a very famous Orthodox rabbi. It was his [maternal] grandfather. He comes from good stock.

P: How about you and Dr. Jacobs? [Dr. Maurice Jacobs, president AJHS, 1975-1976.]

M: I am his closest friend.

P: He told me you call him every Saturday afternoon.

M: That is right. He brought me into the JPS.

P: I was going to ask you the basis of your friendship with Dr. Jacobs.

M: I met him at the JPS. He pushed me and made me the chairman of publications. Then they threw him out. That is what they did.

P: Was he more than just a printer?

M: He was the executive vice-president. He was the Society. They did not like the way he was spending money and building the Society. They threw him out because the people who ran the Society believe in a balanced budget.

P: This is the Jewish Publication Society?

M: Jewish Publication.

P: Who were the "they" you were referring to?

M: Well, they're dead so I can talk about them. Solis-Cohen and Lou Levinthal [Judge Louis E. Levinthal] kicked him out.

P: Did they think that he did not have the right kind of business sense?

M: He had the right kind, but those people believe that a business should balance its budget. I maintain and he maintained that a cultural institution should always be in debt. When he quit I said, I am going to resign and get out of the Society. And they would not let me. So I stayed in. What happened was very interesting. They had the printing presses which Schiff [Jacob H. Schiff, 1847-1920; financier and philanthropist, head of Kuhn, Loeb in 1885] and Louis Marshall [Louis Marshall 1856-1929; lawyer, important Jewish communal and civic leader; partner in Guggenheimer and Untermyer, and Marshall in New York City] had paid for to print the Schiff classics. They were going to junk them for old iron. So they gave them to him.

P: They gave them to Jacobs?

M: For practically nothing. He became a printer because it was obvious he was such a poor businessman that he would go **mekhule** and they had pity on him. He built that into an estate of maybe a half million or three quarters of a million dollars.

P: So he was not such a dumbbell after all.

M: I should say not. Marshall and Schiff gave money. People speak of the Schiff classics and think it is Schiff money, but Marshall put in plenty of money, too.

P: Now identify Marshall for us on the tape.

M: Louis Marshall was probably the most important Jew in America from 1900 to his death in 1929 with the exception possibly of Jacob H. Schiff. Schiff was the president of Kuhn, Loeb Company, the largest Jewish investment banking company in the United States, though not comparable to J. P. Morgan. Louis Marshall was a corporation lawyer who made a fortune. He was a devoted Jew, and a brilliant person. He so dominated American life that Israel Zanwill [Israel Zanwill, 1864-1926; author of The Children of the Ghetto] said that America is ruled by Marshall law.

P: Have any other Jews emerged since Marshall to play the same kind of role?

M: Nobody. We have been talking about that recently. A lot of people have pretensions but compared to him, they are nobodies. One of the reasons for that is that in Marshall's day, the old German Jews were born in Germany and had no training or education. Even Jacob H. Schiff had very little training except in finance as a teenager. So brilliant minds who were educated could stand out. Today where over fifty percent of Americans are college graduates, there are so many competent and brilliant people, that nobody can really stand out. The whole field is full of daisies and no one daisy is bigger and better than the others.

P: When you say half of the Americans, are you saying half of the American Jewish population?

M: That is what I am talking about only. Being a Jewish chauvinist, I am interested only in Jews tonight.

P: There have been some great people, though, who have emerged. What about Brandeis? [Louis Dembitz Brandeis, 1856-1941; U.S. Supreme Court Justice, active Zionist]

M: Brandeis played a leadership role for only three years--1913 through 1916. Then he became a Supreme Court justice and he had to play behind the scenes. He was a very important person who had tremendous influence, and a very generous person, too.

P: But he had difficulty finding himself as a Jew.

M: He had difficulty finding himself as a Jew. He had no Yiddishkeit. I looked through some of his letters. He never used a Yiddish letter until Wilson refused to put him on his cabinet. Then he finally decided to be a Jew. I still believe with Lee Friedman, who hated Brandeis for professional reasons, that Brandeis had one eye out for his future when he became a Zionist and became active in the movement. They were both Boston lawyers. Brandeis was interested in Zionism, and why not. That made him one of the outstanding Jews in America. There were a thousand corporation lawyers in New York and Boston and Chicago and Pittsburgh, and very good men.

P: Talking about the Supreme Court, how about men like Cardozo [Benjamin Nathan Cardozo, 1870-1938; U.S. Supreme Court justice] and Frankfurter [Felix Frankfurter, 1882-1965; U.S. Supreme Court justice] as American Jews?

M: Cardozo was a member of Mikveh Israel. He had no real interest in Judaism, though he would never have left it. Frankfurter was an opportunist. He was eager only to get ahead and make a career for himself. He may have helped, and I have to analyze that. I have not done it yet. He may have helped influence presidents to be sympathetic to Zionism. He was a Zionist. I do not know, but Frankfurter was primarily a careerist, out for himself.

P: What about the great Reform rabbis? You presumably have had an association with them.

M: They were my classmates.

P: Either your colleagues, your classmates, or your students.

M: That is right. Well, you name the people.

P: Stephen Wise [Stephen Samuel Wise, 1874-1949].

M: S tephen Wise never had a rabbinical degree by the way. He was a free-lancer. He finally got two or three rabbis to give him a certificate. He was a brilliant, able man, a great leader, a great Zionist, and a fine human being. I had a lot of respect for him. Urofsky, [Professor Melvin Irving Urofsky, historian, Virginia

Commonwealth University] in his history, maintained that he wrote his thesis. I maintain that he never wrote his own thesis. He hired a man named Guschuney to write his thesis. A lot of that was being done in America and a lot of it was done in my days in Germany.

P: Did Urofsky know this?

