

# **A ROUNDTABLE INTERVIEW WITH MEMBERS OF TEMPLE BETH SHOLOM**

An Oral History Conducted by Barbara Tabach

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The Southern Nevada Jewish Community  
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**This is Barbara Tabach. Today is January 14th, 2015. We are at Temple Beth Sholom.**

**We are doing a round table to discuss the great past stories of this wonderful congregation.**

**Sandy Mallin is going to get us started.**

**SM:** Yes, I'm Sandy Mallin. Again, I want to thank everybody for coming. In this room is the history of Temple Beth Sholom, the people here, the mayor, Jared Shafer. There are a lot of past presidents here. We all have good stories and I hope we'll be able to share them with you. I guess, Oscar, we'll start with you.

**OG:** Hi. I'm Oscar Goodman. I am a criminal defense lawyer by profession and practiced actively here for thirty-five years. The members of Beth Sholom who I represented over the years, they paid quickly and enabled me to keep up with the tuition of this institution. After practicing actively I ran for mayor of Las Vegas and served three four-year terms and made American history; the first time in the United States where a mayor swore in his spouse to succeed them. And my wife, Carolyn, is not with us today. She's busy doing work for the city. It's a shame. She wanted to be here. Her schedule is unbelievable. But I look forward to this experience. I look up at the wall there; I've seen many of these people in post offices.

**JS:** My turn?

**OG:** Jerry, go for it.

**JS:** My name is Jared Shafer. My parents brought me here in 1944, November 14th. I've lived here all my life except going away to school, living in a New York for a short while, living in Hawaii for a short while, living in Acapulco for a short while, and I keep coming back. I have been in this temple all my life. I live at the far end of the east side of town and I come all the way across because it's the only thing I know to be honest with you.

This temple has berthed three other active temples in this community and at one time this

temple was home to every Jew in the valley. I notice from this handout it says, “Non-participating Jews.” I don't agree with that. While these guys were a different breed of person, they were Jewish to the core. They knew it. The Italians that they worked with knew it. And there's no doubt in my mind that these are the guys that actually built Las Vegas.

**JG:** You bet. I'm Joel Goot. I was born into this synagogue on September eighth, 1946. My parents moved here in 1943. Other than being away like Jared in the working world for about eighteen or nineteen years in the '80s, I moved back in 1990 and I've been a member of this synagogue all my life.

**AR:** Arne Rosencrantz. I was born in Portland, Oregon, but moved here when I was four years old. My memories go back a long ways to Sunday school, Hebrew school at Temple Beth Sholom. Part of my life and has been since I've been here. It's been a wonderful place for me to practice my Judaism and for my children and it's a great institution.

**JBl:** My name is Jerry Blut. I came to Las Vegas in the latter part of 1966. I joined the temple probably the following year in '67. I raised three sons, who were all bar mitzvahed here. I've been a very active member of the synagogue for these past—I'm trying to add up the math here; thirty-three and fifteen, fourteen, forty-seven—forty-eight years. At one time I practiced in the same law firm with the mayor, but I wised up at an early time and I went out on my own and practiced law from the late '60s through actually the current time; I'm still working. As I said this temple is a very major part of my life and I continue as long as I'm here to make it a major part of my life.

**JBo:** I'm Jackie Boiman. My folks moved here in 1977 and I used to come here and go to Temple Beth Sholom. I lived on Stony Brook, Long Island. And in 1985, I moved out here. My daughter and myself lived here all these years. I worked for Temple Beth Sholom from 1985 to

1995 as the youth director and office manager. My daughter was one of the first students to go to the Hebrew Academy. She went there for her whole education except the last two years when they closed. And now I work for Touro University, another Jewish organization. I've been there ten and a half years. I work in the administration. I guess this is really the only synagogue that I ever went to. When I left Temple Beth Sholom, I was on the board of directors of Shaarei Tefilla for four years and then I retired and went to Touro to work. I came out of retirement, so I'm working now.

**GG:** I'm Gene Greenberg. I'm probably...I came here in 1976, so I'm one of the shortest tenured at the table. I came here to work at Channel 3 and spent thirty years at Channel 3. I remember coming into Temple Beth Sholom. I had not even gone into the station yet to tell them I was in town and I found Temple Beth Sholom and walked in to find out about joining and Leo Wilner tried to talk me out of joining. "Why do you want to join here?" But I joined anyway. It's been a very great time here. I raised three children, also, two bat mitzvah and a bar mitzvah and two weddings at Temple Beth Sholom that I'm still recovering from. I was honored to serve as president of Temple Beth Sholom for three years. I had more hair at that time. I'll turn it over to Flora.

**FM:** My name is Flora Mason and my husband and I and our three children moved to Las Vegas in April of 1965. So it will be fifty years. We had been in town a month and I went over to the temple, joined and became very active in Sisterhood to start out with and then other temple things. At the time our children went to the preschool, which was known throughout Las Vegas as the best preschool in town. And so there were people that brought their children here from every walk of life, from every denomination. The preschool was a fabulous asset for the temple. My husband, Stuart, who is deceased, was president of the temple at one point. We found that

most of our social life revolved around the temple. We had the Jewish Center Social Club at the time that we moved here and that's where all the social events occurred for the young Jewish couples. We did everything from bowling to picnics up at Mount Charleston; all kinds of things like that.

Then we were involved with USY, United Synagogue Youth, and we did housing for them. One of the most fun things was when they had (Keyness) here, convocation of students from all over the Southwest, everyone would house; members of the community would house the kids. And Stuart and George Katz, also a blessed memory, would do the cooking. The ladies who are not here tonight, but the ladies of Sisterhood who were in charge of the kitchen went crazed that there were men in the kitchen and they would stand there at the door watching to make sure that they didn't use anything wrong. And the kids loved it when the fathers cooked because they liked what they chose to cook. So that was great fun. It's a great place.

**SM:** As we went around the table, I was thinking, Joel, your uncle was on the board.

**JG:** He was president.

**SM:** Was president, rather.

**JG:** My father was on the board.

**SM:** Your father was on the board. And Arne, your dad. Naturally, Stuart. And Flora, you were on the board.

**FM:** Yeah.

**SM:** I went through a lot of the old minutes. Some of them are really funny. They're stories. They're priceless. But, Flora, yeah, you were the secretary.

**FM:** Well, I was the first woman elected to the board. Elected to the board, not as a Sisterhood member. And I took that as a great honor; I did, and served on the board, I think, four years.

**SM:** And Arne's father had a furniture store near the temple and he was on the board. And when I was reading a lot of the minutes, there was about three months of the board deciding which chair to choose for the social hall. And poor Arne's father was bringing samples. It was in vivid detail. So I was wondering does that...?

**AR:** I do not remember that. Unfortunately, I was probably a little too young. But I also served on the board, as you remember.

**JG:** As did I.

**SM:** You did, oh, yes.

**JS:** Did I miss that? Because I tried to get you to join the board?

**AR:** No, I was on the board.

**JS:** When?

**AR:** Well, Herb Kaufman was president for many years, right? So it was during Herb's time.

**JBo:** Actually, Arne and Stuart convinced me to get on the board so I think he could get off.

**JG:** And I served on the board right after this building opened.

**SM:** Correct. Yeah, yeah.

**JBl:** Because I recall, going back to being on the board and then later on president, the turmoil that would occur at these board meetings. Irwin Molasky, who served on the board, he had a great line. He said, "I'd rather do time than serve on the temple board." The individuals we'd have on the board, none of the people here, of course, would argue over the...you can't imagine what they would argue over. And the meetings could go from seven to midnight like they had no place to go.

**FM:** And they would go continue in the parking lot. The meeting would be called, dismissed, and then you'd go to your car and, sure enough, there's two, three, four. The parking lot meetings



were very interesting.

**JG:** They'd be arguing at Foxy's the next morning at breakfast. It never stopped.

**OG:** I'll tell you this. I've represented people before the United States Supreme Court, before the Nevada gaming regulatory agencies and every federal court basically in the country, every state court, and they were picnics compared to the time that I was president of the temple here because it was the most aggravating time that I've ever had in my life. I think they made me serve two years, I think. I blotted it out of my memory to be quite frank with you.

