

# **A BUS TOUR OF “JEWISH LAS VEGAS”**

Hosted by Temple Beth Sholom, narrated by Arlene Blut and others

May 17, 2015

**NOTE: This event was coordinated, hosted and conducted by Temple Beth Sholom (Las Vegas, Nev.) on May 17, 2015. The Oral History Research Center of UNLV Libraries, University of Nevada Las Vegas, digitally recorded the audio during the bus tour and location stops, which include Woodlawn Cemetery and the former Temple Beth Sholom campus at 1600 Oakey Blvd. The audio was transcribed as part of the *Southern Nevada Jewish Community Digital Heritage Project*.**

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The Southern Nevada Jewish Community  
Digital Heritage Project

Oral History Research Center at UNLV  
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University of Nevada Las Vegas, 2014

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The transcript received minimal editing that includes the elimination of fragments, false starts, and repetitions in order to enhance the reader's understanding of the material. All measures have been taken to preserve the style and language of the narrator. In several cases photographic sources accompany the individual interviews with permission of the narrator.

The following interview was transcribed under the auspices of the *Southern Nevada Jewish Community Digital Heritage Project*.

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Named narrators:

Abbey, Joshua “Josh”

Blut, Arlene

Blut, Jerome “Jerry”

Collins, Lori

Goodman, Felipe (Rabbi)

Goodman, Oscar

Steinberg, Faye

Wilner, Martin “Marty”

**ARLENE:** I'm going to quote Adele Baratz, who came here in 1928. She knows where all the bodies are buried. She said, "No sturdier population has grown from such small beginnings as had the Jewish community in Las Vegas." When she came, there were two people of the Jewish faith; there was Eddie, the part-time news boy, and Abe, the tailor. Those were the guys. Others who came after, while Boulder Dam was being constructed, had no idea what the late-comers would build in this city of destiny.

The first beginnings of the Jewish community in Las Vegas came through the efforts of Nate Mack. I want to tell you there are two major Mack families. One is very active in Temple Beth Sholom. The Macks I'm going to be talking about were the original Macks in Las Vegas, a whole other family. Thomas and Mack is named after them. They started Valley Bank. I'm sure you all know who that family is.

In any case, it was Nate Mack who came to Las Vegas during the Boulder Dam era and found nine of his countrymen here. Mack saw the possibilities of the area early on and knew that if the city continued its growth, the Jewish population would grow in proportion. So he set about organizing the Jewish Community Center; that was our original name.

According to Adele Baratz, who came as an infant in '28, a few Jewish people were here. Her mother used to cook for them at the back of the store. Her father worked for a bootlegger, a bootlegger material's person. Yes, he did. There were about twenty-five altogether and they used to gather in the back of the bootlegger store. They prayed and they taught Judaism to their children. I don't think they got to sample anything. It was held in someone's house and occasional services were held in the Eagle's Hall on Fremont Street. It's no longer there, unfortunately.

For several years the community arranged for a cantor from L.A. to conduct the services for the High Holidays and for a service in those days at the Mack home at number seven Bonneville, also no longer there. Sandy and I drove up and down Bonneville; there is no number seven.

It was tough to have a service in those days as there were only ten men. You know what it takes to make a minyan? The ten men. So they all had to be present.

When the community grew larger and more Jews arrived, by the years '43-44, the High Holidays were held in the rectory of the Catholic Church at Second and Bridger, also not there, and in 1945 in the old Elks building. Did I tell you that's not there?

Led by the Mack brothers, a group of dedicated citizens gathered pledges to construct a building. In September '46, in time for the High Holidays, the Las Vegas Jewish Community Center at 1229 Carson—it's there; we're going—was erected for twenty-six thousand dollars.

**FEMALE:** Spendthrifts.

**ARLENE:** Spendthrifts, right, but they paid their pledges.

Within a year everyone had met their pledges and the mortgage was burned. They didn't want any money up front. I'm quoting Adele now. "First, they built the building then they

collected the money. They got a hundred percent of the money pledged. Nate Mack was criticized because he was building the structure too large and they thought it was too far out of the city." Wait till you see where it is.

At Carson Street address, her brother was collecting the tickets on the High Holidays. Well, Joe E. Lewis—I don't know if you guys remember him, a famous comedian at the time—came with his secretary. He had no ticket. The brother wouldn't let him in. He had his secretary write a check there and then and they got in.

One of the high points of the center's activities came in 1947 when the local center sponsored the big show to the United Jewish Appeal. They brought Eddie Cantor to Las Vegas for the affair. They were great days. A total of forty thousand dollars was raised, the highest per capita contribution made by Jewish people anywhere in the United States. After that Israel was born. I'm not sure if it was born because of the money raised in Las Vegas, but in 1948, Israel was formed.

We get to the fifties. Adele says, "The 1950s were wonderful in the beginning, like a family; everyone working for a common good." That's Adele. "A growing contingent of Jewish hotel owners in the fifties meant holiday dinners at the Dunes, Riviera, Sahara. Jack Entratter was the entertainment director at the Sands. He brought in people like Steve Lawrence and Metropolitan Opera star Jan Peerce to sing the Kol Nidre for Yom Kippur."

"By 1957, membership had grown to a hundred seventy-five families. As the center became overcrowded"—remember they thought it was too big?"—"fundraising began anew. There were benefit fashion shows, plays, pool party at the Last Frontier"—not there—"where Phil Silvers, Ray Bolger and Hopalong Cassidy auctioned their autographs. The top cash producer, though, was the annual gin rummy tournament hosted by the casinos." We'll come

back to the gin rummy tournaments.

"In '52, they placed posters in every hotel in town advertising seats for the High Holidays." This was done right up to when I came—yeah, the ladies were selling raffle tickets in the hotels always, right?

**FEMALE:** Fay Mushkin did that, didn't she?

**ARLENE:** You bet. McClicken, may she rest in peace.

Anyway, seats were always saved for members of the armed forces. As you know, the air force base is here.

Louis Mack and Hank Greenspun—you may know that name, the original member of Temple Beth Sholom who started the Las Vegas Sun here—anyway, ran arms to Israel. Louis Mack and Hank Greenspun were appointed to telephone people prior to the holidays regarding buying aliyahs.

Did you hear that, Rabbi? Okay. I think it's a great idea.

The Jewish population in Las Vegas was about three hundred fifty families and the center had an adult membership of about two hundred.

In 1954, the Passover Seder was held at the Silver Slipper. High Holidays were held in the Huntridge Theater. Side note: Lloyd Katz, member of the temple, owned the Huntridge Theater. He gave it for a fundraiser for the temple and they showed *12 Angry Men*, classic. I'll tell you more about Lloyd later. Where was I?

**FEMALE:** He was one of the first presidents.

**ARLENE:** Absolutely. One of the first presidents of the board.

A card and latke party for Hanukkah was held at the Silver Slipper and they raffled a white fox fur. I love that. That is so cute. Lloyd Katz requested that a men's club be formed.

All right.

As they outgrew the community center, Irwin Molasky, who you may have heard that name, headed the building committee. With considerable help from the hotel owners' men, property was purchased at sixteen hundred East Oakey and groundbreaking took place in 1956, which we call the Old Temple which we'll be going to and you'll get a much better tour, as I said, from Josh Abbey.

In 1956, a resolution in the bylaws, the board of trustees decided eighteen men would be on the board. So a motion was made that “the board shall be composed of eighteen members in good standing,” which permitted both men and women to run. The motion was defeated thirteen to one. I'm looking for the one vote.

In '56, a memo from Merv Adelson—Merv Adelson was a long-time member and one-time president. He owned Lorimar studios in Hollywood. He built Sunrise Hospital, the Boulevard Mall...I could go on...the—what's it called?

**FEMALE:** That was Nate Adelson who did that. Merv Adelson's son.

**ARLENE:** I'm sorry. Merv was his son. Nate Adelson who did that. Thank you.

**FEMALE:** Related to Sheldon or no?

**ARLENE:** Not at all. No relation. Sheldon was still driving a cab in Boston.

Merv Adelson reported that the gin rummy tournament should replace the dinner at Moe Dalitz'. You all know the name Moe Dalitz?