M: He knew the sources that I knew. He denies it on the basis of the sources. I say there is no question on the basis of the sources. But he was a great leader and a good man and a great speaker. I heard him several times. The only thing to be held against him is that he should have broken with Roosevelt on the Holocaust. He knew there was a Holocaust and he kept quiet. He would not break, and he did not want to leave his influence with Roosevelt. I hold that against him. He should have staged great fights, great parades, great protests, and something might have been done. We would not have compromised with allowing one thousand lousy Jews to be put behind the barricade at Oswego out of six million who died. He could have done more.

P: I heard Stephen Wise at a great rally after the war in 1945, appealing for support the Jews in the D.P. camps and crying real tears over the tragedy.

M: Yes, no question about it. But he could have done more. He would have had to break and lose his political influence. That is where you separate the men from the boys.

P: Frankfurter did not do much either.

M: I do not think so.

P: How about Abba Hillel Silver? [Abba Hillel Silver, 1893-1963; Zionist leader and Reform rabbi, Temple Cincinnati]

M: He was the greatest and most brilliant rabbi. He was a fine Hebrewist, and a great speaker with tremendous personality. He and I were at school together for four out of the nine years. He made a great career, and was a great leader. He had an interesting combination. He was a classical Reform Jew, if you know what that means, and at the same time a Zionist. He had a Sunday service.

P: Most classical Reform Jews were anti-Zionists.

M: That is right. He did not obtrude his Zionism upon his congregation, but he was a great man. A biography is now being written about him. It is being written by Marc Raphael, [Marc Lee Raphael, American Jewish historian; professor of history, Ohio State University] a Jewish historian.

P: I know Marc, because Marc is now the editor of the American Jewish Historical Society's journal.

M: He took it over after Henry Fangel?

P: Right. He is now the editor and I think he is going to do a splendid job.

M: Yes, he will possibly do a better job than Henry Fangel. Henry Fangel is not a real Jewish historian. He is a brilliant, able, decent person. I like Henry.

P: I like Henry very much.

[End of side A2]

M: So Marc Raphael is a trained historian. He was one of my students. He never worked under me in any detail, but he was a decent person. I probably have a paper of his buried somewhere that he wrote for me.

P: How about Magnes?

M: I have spent the last three weeks working on Magnes so I am full of Magnes. He was a sincere person, a dreamer who will live in history for two things. I can sum it up for you because I know. He built the Hebrew University, and he was responsible for the Bureau of Jewish Education which is modern Jewish afternoon education. He was important in those two areas. He was into almost every important Jewish institution in this country. He moved in all areas. Schechter [Soloman Schechter, 1847-1915; president, Jewish Theological Seminary, New York City] had no respect for him. Schechter coined a bitter, sarcastic bon mot about him. This is not in the literature, but I know it exactly, so it will be in the literature now. He had a large following. But when the cards were down finally in 1922, he left America, though apparently only for a brief time. He went to Israel and started something new. He started the bi-national movement in Palestine, and he started the Hebrew University. He was smart to start the bi-national movement there. When he went in 1925, and I have checked this out, the Jewish population was ten to eleven percent of the total population. So if he was going to establish a bi-national country, the Jews would certainly get a break. They were a minority, a small minority. He was never a political Zionist. He wanted a cultural state. The state itself as such was not important to him. He is a cross between a faddist and a prophet. People who knew him, and some people who knew him intimately, admired him tremendously, even when they disagreed with him. Marshall was his brother-in-law, and Marshall admired him tremendously. Dr. Gluek [Nelson Gluek, 1900-1971; archeologist and rabbi; president of Hebrew Union College, 1947-1971] was a very shrewd person, a

brilliant person, and believed he was one of the greatest Jews he ever met.

P: Did you feel that he was, too?

M: Well, that is the sixty-four dollar question. I have answered it this week. She is in there putting it on the computer. Here is what happened. He was an absolutely honest and sincere person. You cannot be a successful man in public life if you are absolutely consistent and honest and sincere. I am glad this is on the record. You have to be a politician, and a politician is fifty percent crooked. He was never crooked. If he had made compromises, he would have been the great Jew of his generation, but he would not make those compromises. He made no compromises. People left him alone, they departed from him. In World War I he was a pacifist. Overnight he was through. It was the kiss of death, because American Jewry became chauvinistic. German Jews started changing their names. The Signtimers became Sittens, the Weinsteins became Wittens, and the Kornes became Coles and Colliers. He was the kind of man that would not compromise. He was a pacifist, and he lost out.

It was interesting, too, not because he was a pacifist but if America, now I am wandering up the tributary, but it is an important statement I am about to make. I think it is important. If America had stayed out of the war, and if the Germans had won the war, the six million Jews who are dead would not have been dead. Germany would have controlled all of the eastern Europe in its sphere of influence. German culture would have penetrated and these Talmudic Jews and yeshivas with German culture would have created the greatest renaissance of Jewish culture the world has ever known. So historically, the defeat of Germany was a tremendous defeat of world Jewry in more ways than one. Germany today would be the center of world Jewish culture and industry. There have been ten million Jews alone in eastern Europe that have been kept alive by German physicians. They would have had Hebrew training and general training. There would have been a dozen Nobel Prize winners come out of Poland that have not.

P: Dr. Marcus, are you a Zionist?