**FM:** Two terms. Two terms, not two years.

**OG:** Four years did I serve?

**FM:** Oh, yeah.

**OG:** Oh, my god, no wonder I am the way I am. I never drank before that and now I'm drinking to excess still from that experience. I was raised to think of rabbis as being spiritual leaders, men of the cloth, holy. And when you get on the board and you see the way the rabbis are acting, you want to pull your hair out. I'm saying to myself, "I hope priests are acting this way because if it's just the Jews, we're in real trouble."

**[Shelley Berkley (SB) enters the room]**

**OG:** Talking about Jews...

**GG:** Fortunately, there was never any conflict between the office staff, rabbi, cantor and executive director. We always got along.

**OG:** Oh, boy. They didn't talk to each other. It was brutal. And they each come to you separately and they tell you their woes. And then the board members, they give you their opinions as to what the rabbis doing. We've had a storied history here of rabbis, too. I got here when Rabbi Gold was the rabbi. Now, he was a very handsome—does anybody remember

him?—charismatic guy.

**JS:** Oscar, you left out one word, naive.

**OG:** Well, I didn't know him as particularly naive. All I know is that in those days the temple was surrounded by such rumors and stories and people who supposedly were involved in murder and frauds. It's a great training ground for a lawyer; I'll put it that way.

**FM:** Well, like the rest of Las Vegas, we had a very dramatic history. And it was dramatic. There were a lot of things going on in this town and the Jewish people and Beth Sholom were very much a part of it.

One of the things I remember when we moved here was what an ecumenical town it was. Everybody helped everyone else. When we had an event at the temple, all the Catholics came and the Catholics helped us, the Protestants, whatever. The same thing there. So it started, I think, in the casinos where the owners were...whatever and they worked together. And it happened with the events at temple. If you needed some money, you went to everybody.

**JG:** And it started years before that. I only can remember what I was told. I think it was 1947. The priest of the Catholic Church on Maryland Parkway—

**JS:** St. Anne's. And that was father...

**JG:** —St. Anne's, came to my father and asked him to help raise the money for the first school buildings. Several months later—

**JS:** Father Ryan.

**JG:** Yes. Several months later there was a function, a luncheon in the Flamingo showroom with Eddie Cantor and my father on the stage and in that two hours they raised all the money needed and that was done.

**JS:** And Father Ryan—Beldon Katleman owned the El Rancho. I was eleven. So that would

make it 1953-ish maybe. I worked at the El Rancho in the summers as a pool boy. My dad worked there, one of the hotel bosses. There was a slot machine. These are old-time slot machines, mechanicals. There was a slot machine in a corner and it always was covered. And Father Ryan periodically would come in the hotel and miraculously the cover disappeared and Beldon would show up, Mr. Katleman, and you would see this going on. He'd be walking around with the father. "This is so-and-so," introducing him. He says, "By the way, Father, that's been a lucky slot machine. Go play it." They had rigged the slot machine, a dime slot machine. And the father would get a role of dimes and put in and always win a couple of hundred bucks just like it was nothing. And my history in my mind reminds me that when he retired they gave him a Cadillac. Now you've got a priest at the Catholic Church driving a Cadillac that came from the Jews on the Strip. There's some interesting—you're right. That's part of what went on in this town in those days.

**FM:** And it was terrific. You wouldn't find it anywhere else.

**JS:** And the preschool, which you liked, was started by Edythe Katz. I had kids and she came to me one day. She says, "You're going to get involved in the temple." "Uh, I'm a member." "No, no, I've got something else for you." "Okay, what am I going to do?"

**FM:** She was very good at that.

**SB:** Yes, she was.

**JS:** "You're going to run the preschool."

**JG:** She didn't ask.

**JS:** I'm going to what? "You're going to run the preschool." All right. So I went in. I walked in the first day to meet the teachers. Lo and behold, all the teachers were Mormon. That's one of the things. One of the teachers, she was our neighbor across the street from us and I never knew

this when we lived on Eighth Place. So for a number of years I ran the preschool.

Then the happy family fight started; we made money and the Sisterhood wanted the money. So I rehabbed the preschools before they got their hands on the money because it was going to disappear and then the school would have no money. They didn't like me for a long time.

Then unfortunately, your husband [Stuart Mason] and Herb Kaufman and a few others said that it was time for me to go on the board. I said, "Fine, I'll go on the board."

**FM:** Why do you say "unfortunately?" That was fortunate.

**JS:** Yeah.

**FM:** It was a good thing.

**JS:** Let me finish the whole—let me finish this line and then you'll see if it—well, I guess it was. But anyway, I went on the board and all of a sudden they came to me and said, "You're going to be the next president." Huh? What? "Yeah, it's your turn." So I became the next president; I think it was '84. At that time there was one synagogue in Las Vegas. This is when the birth of the others started. The minyan and a lot of the synagogue activities were basically run by the orthodox side of the synagogue.

A gentleman died who worked at the Dunes, which was where my father was at that time. All my life I had known this guy and he was always Jewish. In the old synagogue he had seats in the front row for High Holidays, his kids were bar mitzvahed, the whole bit. Never knew anything. He passes away. Come to find out he's not Jewish. And the synagogue had sold him side-by-side graves in the consecrated ground. So they're yelling and screaming. The wife wants him buried and I don't...So I went to the rabbi. Now, that was Rabbi Schneerson and we got him fired.

**OG:** That was the aggravation that I had for four years.

**JS:** You had Schneerson, yeah.

**?:** He was the rabbi when I came to town.

**JS:** Yeah. He was very difficult. And I went to him. But I said to him, I said very simply, “Rabbi”—or was it Lederman?

**JG:** It had to be Lederman then.

**JS:** It had to be Lederman.

**?:** Well, it could have been—no. Because Stuart hired Lederman.

**JS:** Yeah, it had to be Lederman; that's who I got whacked. Anyway, so we went to him and I said, “Rabbi, you're in charge of all religion. I never said you weren't. I need an answer. What would God say? Would God accept this man as a Jew? All his life he lived his life as a Jew. What would God do?” versus what would Jesus do, of course. He had to say the right answer, “God would accept him.” So I went back; we had a board meeting—not a board meeting.

**FM:** (Inaudible.)

**JS:** Yeah. And at that point I had already approved the funeral. And they came off the wall. And I said, “Gentlemen”—and I had the backing of Herb and your husband [Stuart Mason] and most of the board members at the time. I had gone through this pretty good, but I was going to take the heat. I said, “Gentlemen, if you don't like the way we do things, leave.” And they did.

And so the next morning we get a call from Leo. “We don't have a minyan.” I said, “Start calling the board members.” So we all showed up and started the board. At the same time, the national had come down and said that women can make a minyan. So I said from the place as president, “Women are now going to be accepted in the minyan unless this board says no and the rules are there.” So the women came. So we started the minyan and everyone started

showing up at seven something; I don't know what time in the morning. About twenty days into it, you look around and the minyan's got forty, fifty people in it because women were coming. Everyone was coming. It was interesting to see what happened. And that's the change; that's what formed...what's the name, Shaarei Tefilla?

**FM:** Yes.

**JS:** That formed Shaarei Tefilla. And then the other conservative synagogue in Green Valley.

**JG:** Midbar Kodesh.

**FM:** No. Ner Tamid.

**JS:** Well, Ner Tamid first, but they didn't form out of a fight; they just formed. They were reform and they wanted a synagogue, which was good. So we lost them. And then we got into a fight because I appointed a committee to look into moving the synagogue in '84 or five; somewhere in there, all young guys, fathers were in building and all that. And we had two sites, over there and here. That was the only two sites. My biggest enemy, if you really want it, was my mother. We lived walking distance from the synagogue. Also, Eileen Brookman. They were not happy campers with me. So it didn't go anywhere. But while we were doing that the young guys—Gold—oh, the attorney from Lionel Sawyer.