**ALL:** Yes.

**ARLENE:** Can we talk? A little shady, kind of connected. At one time owned the Dunes.

**FEMALE:** But retired.

**ARLENE:** Retired from everything.



It was replaced by a gin rummy tournament because that made more money. All the hotels were being asked to participate and publicity was being arranged with Walter Winchell. You know that name? It's amazing, this history. And now what have you got? Me, Sandy and Flora. Jerry Lewis entertained the donors' luncheon at the Sands Hotel that year.

It was suggested by a rabbi Dr. Bernard Cohen that we affiliate with the conservative movement by joining the United Synagogues of America. It was reported that Sabbath services in recent weeks have been attended by opera singer Jan Peerce and comedian Myron Cohen.

A loan from the First National Bank of Nevada in the amount of two hundred thousand dollars for the completion of construction of the new temple had been approved with a guarantee from the resort hotels. What are the chances today? Sahara, Desert Inn, Riviera, Thunderbird Hotel, Fremont, Sands, El Rancho and the Tropicana. The gin rummy tournament was now under way by the board of directors of the Las Vegas Charities Foundation—this is all of the Las Vegas charities—with the understanding that the net proceeds from the tournament would be used for the payments called for on the note. And I think that's quite amazing, the whole community. If they failed to do so, the hotels were liable for up to twenty-five thousand dollars each plus interest for each hotel.

Once again, women failed to get on the board. It was moved that the bylaws be amended to permit women to be elected as directors for the general meeting of the congregation. The motion was not acted on for a failure of a second. Have you ever? Were they scared? Moe Dalitz has accepted to serve on the board. No connection here, I'm sure. The importance of hiring a good executive director was discussed at length. The executive director would also be a part-time Hebrew teacher. On July 14th, 1958, Judge David Zenoff, who was very highly thought of in this community, moved that the Jewish Community Center be known as Beth

Sholom. Adoption of the name of Temple Beth Sholom was unanimous.

Any questions yet that I can't answer?

The red brick structure faced East Oakey in the southern section of Las Vegas. It continued to be the center of all Jewish activities for Southern Nevada. Remember, this is the only synagogue in town. The social hall and auditorium provide meeting places and activity rooms for all Jewish organizations, their temple men's club, Sisterhood, B'nai B'rith, men and women, AZA, B'nai B'rith Girls, Jewish War Veterans and its auxiliary, National Council of Jewish Women, and the Jewish Center Social Club.

The largest congregation attended holy day services in the new temple in October 1958; over twelve hundred people occupied each seat in the chapel and in the assembly hall at Kol Nidre and memorial services. That's amazing.

Jack Entratter—once again, the entertainment director at the Sands—suggested the Kolod Foundation be contacted about buying the ground for a Danny Kolod memorial. I am told he drown in Lake Mead. Do you know, Flora?

**FLORA:** That's what I was told. He was twenty-three, I believe. He was a young man.

**ARLENE:** And the reason that's relevant...You'll see that next to the temple and I'll tell you about it a little later.

In 1959, a giant auction and bizarre sponsored by the temple men's club featured a special door prize—this is really good—a 1959 Norge freezer completely stocked with food. By May 1959, the schoolrooms were furnished, permanent seats were ordered for the sanctuary, the bema had been remodeled, a stage curtain donated, the kitchen completed, and Kolod memorial building being erected with landscape going forward.

Temple Beth Sholom, if you don't mind, will be now referred to as TBS, okay? TBS

announced its first formal confirmation class service with six confirmations. The Huntridge Theater—I already told you about the *12 Angry Men*, from Lloyd Katz.

Temple president, now, was Jack Entratter. He announced a double ring ceremony at Temple Beth Sholom for Elizabeth Taylor and Eddie Fisher by Rabbi Bernard Cohen. Fisher appeared before Judge Zenoff with attorney David Goldwater, who was also a member, for his divorce that morning. There's a picture of that wedding in the hallway. Be sure and look if you haven't seen it, of the new temple.

The 1960s brought the Six-Day War to Israel. The Danny Kolod Memorial Youth Center became a separate but adjoining building with complete recreational facilities, including a tennis court, and by 1963 it had a membership of a hundred and fifty boys and girls age nine to seventeen. Most of our kids went there and had a ball. TBS almost tripled its membership to four hundred families and seventy-five single memberships while the population of Southern Nevada doubled from the late fifties to the middle sixties. The original temple on Carson Street had been sold to the Greek Orthodox Church for seventy-seven thousand five hundred. That's still there, but the Greek Church has moved to an enormous building west.

Lloyd Katz arranged for the fundraiser of *Exodus* at the Guild Theatre. To avoid attempted sabotage of demonstrations at the theater, both the temple and the theater will be patrolled.

Now, tell me if I'm wrong on this. Lloyd also owned the Guild Theatre downtown, kind of an art theater. And I think the reason they had all of this patrolling was he started integration in Las Vegas and especially of his movie theaters.

**FEMALE:** He and his wife marched for equal rights.

**ARLENE:** His wife, who you also may know or have heard of, Edythe Katz, marched in the

march for integration and they're very active in many ways.

**FLORA:** And also, Hank Greenspun was very active.

**ARLENE:** And Flora says Hank Greenspun was also very active in that march. By the way, there is a movie coming out about the Moulin Rouge, which is a wonderful documentary. It has nothing to do with Temple Beth Shalom. It was a black nightclub here, casino that was fabulous. It's a whole other story. It's another bus ride.

**FEMALE:** The Jewish Film Festival.

**ARLENE:** I'll get to that, too. That's my baby.

There were three hundred sixty guests at the Passover Seder, fourteen new members and a profit of eight hundred dollars. The Sands' chef cooked and staffed the dinner. Lloyd Katz arranged—well, I just told you that about *Exodus* downtown. There was a newly formed dance cotillion.

A constant discussion of rules for a Jewish cemetery and its upkeep kept the board busy. It was suggested that upon completion of the work, the cemetery be properly dedicated. Rabbi will tell you all about that when we get there, and I think we're almost there.

The men's club and Sisterhood combined efforts by staging *Make a Million*. Were you in that, Flora? It was cast with temple members. Sisterhood fashion shows were held in the Arabian Room at the Dunes Hotel.

In 1963, the youth program at TBS, under the leadership of Cantor Cohen, expanded to the Hebrew school with a hundred—

**MALE:** I have a question.

**ARLENE:** Oh, question. Yes, sir.

**MALE:** This is a comment. Not only is it very interesting, but we're about five minutes from

the cemetery.

**ARLENE:** Oh, thank you.

**MALE:** So the timing is going to be very good here. I'm just letting you know.

**ARLENE:** Hey, for what I'm being paid, I'll give it my all.

**FEMALE:** Good. You're doing a great job.

**ARLENE:** You know *gornisht*? Okay.

We're talking about the youth program in '63 at TBS with Cantor Cohen. It expanded the Hebrew school, a hundred seven pre-bar mitzvah and fifteen post-bar mitzvah students. Sunday school had one hundred sixty-one children. Little League teams, dancing classes, dancing parties, barbeques, lectures, arts and crafts instruction.

**FEMALE:** Do I have the preschool in there somewhere?

**ARLENE:** Yeah. And also Josh will talk...You know who was in the preschool at temple? Jerry says nobody knows or cares. But Senator Dick Bryan. Many gentile people went to the preschool at temple.

**FLORA:** Oh, they all did.

**ARLENE:** All of them. Flora says all of them.

**FLORA:** In fact, it was the best preschool in town. So everybody went there.

**ARLENE:** It still is. It got an award.

**MALE:** I was going to tell you that I knew numerous non-Jewish friends here in Las Vegas who grew up in Las Vegas and most of them went to the temple preschool. I know well-known attorneys who played basketball as they were growing up at the Kolod Center and that was a place to go because there really wasn't—

**ARLENE:** It was the only game in town.

**MALE:** —anything else, any other facility for teenagers.

**FLORA:** Arlene, when you talk about the preschool, Carson Street also started a preschool.

**ARLENE:** Oh, thank you.

**FLORA:** We have a picture of children on Carson Street. So education is always important when you build a synagogue.

**ARLENE:** True. Right. Very true. Thank you.

Should I stop? Yes?