M: I have never joined the Zionist party. In 1926 I came back from Palestine. I told you that. And I was asked to write an article for the Phi Beta Kappa magazine called *The American Scholar*, and there I sort of became a half-assed Zionist. I also wrote for a very fine magazine published by University of Chicago called *The Open Court*. I do not suppose you ever heard of it. It is a good magazine. I was told there what I had seen when I was in Tel Aviv. On a Friday afternoon, around four or five o'clock, before it got dark, an old Jew came out with a ten cent tin horn and blew the horn. As if by magic, every store closed in Tel Aviv. Five or ten minutes later a dozen Jews would get onto the porch of one of the houses as I saw it, and start davening maariv. I said, this is the one place in the world

where a Jew can raise his voice as a Jew. I said, I like this, and became a half-assed Zionist. I never joined any organization. I was turned off by the fact that, in my first conference in 1920, at the rabbinical conference, the rabbis almost tore Max Heller [Maximilian Heller, 1860-1929; influential Reform rabbi and Zionist] to pieces because he was a Zionist. That bothered me. I do not like intolerance. I had my own ideas. I was one of the few Jews in America in the 1930s who came out publicly for a Jewish army. Maybe it was in World War I, I do not know. Maybe in 1941. There is literature on the subject; the Zionists published a list of people. They could not get anybody to go for that. I was one of the few people who came out and said that I wanted a Jewish army. Finklestein [Louis Finklestein, chancellor emeritus, Jewish Theological Seminary] did not go to that meeting. About six or seven of us from the United States who had academic positions and were respected came out for that.

P: Have you strengthened your ties with Israel since 1947?

M: No.

P: Do you go over there?

M: I have been over about four or five times. I feel that it is moving into the direction of a Levantine state. It is just another small state. I have always been interested in Palestine as a cultural enterprise. I am an aqua-Zionist in that sense. I would have liked to have seen the development there. I cannot tolerate the fanatical Orthodoxy, though I was raised Orthodox, of the Jews over there in the religious party. Stoning people. One of our professors wrote a Hebrew prayer book, Betevosky, and one of the members of the Knesset burned the book as a heretical book. There only about twenty percent of the people in Palestine in Israel are religionists. You know that.

P: I know.

M: And these are the fanatically Orthodox, and some were not so fanatical. They were right-wing Orthodox.

P: Do you think Kehane [Rabbi Meir Kehane, founder of the Jewish Defense League] is a danger?

M: I would not say he is a danger. He is a kook. But if he went in there and he started to mess with those Arabs, and the Arabs got mad enough, Israel will disappear.

P: Have you ever had any formal connection with Hebrew University or with any of the Israeli institutions? Have you taught there?

M: No, but I have friends there. I have lectured for Moshe Davis [Dr. Moshe Davis, Stephen S. Wise Professor of American Jewish History, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel] and all the archivists over there are my friends. P. A. Alsberg is the Israeli State Archivist; Danny Cohen, [Daniel J. Cohen, director, Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People] the head of the general Jewish archives, is my friend. Heyman, [Dr. Michael Heymann, director, Central Zionist Archives] head of the Zionist organization, organized archives for the world, and is my friend. They all know me and respect me, and they are friendly.

P: You are a good friend of Moshe Davis?

M: Yes. He looks upon me as his teacher. He refers to me as his revered teacher. I never taught him, but he has adopted me as his teacher.

P: How do you classify him as a scholar?

M: He is pretty good. Pretty good.

P: Did you maintain a relationship and a friendship with Israel Kaplan over the year?

M: Yes. When he was still a student. That goes back, does it not?

P: Yes. He came to Jacksonville in 1916 as an ordained rabbi.

M: Well, when he was courting Cora, he would sometimes send me to bring her a message. She lived up on Hern and Northern Avenue in Avondale. He and I were always friendly. I also had a sort of a friendship with what's his name, the telegraph pole man. I will get his name in a minute. He is a descendant of the Valley Forge Jew. Russell.

P: Oh yes.

M: He was a hospital mate, which meant he was an orderly and he carried the crap cans around. He was a surgeon's mate. In other words, he follows the surgeon and does what he is told to do.

P: Are you talking about his descendant in Jacksonville, Philip Coleman?

M: Yes. Coleman. But not the Jack who is a friend of mine.

P: Philip, his uncle.

M: Philip was a tough cookie. A real tough cookie.

P: Yes, Jack and Elaine are good friends of ours.

M: A very decent person.

P: Yes.

M: Philip was an operator.

P: His wife is still living.

M: Right. They made a living of making telegraph cross pieces.

P: Right. Cross Arms of America.

M: I knew Phil. Phil was the kind of man would promise you money, but you would not get it. I could tell you some stories. He screwed around with Nelson, and Nelson walked in on him one day and said, Phil, you promised me this. He said, you will get it. Nelson said, Phil, I am not leaving this room until I get a check. He stayed there and he got the check. You can put that on the record.

P: I know. Jack Coleman, though, has been a very strong worker in the American Jewish Historical Society.

M: Maybe. I do not know how much he has got. Phil had a lot of money, or apparently he did.

P: But Jack has been very supportive of the Society.

M: I would not know.

P: You do not work within the Society. They do not turn to you for advice and counsel.

M: I am his majesty's opposition.

P: Why?

M: People ask me that question, and I say that I have here a printed list on my dolly of 3,300 historical societies in the United States. Yes, that is accurate. Well, when I started we Jews were three percent of the population, so we are entitled to three percent of thirty-three hundred. Ten percent would be 330, and about a third of that would be fifty or sixty societies. Well, actually today we have fifty or sixty societies. I am one of the fifty or sixty. And if I had not started this society,

Lee Friedman would not have given them the \$2 million.

P: You were the catalyst.

M: I was the catalyst. He was mad as a hornet with me.

P: Do they know that?

M: I never told anybody before. That is, I never publicized it, but I want it on the record.

P: Did Lee Friedman recognize that, because he obviously did not stay mad at you forever.

M: He was mad as a hornet but he did not stay mad because he was constantly writing and sending me his stuff, and he left me money in his will. I stayed at his home as you know. I have very affectionate inscriptions on his books.

P: Did he recognize the fact that as a result of getting mad at you that he did what he did for the Society?