**SM:** Goldstein, Mark.

**JS:** Mark Goldstein. He kept coming to board meetings hammering and hammering, “Make a decision; move out to Green Valley,” blah, blah. And we couldn't make a decision. So they formed the new synagogue. That's how they were formed.

**GG:** Well, I think the Greenspun family gave us land.

**JS:** They gave the land.

**GG:** In Green Valley. We at one time decided to go—

**JG:** They started the whole thing by giving the land.

**GG:** —that way because I followed you in that awful chair.

**JS:** Yeah. They did. But they couldn't—

**GG:** And then I think a lot of the temple membership was out here.

**JS:** Didn't want to go. Well, they had moved out here and I said move out here. I didn't care where we moved. We needed to move. If you look at the demographics of where we were sitting, we were getting encompassed.

**GG:** And I lived a block away, also.

**?AR:** You lived down the street from my mother and dad.

**OG:** There's something about that old temple. It was so great.

**SB:** Loved it.

**OG:** We got here in 1964 and that's the first thing we did is join temple.

**SB:** Us, too.

**OG:** It doesn't matter. There was something about it. And this is a beautiful temple here. This is gorgeous when you walk in. But there was something about that old temple that really represented Judaism as far as Las Vegas was concerned.

**?GG:** I agree.

**SB:** I loved that temple. We also moved here in '64. So I was thirteen years old at the time. I was a kid. And the first thing my father did was go and get a job so he could support his family. The first thing my mother did, of course, in a brand-new town was join the synagogue. This was the only synagogue. It was the center of my life for as long as I can remember. I was involved with USY. I was president of BBG. And you are exactly right. That synagogue meant everything and I'm going through—looking at it through a child's eye, a preteen's eye. But my

whole social life was there.

**?:** As a child the social life definitely was important.

**SB:** It was wonderful. Leo Wilner was a surrogate father. Periodically he would pull me aside. “So how are things going for you?” Have a conversation with me. The beautiful thing about Leo is you know he was asking you that question because he cared how were things going for me. But being a kid and being mentored by some of the people that were sitting in the front of the synagogue, they made a difference in my life. The Greenspuns, the Marshalls, the Molaskys, they took an interest in me primarily because they were going to the synagogue and I was a kid running around the synagogue. To this day we're very close friends. But it started at a young age. High Holiday services were the best days of my life. I couldn't wait to go and see everybody. All the kids in those days, as you will remember, were in the back of the social hall on the stage. There was my social life. There was my dating life. There was everything that was important to me at that time in my life that formed the woman that I am today; it came from Temple Beth Sholom. And I suspect that I am not the only person in town, only adult in town that could be sitting here and saying that.

**OG:** Well, I resisted the move. I really did because there's something about the temple being down at 17th and Oakey, 16th and Oakey. That was a central part of Las Vegas.

**SB:** Yeah, but it's not now.

**FM:** But it was then, but it probably wasn't anymore.

**OG:** I know the demographic change. But I'll never forget how proud I was. I used to walk with Carolyn and the four children. We walked from the Scotch 80 area all the way down to the temple through the Naked City and other the railroad tracks. I was so proud because I had my tallit bag and people would go by and they would honk. And I wasn't the mayor then. I was



representing some pretty rough people. They would honk their horn and they'd wave. I was so proud of being Jewish. On Yom Kippur in particular, the children fasted from my home in Scotch 80 to Winchell's.

**[All laughing]**

**OG:** And then they were so hungry and exhausted they had to have a doughnut. They got their doughnut. We went to the temple. And then Jerry Blut's son and my youngest son, who is now a judge, they went to services for about two minutes and then went out into the parking lot and—

**JG:** Like every other kid.

**OG:** No, not like every other kid, no. These two were juvenile delinquents. They would take the little air things off the tires. Oh, yeah. Oh, at the end of the service they had about forty little air things in their hands. And your son was as bad as mine.

**GG:** Is there a statute of limitations on that?

**OG:** Not on that, no. As a matter of fact, he came by the house today and I told him that I was going to give him up.

**FM:** You checked your tires?

**OG:** Oh, forget about it. No, but there was something about it. I don't know. I guess it's like implosions of buildings here in Las Vegas. We used to do that and now there's a tendency to preserve our history. When I went in there—I think they have some kind of a school there now?

**SB:** Or a church.

**OG:** Whatever it is.

**SB:** It's a church.

**OG:** I think I almost would have rather had it razed than see what's there because there was nothing like those doors. There was nothing like the burning bush that was in front of it. I

remember it like yesterday.

**GG:** Well, the doors are here and the bush is here.

**OG:** It's not the same. It's not the same. This neighborhood is too nice.

**GG:** There was another thing about Oakey that wasn't so good because at one time, and it was during our terms, the skinheads moved into the neighborhood.

**OG:** Right. But that's part of it, though. I mean there is a certain pride about—

**SM:** That's part of it. [Laughing]

**OG:** No. It's the pride of being Jewish. I don't know.

**JBo:** I can tell you I worked there when those skinheads were there and the police were there and we had numbers to call and weren't allowed to open doors. The back doors had to be locked. It was pretty scary working there during that era.

**FM:** No, no. It was time, yeah.

**JBI:** You know what's funny about that? My mother, a blessed memory, who was a very religious woman, she lived two houses away from where the skinheads were. They never bothered her or anything. And she would walk to synagogue on the High Holidays. She lived on Lamplighter off—

**JBo:** We came to work and the rabbi and the cantor's parking spots, there were swastikas on it. At least the police knew what houses it were and told us, “We're on top of it, so don't worry about it.” But we had to go through training and everything.

**OG:** I know. But even up here, during the High Holidays in particular, there were all sorts of police officers out there. Now, they're saying they're directing traffic, but they're looking over the safety of the congregation.

**SB:** But that's all over the world right now.

**FM:** But that's all over the world. That's the whole world.

**JG:** We started that—

**GG:** For the last few years we've had a mayor that's been here on the High Holidays and I think that brought a few more to come out.

**SB:** And a congresswoman. Excuse me.

**JG:** But that was started for a reason in 2011 when the World Trade Center happened. Jerry called me and said, “We need to do something quick.” And we did; we got the security together.

**SB:** We didn't live in the neighborhood. We lived in the apartments on Desert Inn Road and this was our synagogue. I have to tell you. There was nothing I wanted more as a kid than to live in the neighborhood by the synagogue because these were the fanciest homes and I had one picked out that was absolutely my ideal. Now I wouldn't let my dog live in it. But at the time it was the thing you aspired to. All of the people at the synagogue were people you wanted to emulate and be like when you grew up. And I think that was a wonderful example that the adults at the time that were involved on the board, that were president of the board, that were in the minyans, they set the example for those of us who were younger because you wanted to be that. You wanted to do that when you grew up. And I think that was a very good example to set.

**FM:** I wanted to add a story that I think you should know, actually. It's a young man, Bill's friend, fifty-two years old, just passed away, and he was very active in USY and came from a family that didn't have anything. He had a single mother and a sister. His time at Kolod Center, his time at USY were very formative and he often said that. He ended up a huge success. He was a brilliant, brilliant young man, a scientist and an inventor, if you will. When they did the funeral for him, many of the memories that were talked about that the family talked about and that he had talked about in the weeks and months before he died were all at temple, USY, Ruby

Kolod Center. And so when I think of that I think we really made a difference. This congregation made a difference in that life for sure that I know and hundreds and hundreds of other young lives. You.

**SB:** Absolutely. When Eileen Brookman used to walk in, in her splendid (orange), the holidays, I thought I died and went to heaven. I said, "That's what I want to do when I grow up."

**GG?:** You did.

**SB:** I did. I know.

**FM:** There were some negative things.

**OG:** When you say that the truth of the matter is the members of the congregation were special.

**SB:** Yes, they were.

**OG:** They were the leaders of this community.

**JG:** Without a doubt.

**OG:** They were most respected people in the community. They were the bankers.

**JG:** And the leaders of this organization, as well.

**OG:** Right. But they went there and then they were the casino executives. You were just so proud to be sitting there with them.