**FEMALE:** The community around the temple, was it just about all Jewish or what was it like?

**ARLENE:** You mean around the temple? We're going to show you. But, yes, many Jews especially observant—my mother-in-law—lived near the temple so they could walk. We stayed at her house during the High Holidays. Sometimes we walked home with the Goodmans, Oscar and Carolyn. We lived close by. They still live in the house; we don't live in the house. Yes, we're going to show you some houses of people you know—the Steinbergs, both families, Leon and Irv; the Marshalls, who were very, very active in the temple; Adele's house; Miriam Sharp's house. I'm not sure that you know her.

**FLORA:** She just passed away. There should be a map in here of the neighborhood with many of the people's names who lived around the temple.

**ARLENE:** If you can't read it—

**FLORA:** I didn't realize it was going to be so small.

**ARLENE:** I've got it. I've got it.

**FLORA:** When we drive by, hopefully put on your reading glasses and you'll be able to.

**ARLENE:** Well, I've got the names here. So I can tell you whose house they were.

**FLORA:** There really wasn't a Jewish neighborhood.

**ARLENE:** No. That was, I think, very important in the Jewish community was there was no ghetto. There was no Jewish neighborhood. There was no Jewish country club. I think it was a plus. Jews were very active in the community. I think they began the Las Vegas Country Club. But there was never *this is the Jews and this is the gentiles*. They've always grown up together, lived together, which was part of this city's charm, I think, very, very non-separated, unlike most communities I think in the United States. I personally grew up in Duluth. I don't have to tell you there was no Jewish ghetto in Duluth. My house.

**FLORA:** The entrance is right here.

**[At the cemetery – Woodlawn Cemetery, 1500 N. Las Vegas Boulevard, Las Vegas, NV 89101 ]**

**RABBI:** So before I show you a couple of specific graves, I want to take just a couple of minutes to understand the relevance and the importance of Woodlawn Cemetery. It's a historical site in the United States, by the way, because of the first graves that are made here are for people who were born and buried in the eighteen hundreds. So it's a very, very important thing to understand. But also, wherever Jews stayed whether in the United States or anywhere else in the world—[Too much wind noise; indiscernible] So the relevance of having our own cemetery is very, very important.

Now, this area right here is not owned by Temple Beth Sholom. Our area is on the other side of the cemetery. This actually is owned by the City of Las Vegas and [wind noise]. Now, on the other side of the road, we have some graves actually were purchased as a block of graves by Temple Beth Sholom, which is what Arlene was explaining at the very beginning.

Now, I'm going to just tell you something that's very, very telling of a Jewish community. When I first moved to Las Vegas, I kept having this recurring nightmare that I was not going to

be able to be buried in Mexico. And a few people usually have that same thing. *Oh, my God, I'm leaving now Chicago, but I want to be buried in Chicago.* You cannot see yourself buried—I'm just mentioning Chicago; I just picked that randomly. You cannot see yourself being buried anywhere else but the place where you spent most of your life until that time. So for people to actually acquire a cemetery and start burying their family members here, it's much more of a statement not only of *I'm Jewish; I bury my dead in a special way*, but also *I am part of a city; I am here to stay and I'm not going.* So one of the reasons...On the other side my father is buried here. I clearly passed that mental barrier at some point in my life and I said, "Listen, this is where I am. This is my city, my congregation, my community." And I think that all of us by virtue of being here and dedicating cemeteries like we did in Woodlawn are saying, The Jewish community in Las Vegas is here to stay and it's not leaving anytime soon. Believe it or not, cemeteries are not about the past, but are very much about the future because without the cemetery, community cannot exist. It is very, very difficult.

Now, there were a lot of very, very wonderful people that were laid to rest in this section. I'm choosing one in particular right here. Get in closer. There were two people that to me were very, very old time. One was Philip Rosenberg and the other one was Charles Salton, who is Bill's brother, because they were here. I mean they came to Las Vegas very, very long ago. And Phil actually used to come to shul every Shabbat and used to sit in the same seat, took the same seat from Oakey at Temple Beth Sholom (indiscernible), had the same seat. And he was one of the most wonderful, amazing people I ever met in my life. Feel good stories, feel good life. When he died he left me his cufflinks. I always used to go to see him and say, "Look, I love your cufflinks." They were these huge like old Las Vegas cufflinks with a menorah on them.

**FEMALE:** Bling.



**RABBI:** Yeah, but they're real bling. So the story is that the cufflinks were given to him by one of the mob bosses. He never told me who it was. Maybe he made it up; I don't know. But it's one of those things that really make you understand what this city was once all about. Like Jerry was saying, this is one of the only cities, small cities in America aside from something like New York or maybe Chicago that Jews really built with their own hands because you were empowered to really build this city. And Woodlawn Cemetery is a testimony to that.

**FEMALE:** Etta Hormel, before your time, right, Felipe?

**RABBI:** Yeah. That's the Sisterhood.

**FEMALE:** Etta Hormel worked tirelessly at the gift shop on Oakey and she was president of I guess the women seniors and she was a fixture.

**FEMALE:** She also worked at Beth Sholom.

**FEMALE:** She also worked in the kitchen.

**RABBI:** She also cooked.

**FEMALE:** I was just going to say that she cooked for every event, all the Sisterhood lunches, all the Women's League lunches every time. It was fabulous.

**RABBI:** So do you want to go to the other side? Let's go to the other side. We're going to see Adele Baratz.

So I'm going to tell you a quick story. Make sure record what to tell her.

**FEMALE:** I will.

**RABBI:** So the Strausses—everybody remembers Ruth Goldfarb? Ruth Goldfarb who still comes to shul every Saturday now again. But Ruth was (indiscernible) and Ruth has been a really, really big force behind our congregation in a very special way. These are Ruth's father's parents. We have a Torah in our ark that actually is about three hundred years old, which is the

only Torah that we have that is not written on parchment; it is written on actual leather. Now, the unique thing about this story is not that it's three hundred years old; that's not uncommon. It's a Moroccan Torah and that's really unusual. It's a Torah that was written in Morocco; that's unusual on its own. But the Strausses came from Germany and they brought this Torah with them to the United States. They settled in New Jersey. They had a farm in New Jersey and then they came to Las Vegas with the Torah. They brought the Torah.

**FEMALE:** They brought the Torah when they escaped from Germany from the Nazis.

**RABBI:** Right. So the amazing thing is people say to you these days, If there was a crisis where you are and you needed to take some of your possessions, what would you take? So people would say, "Well, photographs, my passport, some money." But they took the Torah. This was their life. That Torah, again, Ruth doesn't know how it got to be that a Moroccan Torah ended up in Germany. It's very, very unusual. Nobody can explain it to us. But that is definitely the Torah they brought with them and that is definitely the Torah we have in our ark. It's one of those (indiscernible) in Jewish history. There was not a lot of cultural exchange at the beginning of the twentieth century between Morocco and Germany. So it's one of those things that is really unique about our congregation. We read from that Torah once in a while at Yom Kippur or Rosh Hashanah to honor Ruth's parents who are buried here.

In my house I have—Ruth gave me as a gift—they also had a (shavez lamp), which now is a very, very prized possession by Jewish museums, which is a lamp that you put on your ceiling; it's shaped as a star, and you put oil on it. And as the oil burns, the lamp goes lower to illuminate better. It's a mechanical marvel of the Jewish people and it was used on Shabbat. You lit it at the beginning of Shabbat and it gave you light for the holy day. So I have that. It used to belong to Ruth's parents.

So it's a very, very emotional thing to be able to stand here and know that people like that really risked it all to come from the old country to the United States and then, again, right, because who went west to the desert? Imagine. Ruth was from Bavaria, which is a very nice green area of Europe, to Las Vegas. So just for you to imagine the cultural change twice in a lifetime. It's not easy. The history of the Jews in the United States...If you stayed on the East Coast, it's great. But if your parents came to the West Coast in the thirties or the forties or the fifties, it was a big deal. It's not just like you take a plane and you go.

So that's why graves like these and history like this is so important, should be so important to us. And in understanding where we should be going in the future, we have to remember where they came from. Thank you so much for listening. I think it's a wonderful, wonderful (indiscernible).