M: I am sure he never thought about it, but he resented the fact that the Society was his personal club, though he was less clubby than Rosenbach. He would never have done what Rosenbach did. I am not sure he did not support Meyer [Dr. Isidore Solomon Meyer, editor emeritus, *American Jewish History*]. He may have supported Meyer, but he would never have gone to a man like one of those--a man who I know is still living, I think he is still living, he may be dead--who would stop a man in the middle of a scientific address and say, "You can sit down now. We have got other work to do here." I stopped going to the Society. I went to some of the meetings. I did not like what I saw. I will not go into it because it concerns people, all of whom are living. I did not like the way the board meetings were run, and I did not like the programs.

P: Do they know that you are the loyal opposition?

M: I am not an opposition. I am very courteous to them. Anything they want I will do or help them with. I would say historically that they are his majesty's opposition.

P: Not you?

M: No, we are a big successful organization with a big program. We will publish three or four books this year. We have a list of publications almost as long as a Jewish exile.

P: Dr. Marcus, I wish to get back to the Jewish Publication Society for a moment.

What do you feel was its great contribution to the world and to the United States?

M: Let's put it this way, what is its contribution? Leave out the adjective.

P: All right.

M: It publishes Jewish books. Period. So does Block Publishing Co., so does Behrman House, so does Ktav. Bernie Sharfstein, who owns Ktav, is a close friend of mine. They have missed the boat. They had no imagination. Frequently, I came to them when I was chairman of publications and proposed what the Germans call a Grundriss. I proposed a Grundriss. It is a German word. I really do not know how to translate it unless it means an outline. And whenever I am in doubt, I look up [pause as Marcus locates dictionary]--this will interest you. The eyes are going. Everything is going. Like Geoffrey who said, "My right wing is crushed, my left wing is crushed, and I am moving forward in the center."

P: Your mind is still there.

M: Grundriss. If they do not have the word I am going to get sore as a boil. Yes. The ground plan, short sketch, outline, primer, rudiments, and so forth.

P: That is what you proposed as chairman of the publication committee?

M: I proposed a Grundriss, and I not only proposed it, I wrote it. I wrote a memorandum which I have unfortunately lost, or maybe buried in my papers somewhere. After all, I have been here or seventy-some years. In it I proposed and outlined all the subjects on which books should be written. In all fields of the social sciences--politics, economics, culture, social aspects and the like. I proposed a Grundriss of approximately seventy volumes. It was a guess. A history of the United States, a history of Germany, and so forth. An economic history of the Jew in the Middle Ages, antiquity, the Bible and so forth. It might take two or three generations, but when it is finally done, it would be a complete outline, scientific and popular, of everything that has happened in Jewish history since the days of Abraham, and maybe even in the pre-Abrahamitic times. I said, "This is what I want you to do." The Germans started to do it, and Hitler stopped it. They put out twenty or thirty volumes of a Grundriss. That is where I got the idea. I do not ever have original ideas. Americans work on American history, as you know, they have a whole series. States and rivers and all that, but nobody has ever attempted to write a Grundriss for American culture from the time of the Indians on to the present day. Well, I proposed that, and they had no understanding for it. Then I finally said to them . . .

P: Who were you dealing with? Who was so negative?

M: A board, not that I am trying to hide any names.

P: I understand.

M: This board is composed of business people.

P: And they want a balanced budget.

M: A balanced budget. All the time. They have no imagination. They are nobodies. God bless them. They are intelligent people, and very successful in their professions. Big lawyers, some of them, but no imagination. One of the last things I did, and after that I stopped going there, I said the most important book in American Jewish history has not yet been written, and that is a DAJB. That is my phrase. A Dictionary of American Jewish Biography. And I proposed, in order not to spend too much money that we put out ten thousand biographies in one volume with 1100 to 1200 pages. It should be brief, except the important people get a whole page so that historians will have the basic tools. Imagine in American history, there was no dictionary of American biography of any sort. I got an Apple computer here, and I got The Dictionary of American Biography, and Notable American Women in my library. If I had to go and dig up every biography I work with, I could not work.

P: Right.

M: They first thought it was a good idea, and then they shifted and took something else. I will not go into it, which I thought was totally unnecessary and very expensive. Then I finally realized these people have no imagination. I stopped going to meetings. And the other reasons I stopped going to meetings is that there was a publication committee. I was chairman but it was after my time. The publication committee no longer has any authority. They are brought there every year. Their expenses are not paid, and they discuss the books. They cannot vote or select on books. They can only talk.

P: Who does that?

M: Three people. The editor, the president, and the third person is the business manager.

P: Did the Society make available any great talents, great genius, that might have otherwise been lost?

M: The JPS? That is relative. They published the first novel or two of Zangwill. Nobody reads Zangwill anymore. They put out an English edition of this. They

put out an English edition, abbreviated radically, of Gratz's history, which thousands of people have read. That is important. Their most important thing which they have published is a seven-volume book on The Legends of the Jews, by Ginzberg [Asher Ginzberg, 1856-1927, known as Achad Hamm, philosopher of cultural Zionism]. It is a great work. The Gratz translation is important even though it is bad. It is antiquated and it was an English translation and a modification of the first edition. Gratz went into the second and third edition. They published the Schiff classics, Medieval classics with English and Hebrew. That is important culturally. They have done some good things, and they published some very good histories of Spain, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia. All these things would have fit into my Grundriss.

P: How about in American Jewish history?

M: They published two or three of my things. They were all sold out by the time of the tercentenary, and they were not sufficiently interested to reprint the books. Ktav Publishing did reprint them, not that they are selling. They are not interested in American Jewish history. The JPS is now controlled by the group who belongs to the conservative synagogue. In my opinion, the JPS is not sympathetic to Reform.

P: Did they [American Jewish Historical Society, 1969] not publish Korn's New Orleans?

M: No. They published, I think, American Jewry and the Civil War [Jewish Publication Society, 1951].