**SB:** I didn't think anyone else mattered but the people, the congregation at Temple Beth Sholom. That was my world.

**FM:** I'm going to throw a question out. Let's name some of the things that grew out of Temple Beth Sholom in those years. We already mentioned all the other synagogues grew out of us, right?

**SB:** Yes. Oh, yes.

**FM:** And so that's one thing. How about some of the other stuff?

**SB:** The youth groups, the B'nai youth groups.

**AR:** What about bonds? Israel bonds and UJA all started at Temple Beth Sholom, basically.

Kay Wallerstein and Edythe Katz who were at each other; did not like each other very much, two different organizations.

**JS:** Netanyahu came and spoke here. The prime minister of Israel in his twenty-year-age group came and spoke and I remember listening to him speak and I thought, *wow*.

**JG:** That was huge.

**JS:** What a dynamic speaker he was as a young man.

I remember High Holidays. What did we do on High Holidays? Well, the synagogue did two things. It collected money for the synagogue through Kol Nidre and then we got people going up there and doing a bond drive during the holidays. And it was very interesting. We didn't have Federation at the time. It was strictly a bond drive. I cashed in bonds not too long ago.

**JG:** Really?

**JS:** Yeah.

**FM:** And you remember the day of the Yom Kippur War. We were in synagogue and we all remember that. It's like remembering where you were when Kennedy was shot. We were here.

We were at temple.

**SB:** Yes. That's exactly right.

**JB:** The Six-Day War, too.

**SB:** Yes. I remember the Six-Day War.

**JB:** I had just moved here the end of '66. This was '67. I can't tell you how impressed I was with the people that were in that room and raising money. Remember it was just a time—

**FM:** They stepped up to the plate.

**JBI:** You thought Israel based on the news was destroyed; NASA had driven them into the sea.

This was like a day after before you knew what was going on, but it was like Israel was gone.

**JS:** No CNN.

**SB:** Transistor radios in synagogue.

**JS:** One of the turning points at the synagogue came of diversity—or, not diversity, but out of sadness. When Danny Goldfarb passed away. He actually died on the lake, if you folks don't know that. He and Mike Soskin were good friends. Mike Soskin's father was executive over at the—

**FM:** Did you say Danny Goldfarb? No. Danny Kolod.

**JS:** Kolod. Get me confused. Thank you.

**SB:** But I do want to talk about Danny Goldfarb.

**JS:** I am older. So you have to give me—

**FM:** Are you?

**JS:** I think so.

**SB:** Danny Goldfarb used to do all of the candidates' nights. Back in those days—and I was president of Las Vegas BBG. Back in those days that candidates' night, you did not miss it.

That social hall was filled from the stage all the way to the sanctuary. We were an informed group of people. We were interested in everybody. All the candidates came to our candidates' night. It was that important.

I'll tell a very, very quick story. BBG was selling light bulbs and I figured out that it would a very good place to be selling light bulbs on candidates' night when people are in the synagogue and they were. This is when Paul Laxalt and Grant Sawyer were running against

each other. This is just...So we went over to Grant Sawyer and we explained that we were Las Vegas B'nai B'rith Girls and were selling light bulbs and he gave me a five-dollar bill and I gave him five dollars' worth of light bulbs. Paul Laxalt walked by. I gave him the same shtick. "I'm Shelley Levine and I'm the president of BBG and we're selling light bulbs for a fundraiser." And he gave me a twenty-dollar bill and told me to keep the light bulbs and give them to someone else. Oh, my god, I thought that was the greatest thing. And I think that was our twenty-dollar profit.

And I'll give you one more BBG story and then I'll stop. We used to do an annual fashion show in the social hall and we used to get the clothes from Sara's Etcetera. We were all size twos in those days.

**JG:** Size what?

**SB:** A two. So we were doing this. And what we used to do in those days...I wasn't old enough to drive yet, but one of the other girls in BBG was and she had a Corvair. We would go from hotel to hotel, talk to the casino executives and sell them fashion show tickets. We were going from place to place. Caesars Palace just opened. I picked up the phone and I asked to speak to Perlman. I don't know how, but they put me through.

**FM:** Was he there then?

**SB:** It was Perlman or Jacobson; I can't remember.

**OG:** Jacobson.

**SB:** Jacobson, Jacobson.

**OG:** Well, you went through Carolyn. She was their secretary.

**SB:** Oh, you're kidding? Well, she put me through, which is amazing. And I explained. I said, "I'm Shelley," dadada. I said, "I'm president of Las Vegas B'nai B'rith Girls and we're selling

fashion show tickets for our annual fundraiser.” He told me to come up to the suite; this is at Caesars. I go up to the suite and this was a two-story suite with the blue shag carpeting, very fancy, and a white baby grand piano in the living room. He's sitting there and I give him the whole spiel and he starts—

**[Microphone issues; colloquy not transcribed]**

**SB:** So he goes into his pocket. He starts peeling off hundred-dollar bills and putting in...And while he's doing that I'm trying to count the tickets. They were two bucks apiece.

[Demonstrating with hands, counting out tickets] And he said, “Keep it; go ahead; keep it.” He gave me five hundred dollars for Las Vegas B'nai B'rith Girls. But as generous as that was and that was generous, everybody on the Strip was doing the same thing. It was great.

**JG:** You're not lying. My father was asked a lot to do fund raising for whatever reason.

**AR:** Because no one could say no to him.

**JG:** Well, that's true because he wouldn't ask; he would tell, which is what everyone says. But the one thing he had is he could pick up the phone and call the head of every one of the hotels, all of the guys, and tell them how much they were going to give whether it be at the auction; you're going to buy a table for five hundred or buy something for a thousand, whatever. And all the money was raised before the phone calls were done. That's the way this town was. That's what disappeared. That's what made it special.

**JS:** Let's talk about something else the synagogue did and raised a ton of money for the world. The gin rummy tournament.

**JG:** Oh, god, yes.

**GG:** I was told that's how Oakey was built.

**SB:** That's what I was thinking.



**GG:** Because I didn't see it in here. So I was going to ask about it.

**AR:** Well, let me tell you, Jerry, because I happen to remember. The reason they got the idea is my father took Harry Wallerstein to a B'nai B'rith camp in Portland, Oregon, on the coast of Oregon. And they did a gin rummy tournament, the camp, every year, which supported the camp. Harry came back and said, "This is a great idea." And they started it at the temple.

**JS:** Right. And it built.

**JG:** And built and built.

**JS:** And it built and built. And everyone played one of two card games at this time, not poker. They played either gin or Klobiosh. That's a game I do not know.

**FM:** I never heard of it.

**JS:** It's an Eastern European game that all old Jews played. My father was probably the youngest of the group that played it and he was not young.

**JG:** I don't remember that.

**OG:** I think I ate it for dessert.

**[All laughing]**

**JS:** It's a strange game. I used to play it. But that tournament started and it raised a ton of money.

**JG:** You bet.

**JS:** The seven hotels...the story I know is seven hotel owners said, "Don't worry about the cost of the mortgage of the temple; just get it built and make your payments." Basically that's how. Flamingo, Desert Inn, El Rancho, Frontier, Thunderbird, Marion Hicks, Sahara; they all, in essence, said, "Build." These guys that were Jewish knew they were Jewish. They didn't come to synagogue. They gave. They did their part in a different way.

**JG:** They came once a year.

**JS:** No, they didn't even come to high—

**SB:** Oh, yeah, they did. They were all there.

**JS:** Some did. No. Well...

**JBI:** Jerry, you mentioned once a year. The thing that impressed me and I'll never forget this. The Yizkor service that they had was at four in the afternoon. Where I grew up in Tucson and other places, it was ten in the morning or eleven. There was no such thing. But because of the shift, changes—

**JS:** They wanted to get both sides.

**JBI:** —at three thirty in the afternoon—I remember the first time I saw that—these limousines would pull out and everyone looked like Oscar's clients. They'd come out of this and they'd come into the Yizkor service and spend about fifteen minutes. Limousines were just...Do you **remember when they'd come?**

**OG:** Oh, I sure do.

**JBI:** Then as soon as the service was over—

**OG:** It would empty out.

**JBI:** —they were gone.

**JG:** It was that way on Tenth Street, too, before that.

**GG:** Let me fall on that and ask a question of you all that predated me. I also understand that we held Yizkor services in a few of the hotels so that people that couldn't make it to the service...