**FAYE:** Talk about Lena. She would go into homes that needed extra help. She would do things...Prior to a funeral, she would go and help with the Shiva. She would go help with everything. This is a remarkable woman that I loved. Lena, if she would say, "Faye, I need you," I'd say, "I'm coming." But she helped everybody and she did it in a quiet way. She was a remarkable woman.

**FEMALE:** She lived across the street from Sarah.

**FAYE:** Do you remember?

**FEMALE:** Yes, I remember Lena very well. And she lived across the street from Sarah and they were best friends. Lena did not drive, but she managed to get to the hospitals. Every week she would go and visit the sick.

**FAYE:** She would walk from temple to her home every day.

**FEMALE:** Well, that was just a block or so. But she would manage to do whatever she could

do—I mean whatever was needed to be done, she did it without a big fuss.

**JERRY:** I was just going to—Faye knew—my late mother, she was her best friend because they lived around the corner, my mother lived.

**FEMALE:** How precious.

**JERRY:** And they were both Orthodox and they would walk to the temple.

**RABBI:** Before we leave I just want to share with you something else about the cemetery itself.

When Gene Greenberg was president of the congregation—maybe a little bit before Gene, but

Gene actually solidified it—we bought a tremendous amount of land on the other side of the cemetery and many of us have loved ones buried there. We have children, spouses, siblings,

grandparents. We still have about a thousand plots on the other side of Woodlawn Cemetery.

There was a time when Palm started developing their property in Henderson, many people chose

to go there because this was not a comfortable area; it was downtown; people didn't like it that

much. But as far as history goes and as far as we can attest, everybody who is buried here is

actually Jewish. This is the only cemetery like that in Las Vegas, our sections of Woodlawn. I

think that when they sat down and they bought those spaces over there, they didn't really realize

the impact that it would have on our future. But it's very, very comfortable for us to have that

because we know that no member of our congregation would ever go without a Jewish funeral if

that would be the case. We could always do something for someone.

Just for you to know, Temple Beth Sholom also participates with the community, with the Jewish community in our indigent burial understanding where rabbis throughout the community donate their services to bury people who can't afford to be buried and King David and the other funeral home also donate their services. But Temple Beth Sholom actually donates the plots to the indigent burials, which is something that nobody else does. You cannot quantify

that in money because it's invaluable. If we didn't have that the community would have to pay maybe two hundred thousand dollars a year in funerals for people to afford to be buried. So just for you to know, the relevance that our congregation still has in this community and the impact that we have is nothing to sneeze at; it's actually very, very significant and we should be very, very proud of it.

**FEMALE:** To help bury the Jewish indigents or all?

**RABBI:** Yes, for only Jewish indigents. I wish we could do for everybody, but we can't. Non-Jewish indigents are usually cremated.

**FEMALE:** And now you give (indiscernible).

**RABBI:** That we don't do anymore. I think that stopped. I'm not sure. I have to ask a member of the board.

**[Colloquy not transcribed; too many people talking at same time]**

**[on bus]**

**ARLENE:** (Indiscernible) became the rabbi of Temple Beth Sholom, February '65. The Jewish Chronicle headlines read—the Chronicle must have been the precursor to the Israelite—"Rabbi Aaron Gold arrives in Vegas for good. His first sermon was titled 'Getting to Know You,' announced President Jerry Mack."

When I moved here Rabbi Gold was the rabbi. I was taken by some very lovely ladies to a Women's League...What was it called then, Sisterhood? Yeah. Meeting. To my shock, I came here from Winnipeg, which was a very, very conservative community. I was in heaven. I thought this was the funniest thing I've ever seen. Went to the Sisterhood meeting. Many of, as you know, of the mockers in the temple were hotel owners, most all Jewish, obviously, and their wives were pretty, a lot of showgirls that were not Jewish. I don't know if they converted, didn't

convert. But Sisterhood was wonderful. I remember Marilyn Resnick, Ash Resnick's [wife], she was Miss Minnesota. I remember that because I'm from there. And she's sang "Hatikvah" and whatever was sang. "America?"

**FEMALE:** No. "The Star-Spangled Banner."

**ARLENE:** "The Star-Spangled Banner." They were all like six feet tall. They were gorgeous. It was the funniest Sisterhood I've ever seen in my life. I called back to Winnipeg and I said, "You haven't seen anything until you've moved to Las Vegas and joined a temple there."

**RABBI:** That's what I said.

**ARLENE:** For sure. We had never seen a rabbi like you, either.

I might as well tell you, Leo Wilner—how many years was he the director of our temple?

**FEMALE:** Sixteen.

**ARLENE:** Sixteen?

**FEMALE:** Yeah, sixteen years.

**ARLENE:** That's all? He became the director. He came from Judea Congregation in L.A. and he assumed the duties of executive director in '63. He had a great impact on me. So I thought it was much longer. His children still are here.

**FEMALE:** Twenty years.

**ARLENE:** Twenty years?

**FEMALE:** I looked it up and it was only sixteen because he was in the old—

**ARLENE:** The old temple, right, before (indiscernible). It's in the time line. Services at Temple Beth Sholom in '68 were dedicated to the celebration of the twentieth birthday of the state of Israel.

When we get to the seventies, I know your notes say eighties, but I think it was seventies

that Shelley, Levine was her maiden name, Berkley, received the second annual B'nai B'rith Bernie Schiffman scholarship check. It was a check. She always refers to it when she speaks at the temple.

**FLORA:** I have a funny note about that. Sandy told me that it said it was the second annual. There was never a third or a fourth or a fifth. That was it.

**ARLENE:** Oh, and then Ambassador (NAME) was the honored guest speaker at a CJA silver anniversary ball in Caesars Palace. Also, Flora was the chairman.

**FLORA:** I do remember that real well.

**ARLENE:** You should, oh my God. Also attending was Senator Howard Cannon. Where have you been? Start chairing these things.

**FLORA:** Chairing what?

**ARLENE:** Anything. A special award was presented to Red Skelton for his service to Israel. Do you remember that, Flora?

**FEMALE:** Was he Jewish?

**ARLENE:** No. You didn't have to be Jewish. A public Seder was held at the Dunes Hotel with nine hundred people in attendance. Oscar Goodman was elected to the board of directors. Does anyone know who he is? No? Do you know Carolyn Goodman, the mayor? They call them the Mayors Goodman.

In May '73, attendance at the Hebrew school was very high, three hundred thirty-five plus thirty-two children. Families plus thirty-two children? Receiving Hebrew training in the nursery school.

**FEMALE:** Before you continue, can I just say something? We are now on Carson Street. The synagogue will be on your right, the old synagogue. This is what? This is the six hundred block.

So six more blocks.

**FEMALE:** It's near the 13th Street. It's right before 13th, which is Maryland Parkway.

**FEMALE:** Yes. So keep your eyes out on the right. It's a very tiny unusually painted building.

**FEMALE:** Were there houses all around here?

**FEMALE:** It was very small.

**FEMALE:** They painted it?

**ARLENE:** Well, yeah, there were. Yes, this is all residential. It still is very old Las Vegas, original Las Vegas. Many of the buildings have been—well, I want to tell you all these restaurants that have opened on Carson Street, please give them business. It's so important to create downtown Las Vegas. I've been to every one. They are terrific. The chefs are from hotels in town that have been dying to create their own restaurants. Please, come downtown. I'm also on the city arts board. So I promote downtown.

It's a small white building. Jerry, what's the street?

**[Colloquy not transcribed]**

Here, the white and blue building. Packed. Packed. No, it was the Greek Church. They recently, well, the last ten years have moved to an enormous place on the west side, and I have no idea what it is now.

**[Colloquy not on the record]**

Now, straight ahead is the Huntridge Theater down that street. It was on Charleston and Maryland Parkway. Big shopping center there. Former family who are gone now, the Blickens had a great store there. Jerry, who else? Lil Blicken, Kenny.

**FEMALE:** Now, the Huntridge Pharmacy has a kosher restaurant in there. Women's League took a tour and we went to the Huntridge Pharmacy restaurant. It was wonderful. The food is



fabulous.