P: Yes. Who published New Orleans? I think they did.

M: He had to go out and get money. The answer is very simple. I have here a very important book, and I am ninety percent sure that that was subsidized.

P: So that was published by the American Jewish Historical Society, as you say with a subsidy.

M: A subsidy. They work only on subsidies. He had to piddle around to get the money.

P: Have you stayed friends with Salo Baron? [Salo Wittmayer Baron, educator, Columbia University.]

M: Salo Baron and I are *deutsche Freunde*. I do not know whether you know the phrase. We call each other "you" instead of "he." We have known each other since he first came to America. For the record, I will pay my devoir to Salo

Baron. I know what he can do and what he has done. I know of no finer mind today in the field of Jewish history than Salo Baron. Is that clear? He is a brilliant thinker. He writes well. He is magnificently trained. He has two or three doctorates. He is trained well. Period. The man is still living.

P: How about your personal relations with him?

M: We are on first name terms. I am Jake to him and he is Salo to me. He and I are both in the same age level. We are different people.

P: I hope that I am able to do an interview with him.

M: You must. He is a great man, as greatness is defined.

P: We were trying to set up one for this past June and it did not work out. I am planning to go this winter.

M: You better get him because when we get around ninety, it is almost *Noc Neileh*. Do you know the phrase?

P: Yes.

M: *Neileh* is the last service in Yom Kippur.

P: That is right. The gates are closing.

M: Yes, the gates are closing, that is right.

P: Were you a colleague with Cecil Roth? I was curious about that.

M: Cecil Roth was a man who hated everybody, but he did not hate me. He liked me. For two reasons. In the first place, I was always curious to him. Of course, that did not mean that he would not attack me. He attacked a lot of people. In the second place, I was chairman of the Jewish Publication Society for years and I published his stuff. No matter how he turned it in, we published it because it read well and it was interesting, and he had a lot of data. So he liked me. He was a tough cookie and mean as hell.

P: Was he a major scholar in twentieth century Jewish history?

M: No question about it. He had a fine linguistic background, a critical historian, but he made a living writing books. I suspect that some of the books that he wrote, and I have reason for saying this, he would sit down in front of his typewriter, on the basis of notes or outlines, and type out a draft on the typewriter. He would

correct that draft and send it into the printer. Let me tell you that is a tour de force.

P: Yes. Very much so.

M: I do not have to tell you. You and I have to sweat.

P: Dr. Marcus, you have lived a long life.

M: I am entitled to a hundred and twenty-six.

P: You are, and I am getting ready to say that you have been around for eighty-nine years as a part of the academic world here in America. You are a recognized scholar. You have accomplished many things with your writing. As you look now into the next eighty-nine or ninety years, where do you see American Jewish scholarship going?

M: Well, I can only extrapolate. I have examples, paradigms. The Germans were a generation or two ahead of us. I would say in the year 2050 that we may have as few as three million Jews, maybe as many as four million Jews. We are not losing people as fast as people tell us we are losing them. We may have as many as four million Jews, if we do not have an accident of history here, whereby we will be expelled or burnt or driven out. I am being very serious, because Germany was the most liberal country in the world, more so than America, before Hitler. If American Jewry survives, it may be the only large Jewry in the world. I have no confidence that Israel will survive. I have thought about this very carefully. Not because of any inherent problem in Israel, but Israel is surrounded by almost fifty million Arabs. There are forty million Moslems in Egypt alone. They hate the Jews the way a Mississippi white hates a nigger. I do not say Negro or Black but a nigger. They have absolute contempt for us. Do not forget I lived there when that was an Arab country. I know how they feel. The only thing that can unite the Moslems who hate and kill one another is the Jew. If they have sufficient arms, fifty million people will move their armies through, say one million or two million armed people, and just move into that country. They will capture it. There will be a complete holocaust. They will murder every man, woman, and child in that country. No question about it. Ergo.

P: And the world is not going to come to the rescue of Israel.

M: It will not even allow them to come in. Haitians, Santo Dominicans, Cubans, yes. Jews, no. Will not allow them to come in. Do not fool yourself. There will be probably four million Jews here.

P: So in other words, you are saying the rest of the world would not go to the rescue

of Israel, and the Jews in Israel would not have any refuge.

M: That is right. They will be destroyed. Some of them will get away. Some will always get away. If so, it will increase the population here. If they can get in. If, if, if.

P: But the world will not let them in. They did not let them in during the 1940s.

M: So we will have four million Jews here, and this will be the great cultural center of the world. It is today. I lecture on this frequently. There are more Jewish books in America than in Israel. Al Procton, who has a congregation in Phoenix, has a congregation library of fifteen thousand volumes. I am sure in Jacksonville that Sidney M. Lefkowitz [Sidney M. Lefkowitz, rabbi emeritus, Temple Ahavath Chesed, Jacksonville, Florida] and Howard R. Greenstein, [Howard R. Greenstein, rabbi, Temple Ahavath Chesed] they were all my students, and must have at least a thousand or two thousand volumes.

P: We have over fifty thousand in Gainesville.

M: Fifty thousand Jewish books. There are infinitely more Jewish books in America than in Israel. In my opinion, this country is superior to Israel in every area except possibly Jewish cultural contributions. I have suggested to my students that I will give a doctorate for the person who will take the bibliographical journal published in Israel called Kiryat Sefer [It is a pun. There was once a town called Kiryat Sefer, the City of Books] and make a study over a period of fifteen or twenty years. We would sample every five years, and take every book that they published and then take every book that was published in America every five years and compare. We are dealing only with cultural books that happened to be translated from the German into the Hebrew. You understand me? It may well be that culturally we are already in advance of the Israelis. We may not do it in Hebrew. It may be in English, yet it is Jewish culture. We should always bear in mind that the two, the greatest Jewish book that was ever written was written in a vernacular, and that is the Talmud which is in Aramaic, not in Hebrew. That was the language of the people, the Talmud. One of the greatest think pieces in Jewish history was the Moreh Nevukim, a guide for the perplexed, written in Arabic.