**FM:** Early on.

**JS:** There were some Yizkor services that were held. Some of the owners had customers coming in from other parts of...

**GG:** Right.

**JS:** And they would ask if we could hold a Yizkor service so that everyone—we couldn't get—first of all, the synagogue was filled to the brim. Nobody was turned away ever in those days.

**JG:** Ever.

**JS:** We just had people standing for Yizkor. It didn't matter. Until the Israelis hit town and then it got a little bit difficult because they thought they were entitled to everything, but that's another story. It goes back a long way, by the way; it's not today. But, no, they did hold them in other hotels.

**JG:** They did.

**JS:** The cantor would go out. The rabbi would go out. It wasn't at four o'clock, though, obviously. It was after. And they'd figure out how to get there because they walked. They lived there. One lived on this side and one lived on that side of the synagogue, so they walked. I don't know how they did it, but they did. Yeah, they did because they were good—and what would happen is you'd get a customer's clients, whatever, from different hotels all going to one of the guy's places, which they hated. Because if you all remember growing up here, one door in and one door out and it was the same door and you had to walk in the casino to get to the hotel and the food.

**JG:** You bet.

**GG:** And I also heard that there would be a tzedakah box at the...for (?) and it was filled with chips.

**JG:** Oh gosh, yes. And it was—

**JS:** Couldn't lift it. Couldn't lift it.

**JG:** It was loaded, loaded with casino chips, yeah.

**JS:** And that was before gaming control said chips have to stay in a hotel; you can't go (?) it.

**JG:** They cashed them. They just cashed them.

**FM:** Otherwise, it's a form of legal currency.

**JS:** They took them back to the synagogue, cleaned them up—no, I take that back. They gave them to the cage manager. He cleaned them up and gave them a pile of cash and they brought it in and put down “gift.” Who knew? Like she said [pointing at SB] just throw money at you.

**SB:** Yes.

**JS:** They threw it at the kids. If you go back to the Kolod Center, that's what defined the youth in this town.

**JG:** You bet.

**SB:** I thought I lived there.

**JG:** We all lived there.

**JS:** And I remember when it was built, even. I wish I did, but I don't. But I remember Danny and I remember Mike—

**FM:** It was in the '70s. It wasn't until—

**JG:** No, huh-uh. Way before that because I was—

**FM:** Well, the big building?

**JG:** Oh, the—no. You're right.

**JS:** The big building was built. But Kolod came, Danny—I don't remember when he got here.

**JG:** The Kolod Center was built in the late fifties because—

**SB:** I was at the bar mitzvah.

**JG:** —I was bar mitzvahed in '59 and the building was there, so...

**FM:** So the gym and all that came later.

**JG:** Yes, much later.

**SB:** I remember the gym from the mid-sixties because that was my time in high school and in BBG, and so I know it was there.

**JS:** Correct. That gave the kids a place to go. It gave us a chance to bring the Catholics kids in. Getting Mormon kids to leave their church was very difficult, but some of them did come over. But the Catholic kids, Saturday nights—in the summer Saturday nights went to Gorman by the pool for dances and some nights—and in the winter they came to the Kolod Center, a bunch of our friends that were Catholic. Meet the cute girls. That's why they went there; that's why they came to us, different girls. Well...

**JG:** But that's right. That was the center of our social life as children.

**SM:** I'm leaving.

**OG:** The chairman is leaving.

**SM:** I'm leaving it in good hands.

**OG:** You're starving, too.

**SM:** The mayor is going to run this meeting.

**OG:** Oh, not me. I'm out of practice.

**JS:** Have you seen him run a meeting?

**[Colloquy not transcribed; Sandy Mallin exits]**

**SB:** Can I just say something about the Kolod Center? Having spent a good part of my youth at the Kolod Center, the friends I made as a kid at Beth Sholom, growing up at Beth Sholom are still my friends today. It doesn't mean that we see each other on a daily basis. Many of them don't live in town anymore. But if we should see each other, if we should meet each other, we could talk for days because there was a kinship and a camaraderie that we formed at the Kolod

Center that if I lived to be ninety and I sincerely hope I do, those friends that I made back when I was a teenager at Beth Sholom will be my friends till the dying day.

**OG:** And there were some real characters who were part of our rabbinical staff and the cantors.

I think of Joe Kohn.

**SB:** Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

**OG:** I mean, poor Joe, his voice went on him in the latter years, but everybody thought he was a fixture around here and nobody would dare say that he shouldn't be up there being the cantor.

**FM:** We used to tease him—

**OG:** I know.

**FM:** —because he would close his eyes when he was davening. And Stuart said to him one day, he says, “Do you have the words written on the inside of your eyelids?”

**OG:** That's very funny.

**FM:** But he felt that the passion of his prayers.

**OG:** Right. And then Simon Bergman, of course, he was here for many, many years and worked with my three boys and my daughter on their bar mitzvahs and bat mitzvahs.

**SB:** My two kids, too. My two kids, too.

**OG:** Did a great job with them. And the nice part about it is I have a daughter-in-law now who's on the board and she just loves it and then her children come here every Friday night and her husband. My older son, he comes here every Friday and they just love it. There's something about this temple that really makes you feel very, very proud and very, very good about being Jewish.

**SB:** There was...at High Holiday services I could almost—because I was sitting in the back—I could identify and I still have in my mind's eyes where people were sitting. After Etta Hormel

passed away, we got her temple seats, were the first seat in the sanctuary. And now our seats are in the first row of the sanctuary. So I could say hello to everybody walking in.

**OG:** That's true. That is clear. I'll tell you.

**SB:** That is true. But...it's true.

**OG:** I never saw anybody like Shelley when they call her up to the Torah. She bows. She curtsies. She goes like that. I never saw anything like it. It was like a siren that goes up there with you.

**SB:** If that wasn't so true, I would take some offense, but it is true. Now you made me lose my train of thought.

**OG:** I tried to. I tried to.

**JG:** But let me tell you something. You're right. Because I remember sitting and you could look across the—

**JS:** And know where everyone was.

**JS:** —and know who was sitting in what seats.

**SB:** Oh, they're late. Oh, my god, it's ten o'clock and they aren't here.

**JS:** Absolutely.

**SB:** And I'll tell you something. The Obers, Hal and Dee Ober were very, very close friends and they were wonderful to my kids. Every year my kids would—and Sam had the last bar mitzvah at the old synagogue. But for years when we came to High Holiday services, one of the first things they did was walk over to the Obers to acknowledge them, kiss them hello. After they passed away—and then, of course, in the new synagogue they did the same thing. It was just a tradition; the first people they went to say hello to were the Obers. To this day we still look over where the Obers used to sit because it was something that...they were there.

**FM:** Someone mentioned Etta Hormel. And she was wonderful. But I have to say something about Sara, Sara Saltzman.

**SB:** I loved her.

**FM:** She was amazing. She was everybody's grandmother.

**SB:** Yes, she was.

**JS:** The two of them complimented each other because one went with this and one went that way, but they always came together and that was what made—

**JG:** You bet. You bet.

**FM:** They were wonderful women. Wonderful women.

**GG:** Sara was probably the one person of established synagogue that just went out of her way to make Melanie and I feel welcome when we first got here.

**FM:** Yes, yes.

**AR:** Gene, Sara went out of her way to make everybody feel that way including children at Sunday school and Hebrew school.