**ARLENE:** Oh, fabulous. There was a drug store that had the best Chinese food at the counter.

Who's that? The best in town.

**FEMALE:** White Cross?

**ARLENE:** No. That had the best food, breakfast, the White Cross Drugs on Oakey. I mean this is before the big fancy restaurants came and we had some really good restaurants.

**FEMALE:** I remember Jackie's Deli.

**ARLENE:** Jackie's Deli was the meet and greet place and it was in back of a White Cross in Commercial Center. It was a haven for everybody. And then across the street Ron Lurie's father opened up a deli. Then there was another deli at Commercial Center. There was more here then, in the seventies than there is now. We're going to Steinberg's house.

**FEMALE:** The Huntridge is on the left. You'll see it on the left.

**ARLENE:** Jerry, who else's furniture store was here? (Indiscernible)

This is being recreated by an arts organization for performance, but this was the Huntridge Theater.

**FEMALE:** And was it open for performances?

**ARLENE:** No. It was movies. Then this was a big shopping center next to it the other way.

We could drop our kids here and pick them up after.

**FEMALE:** Yeah, we did that. They used to show here—

**ARLENE:** Kids' movies. And then it became—right. And the people who showed it have formed a nonprofit and with a little bit more support, this will be a sort of off Broadway, really off.

We had a deal with them where our overflow on High Holidays would get tickets over

there, sometimes the children's services. There have a year in my notes that we had Thanksgiving together, our temple and that church. It was very good relations.

**FEMALE:** But we never had services there.

**ARLENE:** Yeah, our overflow went. Jerry, Flora says we just parked over there. I thought our overflow went there and the services...I remember we had a service there. Yeah, and the servicemen went there, too.

**FEMALE:** But that wasn't overflow.

**ARLENE:** But you said it was owned by Jews. I'm sorry?

**FEMALE:** It is now.

**ARLENE:** Oh, now. I don't know Marshall's story; I just know mine.

**FEMALE:** Yes, we'll take a tour of all of this. This was the preschool. This is where the preschool was.

**ARLENE:** We're going to get to all of it. Josh will give you a much better tour than any of us. He taught Hebrew here. He was born and grew up here.

**[at former Temple Beth Sholom campus, 1600 Oakey Blvd.]**

**OSCAR:** Number one, I want to thank Sandy for putting this together because only her energy and her commitment to the temple could something like this take place. Only through her aggravation of me every single day on the phone saying, "You've got to do this; you've got to do that." I said, "There's a basketball game on today. I'm not going to start with..." That's why I never liked Jewish people because when I was the mayor for twelve years, every Sunday the only people who were doing anything were Jewish people and they ruined every single Sunday for twelve years.

I want you to look over there behind that fence because maybe in some large way,

certainly in some way, it had an effect on the temple moving out of this area. It may have been a subliminal psychological thing as a result of what happened there and it may have been, of course, the changing neighborhood here.

But my wife and myself, we joined Temple Beth Sholom when we got to Las Vegas in 1964. It was really a home. It was a home for our four children and they did everything that people are supposed to do in a temple. They went to the school. They went to the camp. Marty Wilner was involved with them. It was a wonderful time, a wonderful era. My wife and myself used to walk all the way—if you can imagine this—Rancho and Charleston; that area where we live, we used to walk with our four children during the Jewish holidays, trying to keep the tradition that we had when we were growing up in Philadelphia. We would walk all the way down, across the railroad tracks at Oakey, and wave at people who were honking their horns at us. I think they respected us because they knew we were all Jewish and we were carrying our tallit bags. Even on Yom Kippur when we were fasting, the children loved to walk because when they got to Oakey and Las Vegas Boulevard, they went into the doughnut store there and they bought doughnuts.

When we go inside I'll tell you a story that no one's going to like, but it's a real story about Las Vegas and what happened.

**FEMALE:** This is the impetus that got us really put into this tour. It was originally a Las Vegas Temple Beth Sholom tour and we always wanted to tour the Oakey building, but we had no idea what to expect when we got here. We had no idea what to expect. But when we met the people who were responsible for making a shul a school, we were so pleased that it became something viable and useful and wonderful for the community, just like our shul was. It's due to Dr. Mallin and her husband, Ken. They are the original charter people who started this whole thing. And

I'm sorry.

**LORI:** We're the co-conspirators.

**FEMALE:** And Lori, Lori Collins has been such a help to us in getting this done. I have to give them so much credit because they've given us so much love. I hope you feel the same way Sandy and I felt when we first got here. So thank you. We have some pictures that we're going to leave in the library. I found pictures of the stain glass and of different things.

**FEMALE:** Just to kind of give you a little information about our school, we've been here nine years now, finishing up our ninth year. We currently start approximately nine hundred students K through twelve. The first year we opened we got this building less than ninety days before the school year started and people didn't think we would make it. In fact, they were placing bets that we'd have two hundred kids and we opened with four hundred and fifty. So we've been growing since then to the point that we now have a second campus. So we have approximately six hundred, six hundred fifty K through six students on this campus and another three hundred less than a mile from here. We're very honored for you to be visiting with us today and have a chance to see how much love we've continued with the building as we've helped our students to feel like they're in a place where they're supported. So thank you so much.

**FEMALE:** And I want to introduce Marty Wilner. Please, Marty, come. Leo Wilner was our temple executive director for eighteen years.

**FEMALE:** And what a guy, a dynamo.

**FEMALE:** He came on our tour. He'll answer questions, too.

**JOSH:** So, first of all, how many people actually attended services here? Almost half. And several of you lived here in the neighborhood including Faye who's with us today. Anybody else actually live in this neighborhood? I did on 12th Street and Bonanza. Where did you first live

when you first moved to Las Vegas?

**OSCAR:** Well, we moved to the Palms Apartments at 713 East Sahara and then moved down to Viking Road, which is right off Eastern close to Flamingo. Then we spent six months in between homes at Las Vegas Country Club in one of those little houses and we've lived in the home where we live now since '76.

**JOSH:** But a big portion of the Jewish community lived in this neighborhood so they could come to services, send their children to the day school. There was a very successful summer camp here in summertime. My family moved here in the sixties. My mother was Rita Abbey, who did the artwork adorning the sanctuary. We're going to see a reproduction of it; there's a slide projection in a moment and I'll tell you a little bit about how she created that work. It's just a very deep personal history and that's what Las Vegas does best is brings its history and celebrate it and it's wonderful that we're all here today to do so.

The doors of the temple, the current temple, the wooden doors and the sculpture of the burning bush, as well as all of the details, were done by an artist named Eric Ray, who taught at the University of Judaism in California. And my great uncle, my mother's uncle was the president of the University of Judaism; his name was Sam Dennin. And so he put them together. And then Eric hired my mom to create some sort of centerpiece, which she called the "Wall of Creation." I'll tell you more about the fabrication of it.

But it's also really important to talk about your dad. So share with us a little bit about your memories of what it was like to be the son of the administrator here.

**MARTY:** You want the whole truth and nothing but the truth? Thank you. First, Sandy, let me thank you again for the wonderful thought and the work you've put in, in gathering this group of people. Thank you all. For me it's also a thrill, but, perhaps, in a bit of a different way because,

as you know now, my father was the administrator here. His office...I haven't seen it yet. I don't know if it's still there, but it used to be to the right. When my parents moved here, I believe it was 1963. And I actually thought that that's when he was a director, but I think I'm wrong. I think it was a little bit later years.

During those beginning years, always everyone, all of our friends, we moved from Los Angeles where he was a director of a synagogue there, people of Fairfax area—some of you may know the area; it's a densely Jewish area. Anyway, so when he moved here, our friends there were saying, "Las Vegas? What on earth, Leo? Why are you going there?" And you've probably heard those kinds of questions. At that time if I'm not mistaken there were seventy-five thousand people living in Las Vegas. So the tremendous growth is rather obvious.

I think it's wonderful for you folks to have a sense of the history. Obviously, you're interested enough to do that. But I think the more people who have that sense of history in their future will be a little bit clearer as well.