P: Would you say that you are looking forward with some optimism to American Jewish life?

M: I would say this is the greatest Jewry the world has ever known. There is nothing that has been comparable, where at least fifty percent of all the Jews are college graduates. Some say eighty-five percent, but I am careful. I say fifty percent. We all read Jewish books. We are interested in Jewish life. Nobody has ever

given the kind of money we have given. The Polish and the Jews during the period of pogroms in the sixteen, seventeen hundreds did not give the way we give. They did not give even relatively.

P: So you are saying that if there is no holocaust in the United States, the Jews are safe here, although they could be exterminated elsewhere.

M: If there is no holocaust here, or if we do not have a development from Reagan where we become second-class citizens, we will have a great cultural development.

P: By the year 2050 as you look into it.

M: We have it already.

P: It will be enhanced.

M: Yes, our Sunday schools and our Jewish colleges.

P: How about research in American Jewish history?

M: Well, there are so many people in the area I do not even know who they are. Everybody is getting in the act, thank God.

P: And you perhaps were the catalyst for that.

M: I think I was. I know I am. Because I was the first man in the field with a scientific approach.

P: Well, I think America recognizes you. The American Jewish community certainly recognizes you as not only the leader today, but the person responsible for so many of these young scholars coming in.

M: That is right, and we are continuing it now with our fellowships. We bring them here. We bring in eight or nine people every summer.

P: In many ways that is the greatest memorial for you passing on this torch.

M: That is right. And I am very proud of it.

P: Well, you have got every right to be.

M: Mr. Jefferson said he wanted two or three things put on his tombstone. You are an American historian, you know this. The bill for establishing religious freedom

in 1786, the university, and the declaration of independence were the three things.

P: What do you want on yours?

M: Well, the archives for one and the scientific development of American history. Those two things. Nothing else. I want to say to you that I had no idea that the archives would develop the way they did. I told Walter often, "This is going to be the greatest Jewry in the world and we have got to collect." But I did not imagine what would happen when I first started. And the way the stuff poured in, and people were trying to get rid of all that crap. We were literally pulling valuable materials out of garbage cans, and now you cannot get anything.

P: Did you do much research in the South? You said you worked in Charleston and Savannah.

M: I went through all the wills in New Orleans, but I cannot remember. I went through all the wills and I have saved most of them. I guess they are rotten now because in that town they will rot away. I used all that I had.

P: The next thing I was going to ask you is since I am from the South, southern Jewish history is an interest of mine. What role do you see it play in American Jewish history?

M: I am going to shock you and surprise you and say a word about southern Jewish history. It is not my specialty, but I have been in the field of American Jewish history full-time since 1942. And in forty years you can learn a lot.

P: You certainly can.

M: I am not wandering around when I make the following statement. I make an address every year, at least once or twice to the students. Do it once under the auspices of the president to the seniors, telling them what to expect, and what is going to happen, because I have been here now for seventy-three years. I also give the same talk to my classes. So some of these boys have heard it twice. When they graduate at the last dinner at the president's house, and at my class when they take the course. I give a quarter semester in American Jewish history. I say to them, do not go south. Do not go south of the line, and stay east of the river. And they ask me why. Despite the fact that thousands of northerners have migrated to the South, I maintain there is such a thing as a regional ethos. You understand me? I maintain that the South has been accustomed, habituated, and indoctrinated, if you wish, because of its hatred of the blacks. As that classifies the blacks, to a degree that classifies the Jews. I maintain a true southerner will never accept a Jew as an equal. The goyim who go down south

are going to inhale that miasma. I think that a Jew has a better chance to survive north of the line.

P: As a Jew.

M: As a Jew. The people in the South hide this, and try to hide it. I do not think that they have changed. I do not think that they ever will change. The tragedy is that they have so intimidated the Jews spiritually, that the Jew has adopted these prejudices of the typical southerner. If the Jew wants to identify, subconsciously he subordinates his Jewish feelings and loyalties so as not to bring them into conflict with the Gentiles, and not to arouse the prejudices of the Gentiles. In other words, the Jew is neither spiritually free in the South, nor emotionally free. That is a thesis, a scenario. I believe it absolutely.

P: In terms of research into the role that Jews have played in the South, do you see a field there?

M: Well, I take the *Journal of Southern History*. I read all the reviews. They know nothing about the Jew. I once heard Clark of Kentucky talk about the Jews. He was a famous historian up there.

P: I know Tom Clark [Thomas Dionysius Clark, emeritus professor of history, University of Indiana].

M: Is he still around?

P: Yes.

M: He did not know much about it. He thinks he does. He was not arrogant. He is a decent person. He does not know. They do not know the Jew. A lot of the very prominent Jews in the South were the inverted Marranos. Do you know what an inverted Marrano is? A Marrano is a Christian who is a secret Jew. An inverted Marrano is a Jew who is a secret Christian.

P: We have got a lot of those.

M: They would like to be goyim. They do not dare be goyim. But the goyim will not take them and the Jews will not take them. They are American citizens of the Jewish aversion, quoting Marcus. They are hiding. I have read the literature of some people, would not mean anything to you, I have even forgotten the name of the man. He was a Jewish plantation owner in Carolina, who went into Mississippi. He was a politician at the time of Andrew Jackson. Levy was his name. I have forgotten his first name. He came from Camden, South Carolina. He was a goyim. They want to be goyim. They do not want to be Jews. But it is

beneath their dignity to become goyim. They do not mind if their children marry out.