**JG:** And it didn't matter whether she liked you or not. If you were in temple...no, seriously.

**SB:** How would you know?

**JS:** Yeah, exactly.

**GG:** What? She may have not liked you? Is that what you're saying?

**JG:** Well, as a matter of fact—oh, never mind.

**JBo:** I know that when I first moved here, my daughter was six years old. And working at the synagogue, she would go to school and come back to the synagogue and sit in my office until it was time to go home at night and do her homework and fall asleep on the floor in my office. But every Friday Etta Hormel would take her home with her for dinner and bring her back on Friday



night for Shabbat services. When she was up on the bimah saying the prayer, she always did to light the candles and then she would go down—or she would go to the back of the bimah and give Isabel a hug and then she would run down and give Etta a hug. And then she did what I find was very nice, was one night she said the wrong prayer. She was doing the HaMotzi by mistake and she was very embarrassed. And Rabbi Lederman, he didn't make anything wrong of it so she should feel bad. But I thought that was kind of nice.

I have to tell you as an employee of the synagogue, the youth committee, the youth department committee was always good to me. They gave me everything I wanted for the students—the kids that were here, rather, not students. I say students because I work for Touro University. So they're not kids; they're students. USY used to do a tour every year. And the kids from the East Coast would come out here during the summer on a bus tour. So one year we did casino night here where we took all the Monopoly money and we put Rabbi Lederman's picture on the money and Rabbi Bergman's pictures on the money. And I went to all the hotels and spoke to Burton Cohen and to the pastors; I mean all of them, and they were giving me stuff like crazy for that night for the kids. So we had phony money, but they could win all the tchotchkes that the hotels were giving away. They gave us the tablecloths from the blackjack tables and everything and we set them up. I could just tell you that they did with the best intentions, the goodness in their hearts. There wasn't anything that they wouldn't do for the youth. I never really got a chance to thank them, but in my heart I thank them. It was great.

**JG:** The Burton Cohens of the world knew that they would benefit.

**JBo:** Oh, absolutely.

**I do have one question to interject here now that's Sandy's not here. Actually, I wanted to do this while she was here. She was the first female president. Talk about that; the**

**selection. How did you all get chosen to be president or talked into it? I mean you talk about it in such glowing terms.**

**GG:** We missed the meeting that they voted.

**OG:** We were conscripted.

**Well, how did you finally decide to select a woman?**

**JS:** I wasn't on the board when that happened.

**JG:** It was a board decision.

**JS:** It was a board decision from the board. But here's an interesting thing. And I don't know how many people are going to throw things at me when I say this. This synagogue would not be standing here if it was not for Sandy.

**SB:** I agree with that.

**JG:** Without a doubt.

**SB:** There's no question about that.

**JS:** Nobody could walk up to everyone on that Strip no matter who it was and say I need ten; I need fifteen; I need thirty-five; I need a hundred thousand dollars for the new synagogue. Unbelievable.

**JG:** During that period of time in Las Vegas, the Strip was not what it was when we were talking about the old days.

**SB:** That's exactly right.

**JG:** That the owners would just reach in.

**FM:** But now it was corporate.

**JG:** The 1980s and early '90s was a whole different period of time.

**JS:** Howard Hughes ruined it.

**JG:** Yeah. And these corporations were not giving out money easily. But when Sandy went there and pushed, they didn't push back. They reached in their pockets.

**SB:** It was more—I don't want to make it sound like Sandy did a great job because she was a good fundraiser. Sandy literally held this place together when there were many who felt its time had come and gone. And without her belief that Temple Beth Sholom was relevant and could be relevant and had a future ahead of it, we would not be sitting here today in this very nice conference room in a beautiful synagogue. So say what you will about Sandy, for my money I would elect her president of anything. She was great.

**JG:** She grabbed people and involved them.

**SB:** Yes, she did.

**JG:** I moved back to town in 1990. And in 1991, I went to services with my mother. And a week later Sandy was on the phone saying, “I need to talk to you.” She had me.

**FM:** I can tell you a story that my son Jim told me just this past week. Jim and Bill were fortunate enough to build this building and they consider that one of the best things that ever happened to them because they were so proud that they could build the temple that they love.

Anyhow, he was talking about how Sandy would come. They had the trailer out there, the construction trailer. And Sandy would come very often during the week, at least once a day with someone in tow. And she would come into the construction office, get a couple of construction hats, and walk the job site with her prospect. And by the time she came back to turn in the hats, she had her arm around them and they're shaking hands. She would make the sale. She closed the deal.

**JG:** And she had sold that window or that whatever it was.

**FM:** She closed the deal. And she did that all the time.

**OG:** She also closed the deal with Rabbi Felipe Goodman.

**SB:** Yes, she did. Yes, she did.

**OG:** We were having dinner with him and his wife, Leez, Carolyn and myself over at Piero's and telling him about Las Vegas and why he should move here and what a great town this is. I say but for her and Stan, he may not have come here. And I think he's been a great rabbi. You can't understand a word he says.

**SB:** Nah.

**OG:** But I think he's a good rabbi.

**SB:** It took me about ten years.

**How have you kept him? He's by far the longest standing rabbi, right?**

**OG:** His last name is Goodman; that's why.

**[Colloquy not transcribed; all speaking at once]**

**JS:** He's the longest serving rabbi here at this temple. **JG:** Oh, he is?

**GG:** Akselrad?

**JS:** No, Goodman.

**JG:** Goodman.

**GG:** My wife and I, Melanie, we were at—I won't name it—we were at another synagogue in town that had just opened.

**JS:** When?

**GG:** Just very recently out here.

**JS:** Oh, I see.

**GG:** And this is a compliment to Sandy because as we were sitting there Melanie looked around the sanctuary—we were in the sanctuary—and I said, “When you sit in here and look around,

there's one thing you know for sure; Sandy had nothing to do with building this place.” What can I tell you?

**SB:** She saw the big picture and the little picture. I mean she is meticulous when it comes to detail. And also, it takes time and she was willing to give the time that was necessary to do something well.

**JS:** Give her husband credit.

**JG:** You bet.

**JS:** Give him credit. He allowed—that's a terrible word to say.

**JG:** But he allowed.

**FM:** No, he encouraged. He encouraged.

**JS:** Not allowed, he supported it. He supported it all the way through and he knew where she was going.

**JG:** He always had a smile on his face about it.

**JS:** Oh, yeah. How she became president, we weren't—I wasn't involved. I don't know if anyone here was on the board. But it's the single—it's another one of those critical points of life.

**JG:** I wasn't in town at the time during that process.

**JS:** You weren't there.

**JG:** But I've got to believe that because things were falling apart in the organization and people were leaving the temple that Sandy was one of the few that was willing to stand up and say, “I'll do whatever it takes.”

**SB:** Absolutely.

**JS:** But the problem was—that's one thing. But the problem was the synagogue was down there.

**JG:** Right.

**JS:** The Jews had all moved out here and up into Green Valley and they didn't want to join...too many people have been in this synagogue, like me, like him [JG], forever. This is our own life, like this one [SB]. It's our only life in Judaism. Where do you go? So they moved it. She just was the right person at the right time. I don't think it had a...I don't know what their thoughts were. I don't think any of us will ever know what they were thinking. Someone probably thought, *let's give it to a woman; she can screw it up pretty good.*

**SB:** I don't think that. That's nonsense.

**FM:** No. They would say if they have a hard job, give it to a woman.

**JS:** Well, I agree with that, but I also think—

**SB:** I think nobody else was willing to take it.

**JS:** —I think some guys are arrogant as hell when it comes to things like this.

**JG:** You think?

**JS:** You think.

**Do any of you know the ritual of moving the synagogue from one location to this one?**

**JS:** The physical ritual?

**Yeah.**

**JS:** It's a big deal.

**Talk about that.**

**JG:** I'm sure it is.

**JS:** Can't. I don't have enough—

**FM:** Did they walk the Torahs?

**JS:** No.

**FM:** They didn't walk the Torahs?

**JG:** No.

**JS:** Couldn't.

**FM:** I can't remember.

**GG:** It was a move. You just had to be careful with—

**What would you do with the Torahs?**

**GG:** —with the sacred objects, like the Torahs and the prayer books.

**JS:** Were you gabbai then?

**GG:** No.

**SB:** I'll tell you what I do remember, when all of us signed—it was one—it must have been a Sunday afternoon or late morning and we were all here to sign the inside of the dome before they put the dome on top of the synagogue. I drive by because I drive down Town Center going to work and coming home from work. And I have to tell you, every time I drive by the synagogue, it gives me tremendous pleasure to know that my name is written under that dome. It is just...And it was a wonderful day.