During those beginning years I was mainly in school. I went to school it seemed like forever and I guess it was in many respects. But I would only come home during vacations. And during those times dinner was something that my brother and I and my mother and father, may they rest in peace, we always ate dinner together. That was sacred. And during those times I learned a great deal about some of the Torahs as well as some of the wonderful things at the temple.

As you can imagine it was a relatively stressful type of work, but, indeed, my father really did love it. He lived for it every minute of his life. When he retired he was still in good health relatively speaking, but he wanted to enjoy his life. And after retiring he was still very instrumental in helping other synagogues in our community become successful as they are now.

A couple of the things that stand out pretty much in my mind were, as I say, the meals that we spoke about and the High Holiday time was, as you can well imagine, a very stressful time. My father would spend nights staying up before the Rosh Hashanah until Yom Kippur in making sure that the seats people had were the right seats because he would always be pacing in the house, pacing back and forth. *This one I hope understands I can't put him or her there because of this, that or the other.* It was a very difficult time for him. So I came to understand as a young boy that I couldn't wait till the High Holidays were over. But nonetheless, it was a wonderful, wonderful time in my life, too.

This is the first time I've been back here since—I don't know—thirty, twenty-five years. It brings back a lot of wonderful memories. Thank you so much for sharing.

**OSCAR:** Leo was loved. Your dad was loved by people who went to this temple. He was respected and he was sort of the shadow rabbi over the years because everybody looked to him to get the true story. I don't think Las Vegas (jewelry) really would be the same without your father's contribution to it. I mean that sincerely.

The second thing my friend Jerry Blut here reminds me that he and his three sons used to walk the same distance that I used to walk of my four children and Carolyn and the only difference was he did not stop at Winchell's.

But I've got to tell you something. If you have any children or grandchildren that you think are wayward—and I'm putting it nicely—who you thought would never amount to anything, well, each of us had one son who, when they came to temple, for some reason during the services during the High Holidays, they always disappeared. We never saw them. The two of them disappeared together. It was almost magical or mystical. And we found out after a while what they were doing. And this didn't last just one year; this lasted year after year after

year. They would go into the parking lot and take the little things off of the tires and the wheels of every car.

What's Ritchie doing now? I didn't say, how much time was he doing? I said, what's he doing?

**JERRY:** He's with the county.

**OSCAR:** Eric is a justice of the peace. So no matter how bad these guys seemed to be during the time, they all turned out okay.

**JERRY:** As Oscar said, his son and my son, Eric, they were always in trouble. Once they got to be about eighteen or nineteen, they turned out to be the straightest people in the world. They wouldn't do anything.

**OSCAR:** I wanted to say this before I take off, because I've been here, I've been here several times. When I was the mayor, I used to visit the school and have tours through it and saw what kind of great job is being done here. So I'm familiar with the surroundings.

But I ask you to look at that little lot in the back of the school. A horrible event took place there in 1978. It was a day school and the children were playing in the schoolyard there. There was a gentleman who owned a business called the Carpet Barn, probably one of the most successful businesses in Las Vegas. He was selling carpet and flooring to all of the hotels. A very, very wealthy gentleman. His son was out on the playground there and one day the son disappeared. There was a phone call—yes, Sol Sayegh. There was a phone call that went to his home and without any identification they said, "Do not call the police, but we will be calling you as...You have to leave two hundred and fifty thousand dollars for the safe return of your son." At that point there was a never phone call to follow it.

It was interesting because I'm a criminal lawyer by profession and I was representing the



father of this youngster in a very contested case and the FBI was on the other side and there was no love lost between myself and the FBI at the time. But when the son was kidnapped, they asked me to come in and try to assist them in trying to have the son recovered. The story was unbelievable that was given. The fellow who was the suspect said that he was walking—listen to this—he was walking down Las Vegas Boulevard and he was walking in front of Circus Circus and a pay phone rang and he was told that you will find something very important if you go to the intersection of Pecos and McLeod. Well, impossible that that could have taken place. You don't walk down the street and when you're walking past something a phone rings and tells you where to find something that's very important.

Well, the child's grandfather and myself, we went to the...It was a big pit at Pecos and McLeod and we climbed down the pit and we found his shoe. We brought the shoe home and the mother, when she saw it, she just collapsed. She said, "That's my son's shoe." It went on and on from that.

The horrible part about it, they never found the boy. There was never any closure to it and it remains unsolved. I know who did it. I do. And he went to trial and he was acquitted. His lawyer was so bad that the jury felt sorry for him.

**FEMALE:** Oh, come on.

**OSCAR:** Tell you the truth. It's a true story. The lawyer was taking cocaine at the time he was defending him. The lawyer didn't know where he was or what he was doing. The jury felt so bad for the defendant that they let him go. Now, he spent time subsequently for a lot of other things in prisons all over the country, but he's still around. He appears every once in a while. A very, very bad fellow by the name of Jerry Burgess. And if he'd like to, he can sue me if he thinks I'm slandering him.

**ARLENE:** I was watching on television. This guy was painting my kitchen. I had no idea. He was referred to me by somebody. I went upstairs and I was watching television and that case or somehow he was on the screen. I called Jerry from the upstairs while he was painting my kitchen downstairs and I said, "Jerry Burgess is in our house painting. What should I do?" He said, "You know, I can't get home until about five thirty."

**JERRY:** I was very busy that particular day.

**OSCAR:** He was on the golf course, but he couldn't get home until five thirty.

**ARLENE:** I can't remember how it ended, but I stayed upstairs until he came home.

**JOSH:** I just want to share one last aspect of that story. I heard that story for the first time today from someone who prefers to remain anonymous who's working at the school here now who actually left after that incident because it was so emotionally intense, but came back to education and is dedicating her life. So the rebound will—yeah, perseverance is what matters most.

**OSCAR:** They never heard anything about the child.

**MALE:** Three years ago while we were in operation on a regular school day here that there was an FBI agent who pulled up in our parking lot and two people were standing out there. We had no idea who they were. We approached them to find out; he introduced himself as an FBI agent and that he was still working a cold case involving a missing child. This was three years ago.

**OSCAR:** The father, Sol Sayegh, never got over it, of course. His family moved to Beverly Hills and Sol basically stayed near the two other children. But his whole life was consumed by this horrible disaster. And every time a new FBI special agent in charge who would be the head of an office was assigned to Las Vegas, the first meeting that ever took place with that agent no matter who it was, was with Sol and they went over it. And they have been working on it, the

best somebody could work on a case from 1978, all the time. I mean it has not been forgotten. The father won't let it be forgotten. But I will it will you this. God forbid if it would have happened to me, I would have killed the guy myself. But with those pleasant...Rabbi, is that legit?

**RABBI:** Once you come to Las Vegas and start working here, everything becomes legit. So it's okay.

**JOSH:** There was a forty foot wide by twenty foot high art installation by Rita Abbey that she created in 1970 to about 1972; it actually took her almost two years to fabricate it. She had to come up with something...They didn't want to break out the wall. She had to come up with a way to replicate stain glass without actually using stain glass. So what she did was—you'll see in some of these photos—she rented out a portion of a huge airplane hangar that used to be on Tropicana near the airport between Paradise and the Strip; it was called Jet Craft. I don't know if any of you remember that, but it was a humongous facility. She rented out a portion of that. And then she build a matrix or mold out of plywood on the ground and she poured in different layers of resin and fiberglass, fiberglass that came on a sheet roll and then that was dyed and then different elements were put onto the fiberglass. And then the bottom quotation is from Psalms and it reads, "The Lord thy God was very great. Thou art clothed in glory and majesty. Thou cover thyself with light as with the garment. Thou open up the heavens like a curtain." So it was a very appropriate quote for the artwork. It made many a tedious sermon much more tolerable. We're able to just get lost in the majesty of the artwork. Although during my time the rabbis were all pretty dynamic, as they are today. So I'm just saying that in jest. But I have heard that comment from more than one occasion that coming to see the art is a strong motivation. Rita's work is also in the new temple. She did the stain glass windows on either side of the sanctuary.

So this is her. The materials were extremely toxic. She's in poor health today. She's in her late eighties. It's definitely impacted by having worked in such close proximity over long durations of time. She took a lot of precautions, but it was before they had more sophisticated protective garments and aspirators to keep the fumes from getting into your system.