P: That was true of our own David Levy Yulee [David Levy Yulee, 1810-1886; U.S. senator from Florida, 1845-1851] in Florida.

M: I have gone through the Levy papers in Florida. I am probably the only Jew in America who ever has. There is more than you know. I can tell you because I have been through the papers. I did not study all of them. It would have taken me years to have studied them. He was a fanatical evangelical Christian. Jesus Christ was in his soul all the time, writing to his wife, the Wycliffe girl, who was the daughter of a Kentucky governor.

P: Nancy Wycliffe.

M: He was a real kook, and he had a brother who was a Swedenborg [Emanuel Swedenborg, 1688-1772; mystic philosopher], and another kook. The father was a kook. A fanatical Jew.

P: Moses Elias Levy.

M: Yes. A real kook. I have seen some of his stuff. It was I who gave Korn the prospectus for the school in 1921, which he published.

P: Do you know we have those papers in Gainesville?

M: Yes, I have them in microfilm at the archives.

P: Yes, I know.

M: You may have helped me get them. I do not know.

P: Now those papers have been evaluated by Arthur Thompson [Arthur William Thompson, professor of history, and chairman of Social Science Monograph Series, University of Florida].

M: Who is he?

P: He is deceased now, and he did that as his doctoral dissertation at Columbia University.

M: I think I once got the dissertation but I do not think he went into that Christian business.

P: It is kind of interesting because Thompson himself was Jewish.

M: He was. Where did he get that name?

P: An inverted Marrano.

M: He was an inverted Marrano, yes.

P: Right. An inverted Marrano. I thought of him as you were saying that earlier.

M: We got twenty minutes.

P: All right. We are going to close this up very quickly now.

M: I may have said a few indiscreet things. Use your judgment. I do not want trouble with anybody.

P: Nobody is going to sue you for libel. And I promise not to put this in any scandal magazines whatsoever.

M: You are not going to give me, what is it called, the inside page of *Playboy* or something.

P: No, I am not going to put you in *Playboy*, *Penthouse*, *Hustler* or any of those magazines which all scholars read. What I am going to do right now is to thank you for this interview, and to tell you how much I appreciate it, and to tell you that I am going to send you that copyright release when I get back to Gainesville, and ask you to sign it and return it to me. What we are going to do with this is to transcribe it. Now you know that people do not talk in complete sentences and there may be some problems, but we will edit it and we will put it into beautiful form for you.

M: Good, good.

P: And send you a copy of the finished product. Then all of this will go to the American Jewish Historical Society Archives because that is the major reason that I am doing this.

M: Yes, of course. Let me ask you a technical question. You will give me a copy and I will turn it over to the archives for deposit in my personal papers.

P: That is fine.

M: Now, I do not think there will be any problems. In my lifetime they certainly are not going to use it. If there is any problem, I will get in touch with you because, in

a way, the historical society has the moral right to this material.

P: Right.

M: I am very fair about these things. But, they are not going to publish anything. One of these days this will be *Stoff*, to use a German word, for a person who will want to write about American Jewish history or Jewish historians.

P: Absolutely, and that is the reason that I am spending my time gathering this material.

M: Yes. Well, you are doing a pioneering job. If you do the same thing with Baron as you have done with me, I hope Baron lets his hair down.

P: Do you feel that you have given me a fair interview?

M: I have given you an absolutely honest interview.

P: You have answered every question. But I wondered whether I had asked you all the questions.

M: Oh, there are a million and one questions you have not asked me. They have nothing to do with American history as far as I know, because I have a lot of ideas of my own, and if I live it will be in my book. Without setting out to be a revisionist, I will be a revisionist in almost every page. Most people write American Jewish history and it is crap. Do not misunderstand me, an individual fact may be correct, but "it is all perfumed and rouged words," to quote a very famous Englishman of the sixteenth century. Everything is seen in rose spectacles. I have an entirely different point of view. Please bear in mind, I was born in 1896 and I am more than an historian; I am a person who recalls what he knows. I became cognizant of Jewish life when I was six or seven, say from 1902 on. In 1902, there were only about a million Jews in America. Later on, we had five or six million. So, I have ideas. Not so much ideas as prejudices. I see what I see. I lived in a little *Stadtchel* in western Pennsylvania, and I saw the yiddim, and what they were. I do not write nostalgic, sentimental, maudlin crap. Nor do I go out of my way to be mean and nasty.

P: Do you see anything in your life that you would have changed or done differently?

M: No.

P: In your professional life, would you have followed the same course?

M: Oh, I love my work. I have been the luckiest man in the world. When I was

appointed to the college, I only got sixty percent of the going salary for graduates. I was tickled to death. I never wanted to be a rabbi. It never appealed to me. I am on the lecture circuit. I do very well. I can get all the lectures I want, and get attractive fees. I never cared for the rabbi, but I have been very happy in my work, even though I was exploited for fifteen or twenty years. I had to teach fifteen hours a week for about twenty-five or thirty years. That is a hell of a big schedule, and every two years they would change the whole schedule. Of course, I learned a lot.

P: Are you teaching now?

M: Yes. I am fully employed, not retired. When I was sixty-nine years of age, I was elected for life, by acclamation of the board. I do not know whether that will hold up in the courts, but I was elected for life at sixty-nine. At what time are you dead?

P: They did not realize what they were buying and how much you were going to cost them.

M: That is right. In those days, retirement was sixty-five. Then seventy-five, eighty-five

P: Ninety-five? You have got another seventy-five years. You will be taking all of these people to the cemetery and collecting your monthly checks.

M: I could die tomorrow. The vice-president is only a heartbeat away from the presidency. You are only a heartbeat away from the Jewish undertaker.

P: So, you would not have changed anything in your life?

M: No sir. I have had it good here. I also had tough years under unsympathetic presidents who really took me to the cleaners. I had to work hard. But I have got it pretty good now.