**GG:** Yeah, it was a great event, a great thing.

**SB:** You just signed your name and there it was.

**JS:** The orthodox would have walked.

**GG:** Flora just mentioned about her boys, her sons built the temple. I was real honored. One of my daughters was the first wedding in Temple Beth Sholom.

**FM:** Oh, yes, she was.

**JS:** There were a few firsts in this building.

**GG:** After it opened. Well, before it opened. Actually, when it opened. And when we set the

date for the wedding, all there was here was rocks and a sign that said, "Future home of Temple Beth Shalom." And we set the date one year later.

**JG:** Boy, that was guts.

**GG:** And these guys did such a great job. Melanie said that the foreman had on the clipboard a piece of tape that said, "Greenberg wedding, August 15th."

**FM:** They did. They knew they had to have it done. They knew they had to have it done for that wedding.

**AR:** That was amazing.

**GG:** The Thursday before the wedding, Jim Lukasavage, who is a member of the synagogue and who was the guy that was the liaison between Taylor and the temple, called up Melanie and said, "Could you come up to the temple?"

**JS:** The first thing she thinks of is uh-oh.

**GG:** Yeah. And it was an uh-oh. And we walked in and he let us know that the seats in the sanctuary weren't here. The seats were made in Colombia and they were at this point held up in Houston in customs and may not make it here in time because this was Thursday; the wedding is on Sunday. The chairs that are like these chairs that are in the social hall, because of the slant of the sanctuary, would have just slid down to the front. We really didn't know what the heck we were going to do. But someone was able to get them released from customs. And again, the Taylor crew worked twenty-four hours a day and got these things bolted down.

**JS:** They were bolting them down, if I remember correctly, on Saturday. They were doing it Saturday.

**GG:** When we look at the wedding pictures, the sanctuary is completely different because none of the color is there. It's very stark.



**JG:** Oh, it couldn't have been at that point, yeah.

**FM:** But the windows weren't done.

**GG:** So that's one of my memories of the place.

**How about some other memories?**

**JS:** How about this one? How was a bar mitzvah done in 1955? Mine was done in the old synagogue down on Carson Street. Now, who catered it? Anyone want to guess? The mothers. So what happened was—

**JG:** Of course. Of course, they did. They cooked at their home and brought it over.

**JS:** They cooked at—no, they cooked there. They baked at home; they cooked there. So the synagogue was one room this big, big room, but it was one room. The kitchen was in that corner. So what would happen is they'd set all the chairs up. We had a bar mitzvah. I passed out. It was mine. And if it wasn't for Mory King, I would have hit the floor.

**JG:** But nobody knows Mory King.

**JS:** Well, yeah. But anyway, then afterwards everyone went outside. This was in November.

**JG:** That's right. Went outside on the grass.

**JS:** It wasn't exactly warm, but everyone went outside. Thirty minutes later the place was set up with round tables. I think it was round. Maybe it was long. I don't remember. And all the women had done all the cooking, all of it. The whole back of the—there was two rooms. The kitchen was there and—

**JG:** There was a little, tiny room where we had Sunday school.

**JS:** —a little one over there where you had Hebrew school—or Hebrew lessons in the afternoon. They were full of food and they brought it out and the women did all the work. That's how it was done in those days. There were no caterers in Las Vegas in those days or

anything like that. And guess what? These women could cook. His mother, my mother, that age group—

**JG:** You bet.

**JS:** —they could cook.

**JG:** They were all taught by their mothers to cook.

**GG:** And that evolved to the Sisterhood doing all the catering for a while.

**SB:** That's exactly right.

**JG:** There was no Sisterhood back then.

**JS:** Sisterhood didn't do the catering then.

**FM:** It evolved into it.

**JS:** That's where it—yeah, that's how it evolved.

**JG:** Yeah, probably, probably.

**GG:** Because they probably became the Sisterhood at some point.

**AR:** Jerry, my bar mitzvah was at Temple Beth on—

**JS:** Sixteenth?

**AR:** No. On Oakey. But we still owned the building on 12th or 13th Street and we had the party at 13th Street. And the women of the community—that was in the early sixties and they prepared all the food.

**JS:** Did they?

**AR:** Yeah, they prepared all the food and it was—

**JS:** Since I was older, I didn't get (inaudible).

**GG:** We hadn't sold it to the Greeks yet.

**AR:** No, not yet. I have to tell a story about Elizabeth Taylor and Eddie Fisher's wedding

because I was at Hebrew school and it was a very big day for me. I didn't know it was going to be a big day. I mean there I was at the wedding. They emptied the Hebrew school out. For some reason they just said everybody had to leave the building and this big limousine—we were in, I guess, the children's area, the play area or whatever it was. And this big limousine came up and a couple went in. They had their service. We saw them come out and we left. I came home and I said to my dad, “This is the best day I ever had at Hebrew school.” And he said, “Why?” I said, “Because there was a wedding there and we didn't have to participate in Hebrew school for the whole day—for the whole afternoon because there was a wedding.” I guess I had a clue who it was, but that was about it. I wasn't very old; I was maybe ten at the time. It was great.

**JS:** This was the center of Jewish life if you came to Las Vegas and were Jewish.

**SB:** Absolutely.

**JS:** There was no question. It didn't matter who you were. And like I said, Sammy Davis sang Kol Nidre. He was a convert.

**FM:** She didn't hear that.

**I didn't know—he actually sang the Kol Nidre?**

**JS:** He sang the Kol Nidre.

**JG:** Yes. Then he slept on his seat; he fell asleep for the remainder of the service. He was in the third row.

**JS:** Yeah, he did. It was probably one of the most beautiful things. I remember that. I remember watching Sammy Davis, Jr., when he was the Will Masterson Trio [Will Mastin Trio] and they were on stage in the lounge at the El Rancho when I was eleven. His uncle was Will Mastin—Masterson.

**JG:** Will Mastin.

**JS:** Or whatever. It was his uncle and his dad and him. He lost his eye from here to L.A.—or L.A. to here, one of the other.

**JG:** In the middle of the night—

**JS:** In the middle of a night in a car accident. But I watched this man. And this town—well, I'm going to say some things—this town was a southern town growing up. It was segregated to the hilt.

**JG:** You bet.

**JS:** The only black community was on the Westside. It was a thriving community with its own gambling and everything like that, stores, everything. It was a good community. The only blacks you saw in the hotels worked there. My dad had many, many different traits and one of them was he was an athletic trainer and he was a masseur. At one time he owned the health clubs at the El Rancho, the Flamingo, the Desert Inn. He built the one at Caesars. He had one down at the Pioneer Club. We built the last one at the Fremont Hotel while the bombs were going off. So we used to sit on top of the Fremont Hotel and watch the bombs.

But he had a nice black guy working for him. This was at the Last Frontier. He was the towel boy, shoe shine guy; that kind of stuff. One day a guy came in and said, “Clean my shoes up.” Well, Lloyd had never seen suede shoes, so he polished them. So Dad bought a new pair of shoes for the guy. And then Dad trained him to become a masseur. He ended up being the premier masseur in Las Vegas at the Desert Inn and that was something. That was after the Fremont.