**RABBI:** (Indiscernible.)

**FEMALE:** And our doors still have the Star of David on them.

**JOSH:** Yeah. You can see a lot of elements. We're going to take a tour around the back. You'll actually see a plaque; there's one surviving plaque for the Kolod Center. So basically behind the screen, which is how she referred to it, there was a little antechamber where there was fluorescent lighting that created the lighting. And then the eternal light was on top; that was the largest single cast piece. You can barely see it there. They were bronze hands crossed like this just below that. All that artwork and pictures that we mentioned, the features were all done by Eric Ray.

**FEMALE:** And we tried to take it to put it into the new synagogue. It's just it didn't...The architecture couldn't get it to fit because there would be a big space behind it, right?

**JOSH:** Right. Originally the windows that are at the new temple were designed to work in concert with this piece so that it would have been a surround effect. But there was issues with the architect individually. They abandoned that idea. The piece remained here after the building was sold, believe it or not, and it was owned by I believe an Episcopal church for a number of years. They spray painted the ceiling with some of asbestos paint, material or whatever, and it splattered all over the face of the artwork. At that point we just asked for it back; the family asked to get it back because they didn't really care about it as an asset and, obviously, they didn't care about it aesthetically either.

So it was taken apart and then my mother spent a long time resurfacing it. She had to strip all of the resin off the surface, put a new layer of resin back on each individual panel and there were probably a dozen panels that are welded together. This metal frame, it bolted into the metal from behind. It's very complex. It was a very original design and it's just magnificent artwork. She also taught—

**FEMALE:** Where is it now?

**JOSH:** Right now it's just in crates. But my mother has her home and a gallery in the northwest that will eventually become a museum to her life's work. We're in the process of getting permits now to do an extension where we might actually recreate it and put it up again. So there is a good possibility.

**FEMALE:** How long did it take her to do it?

**JOSH:** Two years.

**FEMALE:** And how many people—did she do all the work physically herself?

**JOSH:** Yeah, she did all the work by herself pretty much. I mean she had some people, I'm sure, load materials in. She may have had some students assisting her, but I don't recall that. I just recall...It was the year actually just after I was bar mitzvahed. I was bar mitzvahed here in 1969.

I'm sure there's several people here who visited my mom's home, right? I know Sandy has. Where's Sandy? Yeah, it's a pretty amazing place. Eventually, when it's open to the public in the next couple of years, I, of course, am inviting everybody to come. We're thinking about taking a group for the Adelson School, for their art students to visit.

The cantor who was here the longest who tutored me was Joe Cohen and his wife, (NAME), is a brilliant woman. She's still living. She's now retired in California, but she was

here in Las Vegas for many, many years. She was one of the main teachers at the Hebrew School here. You may know her. She participated as a moderator of some of the films that I've shown at the Jewish Film Festival. I run an annual Jewish Film Festival at the Adelson School and at a couple of little theaters in January. It's just finishing its fourteenth year. With everybody's help hopefully it will continue to survive.

But this is an amazing place.

**FEMALE:** (Indiscernible. (NAME/Rose) was the person responsible for the sale of this building to the church. We're so grateful to her. She worked so hard.

**JOSH:** Rabbi, do you have any memories of this you want to share?

**RABBI:** I was just here for maybe three services of Shabbat (indiscernible).

**FEMALE:** And your interviews.

**RABBI:** And my interviews. My fondest memory is (NAME) Gardens, Shelley Berkley's son. They had one that he was going to sing something special at the end, but (indiscernible).

[Singing] That's one of the fondest memories, yes.

**FEMALE:** I think that was the last bar mitzvah, wasn't it?

**RABBI:** That was the last bar mitzvah here, yeah.

**FLORA:** And this is still our floor and you can still see the holes where our seats were, the sanctuary seats. And Oscar (indiscernible).

**FEMALE:** They have left the Jewish stars on the doors; that's really kind of politically incorrect, but they think—well, because it's a religious symbol. But they decided to keep the doors because they thought it was a beautiful design and part of the history of the building.

**FEMALE:** I just want to share with you...My husband and I came to Las Vegas in 1990 from New York and the day we got here he registered at UNLV to take a master's in American history

and I discovered that I didn't know what I was going to do with myself. So I went to real estate school and I got involved in the temple. From the start I could see that God smiled on Temple Beth Sholom. Although we had many hard times financially, it always worked out for us. I was elected to the temple board and served for six years. We kept losing members as the city was changing. The city was growing and the Jewish people were moving out to Summerlin or to Green Valley and we had to make a decision. So the board made a decision and voted to move to Summerlin. Money was a big problem for us. We needed money to buy the land and then we would sell the building and raise funds to build our new temple in Summerlin. Out of the blue appeared a gentleman called Martin Howard. He was a Jewish man who came to services and enjoyed the temple. He advised the rabbi that he wanted to leave his money to the temple. When he died the temple received six hundred thousand dollars from his estate and that money was used to buy the land in Summerlin. I don't know if any of you have ever noticed, but right outside the new Temple Beth Sholom there's a wall and on the wall is the name Martin Howard because he was the man that started our move to Summerlin.

I was selling real estate at the time and I helped to sell the building here. We sold the building to the church and we received a lot of money for the building because it was in really bad shape. We were able to take the front doors, the burning bush and lots of stain glass, all of which now are in our new Temple Beth Sholom. I told the priest at the time who was involved in buying the building that I could not take a commission because I didn't want people to say that I made money from the synagogue. And he said, "I don't know why. I live off the church."

Lots of people worked hard to raise money and build a beautiful new Temple Beth Sholom in Summerlin, but nobody worked harder than Sandy Mallin. She traveled all over, viewing synagogues to see what other places were doing so that we would have the most

beautiful and workable house of worship. The best fundraiser was Sandy Mallin. She didn't care; she got funds from Jewish and non-Jewish people as long as they contributed. Today we have the most beautiful house of worship because God smiled and gave us Sandy Mallin and lots of other loyal and hard-working members. Thank you.

**JOSH:** I also want to mention that from my knowledge Arlene really was very, very instrumental in working with Sandy as well during those times.

**[Back on bus]**

**FLORA:** —a representative on the board. Actually, it started with one and then two, the Sisterhood president and then a Sisterhood member at large who was on the board. But they were not elected to the temple board; they were there more or less on suffrage if you will. They presented a slate every year and we were having some problems and I was not happy with some of the things and there were a bunch of people who weren't happy and they said, "You really ought to get on the board." So I ran for the board contested against the slate and I was the first woman elected to the board.

**FEMALE:** You opened up the doors for other women.

**FLORA:** Yes. But I'm telling you it was hotly contested. There were women who did not believe that I should be elected. I made a lot of phone calls and my friends made a lot of phone calls. It was a real big deal.

**ARLENE:** I don't think that's on the time line. If you look at your time line in your brochures, it talks about when women were allowed to have a bar mitzvah and to have Aliyah. I'll talk about it now, actually.

In a ritual committee meeting with rabbi—thank you, Flora.

**FLORA:** You're very welcome.



**ARLENE:** The subject of women in the service was discussed and recommendation be made that girls be permitted to have bar mitzvahs on Saturday. The natural consequence of this would be to eventually extend Aliyah to women. It was also agreed that women be encouraged to wear head covers at Shabbat services. This is in keeping with their being called to the Torah.

As the neighborhood aged—now we're in the seventies that Flora's talking about—the membership committee reported that membership was now—this is '74—divided about 55 percent middle to over-age; children, families, 40 percent families with children; and a small percentage of singles and young couples without children. Another step towards the depletion of membership at TBS is when Temple Ner Tamid, which was a Reform temple, started. My father was the first bar mitzvah there. It was at a church and that was the formation of a new temple. That was the first to start. Many followed. I think we have...Eight?

I'm going to skip to announce—it's still seventies. Passover Seder was held at the Sahara Hotel Space Center. You may not know there was one. It was attended by five hundred sixteen guests. It cost fourteen dollars a person. Leo Wilner, who you all are familiar with now, thought we would have had more people but that the price was a factor.