P: What are you teaching presently?

M: I teach three hours a week, a half a course. A full professor only has to teach six hours here and I teach three hours. This will interest you--this week I began giving a seminar, and the seminar meets here. It is in German Methods. This is a seminar *bibliothèque*. This is a seminar library. That is the way the Germans do it. You meet with your professor in his library at the university. Every professor has his own separate library, though they are not his books. They are university books, and when he wants to say something, he pulls a book out. Last night, I kept pulling books out. I am giving a course on the forty most important

documents in American Jewish history. It will take me three or four years to get done, because I could spend an hour and a half on one document. Then the class is over.

P: Are you the oldest living full-time faculty person at the college?

M: I would say that I am at least fifteen years older than Orlinsky [Harry Meyer Orlinsky] or any of those people. Yes. I am the oldest. But they are all retired. And so, you say to me, Dr. Marcus, it must have been your brilliance and your charm that got you this appointment.

P: [Laughter.]

M: Is that your question?

P: That is right.

M: Now, what is the real story, Dr. Marcus?

P: All right, what is the real story? We have some more time and the tape is still going.

M: The vice-president's widow of Du Pont, a Jewess, walked in and laid down one-half of a million dollars on the spot, and all she said was, I am only too happy to give this with the understanding, of course, that Dr. Marcus will be kept on as long as he lives. So I was elected by acclamation.

P: All hail to Du Pont.

M: Du Pont, yes.

P: You are not going to name this generous lady?

M: Oh, sure. She is well-known. It is on my letterheads. I am the Milton and Hattie Kutz Distinguished Professor of American Jewish History. There is the Milton and Hattie Kutz Camp in New York at Warwick. There is a Milton and Hattie Kutz home in Wilmington, Delaware.

P: How did she happen to get into the Du Ponts, who have not been overly sympathetic to Judaism?

M: That, Doctor, is an excellent question. They did not; they inherited it. They bought out his firm. At the same time that they bought out the firm, they started hiring Jewish lawyers. It had nothing to do with the firm. They had always had

Jewish lawyers.

P: The Du Ponts?

M: The Du Ponts. In their own office. One Jewish lawyer impressed them. To make a long, long story short, after thirty years, this young Jewish lawyer, who I knew, was the first non-Du Pont to become president of Du Pont. Irving Shapiro.

P: And the early Du Ponts flipped in their graves.

M: One of them was of Jewish descent, as you know. He had married into a family which originally was Jewish--the Hombergs. Some people think it is Bellins and Bellinskis. It is the Hombergs. I have checked it out. When Irving Shapiro, [Irving Saul Shapiro, chairman of the board of directors, E. I. Du Pont de Nemours and Company] whom I knew, became the president of Du Pont, I did not write to him. I did not know how he would take it. We are very friendly. So, I wrote to the local rabbi who was a friend of mine, and a student of mine--they are all students of mine--Herbert Drooz.[Herbert Drooz, ordained HUC, 1943] I said, Herbie, is Irving a member of the Wilmington Country Club? Milton Kutz never made it. He said, I will ask Irving. Irving comes from an Orthodox Jewish family. In fact, I was with his family once when they had a bar mitzvah. That was in Minnesota. He went up for a bar mitzvah for a brother's child. And Irving said to Herbie Drooz, a true story, when I became president of Du Pont, I was invited to become a member of the Wilmington Country Club. Herbie said to him, Irving, what did you do? He said, I wrote them a letter. Herbie said, what did you say in your letter? He said, gentlemen, thank you, but you are thirty years too late.

P: And he turned down his invitation to become a member of the Wilmington Country Club.

M: Yes, he is a good Jew.

P: You are kind of pessimistic about the political future of America, aren't you?

M: Oh, very much. I am scared shitless. This is bad business. See, I know too much. Attempts have been made all along to baptize the Constitution. Even in the 1780s there were states discussing whether they would accept the Constitution. They did not like the idea that anybody could become a citizen--Article VI. Other people were upset for other reasons, and that is why they insisted on the Bill of Rights. There are people who will work to write a preamble to the Constitution invoking the name of Jesus Christ. That is not good. It is not good that they will finance parochial schools and the like, although a lot of the Orthodox Jews want it, you know that.

P: Yes.

M: The medieval period began in the year 320 approximately. I have the law in one of my books, where they made the first discriminatory ordinance applying to Jews. It took 250 years, but by the time they were through, politically, economically, culturally, and socially, a Jew was no longer a citizen. He could be executed for converting a Christian. He could be executed for marrying a Christian. These were capital crimes. That will not happen here, but they can move in that direction. There is a great deal against it, because the tradition is against it. The Catholics will be worried. But we cannot tell what coalitions may be made between the southern Baptists and the Catholics. They are both probably anti-abortion. Anything is possible. If a Hitler could develop in Germany, anything is possible. If a man came here in a period of depression, a powerful charismatic figure, and he began an anti-Semitic campaign to deprive the Jews of citizenship, it is quite possible, if not probable, that he would be successful. Remember, we have had a lot of violence in American history. Nineteen Italians were lynched in Louisiana in the 1890s or early 1900s.

P: And members of their family then fled to Tampa.

M: To Tampa, yes.

P: And settled there for fear of their lives in New Orleans. And of course, we had the Leo Frank case [Leo Max Frank, 1884-1915, engineer, only Jew to have been murdered by a lynch mob in the United States] in Georgia.

M: Yes. What bothers me even more is if prejudice ever develops against the Jew, the Klux and other sort the people who are spiritually of the Klux will have the complete support of the blacks. The blacks hate us, with a few exceptions. The average black man does not like a Jew. He is the one person who he feels is inferior to him. Thus, endeth the first lesson.

P: Thank you, sir.

[End of the interview.]