**FEMALE:** Was it kosher?

**ARLENE:** Eh, I doubt it. It was at the Sahara Space Center.

**FLORA:** It was kind of a fight to get kosher for all the Jewish organizations. They did not serve kosher lunches and stuff when they had those at the hotels and we had to fight to change that. Faye was instrumental, really.

**ARLENE:** In changing that?

**FLORA:** Yeah. There were some things that even had shrimp.

**ARLENE:** It was a different time.

**FLORA:** Not at temple, but other organizations.

**ARLENE:** Now, remember the people involved. Twelve adult women were bar mitzvahed. See, things are kind of slowing down here. The rabbi and the pastor of Griffith Methodist Church traded pulpits for sermons. There would be a joint American Thanksgiving service between the two.

Josh pretty much filled you in. But then the first time the issue of relocating is mentioned in the minutes, about 1992. And then Ed Bernstein was the president. You've seen his ads on television. Still a member of the temple. Everybody in town was a president, maybe my husband at the worst time, but we'll get to it. A five-year planning committee was formed. There were now eight temples in Las Vegas. Many, many unaffiliated Jews, as there still are. Jerry Blut announced that we raised a hundred and ninety-one thousand dollars with a Kol Nidre appeal, ten thousand dollars over the prior year. In the same report, the rabbi at the time stated that, "A mass"—this is his words—"of Jews from California and Palm Springs were moving to Sun City in Summerlin." Anybody here?

**FEMALE:** Not then.

**ARLENE:** Jerry Turb, another member who owned Fitzgerald's Hotel downtown, donated two six-hundred-dollar tickets to Barbra Streisand to be raffled for fifty dollars a ticket. Good stuff really happened. In a survey it was found that most members wanted to stay in the present building. Some withheld a pledge because of the proposed move. A crisis arose.

**RABBI:** What year is this?

**ARLENE:** This is '94. Jerry Blut was the unanimously elected president in '95. I just have to tell you a sidebar. He had never been depressed in his life. He became president of the temple and didn't understand what was wrong with him; he didn't want to get up in the morning. And I

said, "Welcome to nonprofit. This is how it goes. This is what's called depression because I've been a nonprofit my whole life." Go ahead, Jerry. Jerry, they can't hear you. Can you stand?

**JERRY:** So when I became president—I had been on the board a couple of years—we never got accurate financial information. We were told we had seven hundred members, eight hundred. It turned out that half of them either left the place or they were on such reduced dues they weren't paying anything and our financial situation was really dire. So here I take this job and it looks like it's about going under. The first thing, the temple was falling apart. It needed new carpeting, paint. So one of the first things I did is talked nine other people and myself into guaranteeing a two-hundred-thousand-dollar loan we borrowed from the bank. We re-carpeted, painted, and probably used some of it to meet our bills. It was dire.

**ARLENE:** The Sisterhood paid for the heating and air-conditioning repairs in the chapel and the library. The approximate cost was six thousand seven hundred. Bonanza Club paid for the bathrooms downstairs, which was a thousand.

A land search committee was formed. They had been offered two pieces of property by the Summerlin people west of Sahara, about six acres of land at sixty thousand dollars per acre. You heard in the temple that six hundred thousand was left to the temple by Martin Howard. Also, Sherry Sagisman provided a big part of the seed money to move.

At that point, '96, after Jerry collapsed, the first woman president—now we're getting somewhere—Sandy Mallin was elected in '96.

I told you about the initial seed money. At that point with the influx of fine restaurants to Las Vegas, Spago being the first, Sandy and I invited Spago to cater the Sherry Segisman Gala. We were honoring her for her very generous donation. It would be the first gala catered at the temple by an outside restaurant but entirely kosher, the dinner. They did it. The dinner was

designed executed by well-known chef Dave Robbins and the gala raised fifty thousand dollars.

By '96, there had been a rabbi crisis for almost two years. TBS was almost out of money and thirty to forty people were showing up for Friday night services.

Did they tell you that, Rabbi, when you came?

**RABBI:** No, they didn't.

**FEMALE:** Awful smart people.

**ARLENE:** That's how the board was presented with things. In '98, the congregation left its Oakey building—well, I should talk about...Well, that's good—now the new home of United Methodist Church at the time and began to hold services at the Schwartz Hebrew Academy. Two trailers provided office space at the Hebrew Academy, which was then the Schwartz Hebrew Academy. A shuttle service was provided—excuse me. You're going to have to...Two trailers were provided for the staff and office space and a shuttle service was provided to transport people who lived around the old temple to Summerlin, which was terrific. Rabbi Felipe Goodman was hired—under duress—was hired about the time the project was going forward. He began at the Oakey location and was then involved in the move. Under the leadership of Rabbi Goodman, attendance grew to a hundred fifty on a Friday night at the Hebrew Academy. Remember that was from, what, thirty, forty people?

In the fall of '98, President Sandy Mallin and the Architect Brad Friedmutter and Rabbi Goodman spoke at the groundbreaking with over two hundred people in attendance. Temple Beth Sholom held its first Summerlin High Holiday service in '99 at the Resort at Summerlin, packed. The response was overwhelming in attendance and enthusiasm.

**RABBI:** Can I say something?

**ARLENE:** You bet.

**RABBI:** It was Yom Kippur and we took a break and I went to my room to take a nap. I'm walking by the sports book and there's a guy that was probably visiting Las Vegas with a tallit and a cigar watching the World Series.

**ARLENE:** Oh, my God, only in Las Vegas.

**RABBI:** Only Las Vegas.

**ARLENE:** In December of '99, we were the first to honor Carolyn and Oscar Goodman and it was chaired by me and Sandy, Tom Leticia and David Chesnoff. We netted over two hundred thousand dollars. I want to tell you about the video. I don't know where to begin. But as I always say to Oscar, all his clients were there because they were in jail and they all praised the life out of him. They were on the video from jail.

**FEMALE:** From jail?

**ARLENE:** That's where his clients are.

**FEMALE:** Where is the video?

**ARLENE:** Well, that's what Sandy was trying to find. It was called "Tribute, the Evening." And other criminal lawyers very famous came from New York and Chicago. It was fabulous; it really was if I say so myself.

Okay, 2000, the first Shabbat service at the new synagogue in Summerlin drew about a thousand people. That's the service. They moved into the new home on August seventh and a program was created. On September 24th, 2000, Temple Beth Sholom was dedicated at 10700 Havenwood Lane in Summerlin. Monty Hall narrated a program written by Rabbi Goodman. I was in Australia, which is neither here nor there. There is a video; there's a movie. The other bus saw it. Do you want to see it? I don't know where it is or how it works.

**[In the kitchen]**

**FEMALE:** They had it as a school and a school came in, was the kitchen. It was the kitchen, Faye's kitchen.

**FAYE:** Years ago I tried to keep this kitchen strictly kosher and it was difficult to do. I must admit I worked hard and we did a lot of nice things. We did bar and bat mitzvahs. We did weddings. We did special engagement parties and any other type of party. What we were very proud of, the committee that I worked with—Etta Hormel was on the committee with me—we were very proud of the fact that if we as a family needed help, we wouldn't charge. We were just going to get costs. We would have a little fund and we would just put on a function and say, "This is part of our gift to the family." But we really made every effort to reach out to the families so they felt comfortable to ask us to put on a celebration for them. When they named the kitchen after me, I was very proud.

**FEMALE:** And how many children do you feed and how many meals do you feed out of that kitchen?

**FEMALE:** Out of that kitchen...Well, there are six hundred and fifty here. And (indiscernible) carried on the tradition without knowing it because our children volunteer at Three Square. And so because they do that we also give backpacks—

**FLORA:** You must teach them when they're young.

**FEMALE:** Oh, absolutely. We get backpacks for the children that need it on the weekend. Also, around Thanksgiving our children and parents do a food drive and we give away about thirty-five boxes of entire Thanksgiving meals for folks in our area that can't afford it and are not going to have a meal. So our kids really work at it to give back. They come to realize even though they may come from families that are struggling, they always realize that there are people who are struggling more than they are. So they give back. So we carry on that tradition.

**FLORA:** You are teaching them very beautiful fundamental goodness and kindness.

**[End of recording]**