And the Fremont was owned by Eddie Torres and Eddie Levinson. Eddie Torres was a Sephardic Jew. He was darker than you are, ma'am. You wouldn't have known the difference whether he was Negroid—

**JG:** You bet.

**JS:** —what he was. But he was an amazing guy, but hated everybody.

**SB:** He was a nasty guy.

**JS:** He was a very nasty man.

**FM:** He knew my family. He grew up downstairs from my family.

**JS:** Really?

**FM:** Yeah.

**JG:** Really?

**JS:** Well, you know who his daughter is.

**SB:** Yeah. I got—well, any who. One of the things I remember about Beth Sholom was the synagogue used to put on shows that people would participate in and Stan Irwin, when he was president—

**JG:** You've got to talk about Stan.

**SB:** —was in charge of the productions. And everybody participated. The Sisterhood did their act and the men's club did their act. USY did our act and BBG did its act. And it was amazing. But here was this man who was bringing the Beatles into Las Vegas. But in his role as president of Temple Beth Sholom, he had a responsibility to our community and put on some extraordinary shows. I remember participating in them as a kid and just thinking this was great. There was Stan Irwin. You couldn't do better than Stan Irwin producing a show and he did it.

**JG:** For those of you who don't know who he was, he was the entertainment director for the Sahara Hotel from the time it opened—

**JS:** And...? Keep going, keep going.

**JG:** And what?

**JS:** And...?

**AR:** Johnny Carson Show.

**JG:** Oh, Johnny Carson Productions.

**JS:** And he brought Carson to Vegas and became the producer of the “Tonight Show” first period of time.

**JG:** Exactly. That's when I was living in New York. So I should remember that. So he knew what he was doing with that. So his part in his mind with the temple was we'll always have a star there. We'll always have somebody performing. We'll always...

**FM:** And do you remember Art Engler?

**JG:** Of course.

**FM:** He acted in everything.

**JG:** Exactly. He was an actor.

**FM:** He was one of the...the group of kids...oh, my gosh.

**?:** The East Side gang, one of those?

**FM:** No. Another little boy thing. He was Sparky. His name is Sparky or something.

**JBo:** “Our Gang?”

**JG:** Our gang. Yeah, Sparky.

**FM:** I think it was.

**JS:** Little Rascals, our Gang.

**FM:** No, he was “Our Gang.” He was in “Our Gang” when he was a little kid. He had big, big eyes. Anyhow, so he acted in many of the plays that we put on at temple.

**SB:** It was just really terrific.

**Who are some of the other names that we need to make sure we mention?**

**AR:** Well, I think Jack Entratter is a name that probably we should.

**JS:** Jack Entratter was president.

**AR:** He was president for many years.

**SB:** Many years.

**JS:** All his life.

**SB:** Jerry Mack.

**JG:** And Jack Entratter was president of the Sands.

**SB:** Herb Kaufman.

**JG:** Jerry Mack, his family. The Mack family started this synagogue it shows in these forms and Jerry stayed in involved always.

**JS:** Nate Mack was his uncle.

**JG:** No, Nate was the father.

**JS:** Nate was his father.

**JBo:** I noticed in here one of the rabbis...there was a Rabbi Appel was here, wasn't he?

**JS:** Rabbi what?

**JBo:** Appel. I didn't see his name here.

**FM:** I think we need to go through the whole...it's actually there's some of them that are wrong.

So we'll have to go through that.

**JS:** The problem is a lot of records were lost.

**We'll get that all updated.**

**FM:** Art Engler was president for many years. He has since passed away. But he owned—

**JG:** Who are you talking about?

**FM:** Art Engler.

**JS:** Artie.

**JG:** I mean you can look at these pictures and it tells a lot of the story. Look at the wall out here. It tells a lot of the stories. There are things in the rooms in there on the walls and awards that tell the stories of the time.

**JS:** One important name would be Greenspun.

**FM:** Oh, absolutely.

**JG:** Greenspun family was involved in starting the temple. They moved here in 1944.

**JS:** Right.

**SB:** One of the most touching funerals I've ever been to was Hank Greenspun's funeral here.

**JS:** Yeah, it was hard.

**SB:** What I loved about it is here was a man who was a lion. He was as big as you get. And yet, it was the most profoundly personal funeral that I've ever been to where they truly talked about the man, his family remembered him. And it was a beautiful funeral and that was something I'll never forget. Lloyd Katz's also, a beautiful funeral.

**GG:** Now, Lloyd was kind of—to follow what Jared was saying before. Lloyd was one of the first businessmen in town to integrate, right?

**SB:** Yes.

**GG:** He took his theaters—

**SB:** His movie theaters downtown.

**JS:** Yeah, he did the...not The Palace.

**FM:** The El Portal.

**JS:** What was the one called—the Fremont.

**JG:** The El Portal and the Fremont.



**JS:** Fremont. He didn't own the El Portal. That was Kareskesie or whatever their name was. He owned the Fremont and when we went to—

**FM:** And the Guild.

**SB:** The Guild, yes.

**AR:** The Palace and the Huntridge.

**FM:** Huntridge.

**JS:** He owned the Huntridge. He owned the one where the—I just said it and forgot its name. On the side street there was one.

**FM:** That was the Guild.

**AR:** That was the Guild or Palace.

**JS:** No. It was the name before the Guild.

**AR:** It was the Palace.

**JS:** The Palace. Thank you.

**AR:** The Palace and then it was the Guild.

**JS:** Then it was the Guild. He integrated downtown. The Fremont had a balcony. And when we went with the maid, we sat upstairs. He integrated that. The Jews integrated Las Vegas. Let me make it very clear.

**JG:** You bet.

**JS:** Nobody else did. It was the Jewish community. I remember I was... '64, whatever I was. I parked cars at the Dunes Hotel. I remember I was parking cars and I saw a black couple drive up. And I'm watching this one. The two adults—I'm a kid still; I'm sixteen or seventeen—the two adults' car parks. Knew what was going on. They knew this was going to happen, evidently. Jumped up, got the keys, parked the car. A man and wife—or boy and girl, whatever

they were—they walked in the front door and I thought, *wow, life did change*. And from that point on...

My father was also tied to the Dunes quite tightly. He brought the first black convention or tour group into Las Vegas. It was a group of—it was one of two groups and I'll be damned if I can remember the name. It was either insurance guys out of Chicago or it was the Coca-Cola distributors out of Long Island; I don't remember which. But he booked that in and all his partners except for Major Riddle were Jewish. All the bosses were Jewish. They were giving him such a wrath of crap because they didn't know what was going to happen. I remember Dad came home and he was frustrated as hell with Sid Wyman. Sid Wyman was six foot six and three hundred and eighty pounds if he was an inch. He was the biggest guy in the world. And his partner—

**JG:** He was a monster.

**JS:** And his partner was a guy named Charlie Rich. They were both bookmakers out of St. Louis before they came here. And he was five foot eight.

**JG:** He was this little guy.

**JS:** You talk about Mutt and Jeff. Anyway—

**SB:** Something else that I remember about—

**JS:** Let me finish. Let me finish, Shelley. These guys were given—they had such a wrath of crap. And Dad said, “Look, guys what's the color you care about the most?” And they stopped to think. He said, “They just stopped dead in their tracks.” And the color is easy; it's green. That's all they ever cared about. They didn't care where they got it from. That convention turned out to be a bunch of the classiest guys you ever, ever saw in your life. I worked them and they were great.

**Well, if we can get back to—**

**SB:** Actually, Beth Sholom.

**—Temple Beth Sholom history...**

**SB:** Another thing that I remember, I was part of confirmation class of 1965, I think. Of course, we come to the classrooms at the old Beth Sholom synagogue and all of the classrooms were named after somebody. I knew their children. Their children were sitting next to me. They were kids that were going. Al Benedict, Gale Kohn. Their names were prominently displayed on the wall. They gave the money to build that classroom. I thought that was pretty special, too, because you were putting the names, very important people in this community, so you knew them. You knew them as people and then you saw what they were contributing to our synagogue, to our people. That made obviously a lasting impression on me, as well.

**What's the future? In our last few minutes, what's the future of the synagogue?**

**JG:** It's going to be here—this organization will be here forever. Whether it will be in this building or not, nobody knows because after a while buildings get old. But this organization has been around for the life of the city. There's no reason to believe it's going to change.

**Does anybody have any other thoughts on it?**

**GG:** Well, yeah. I think the congregation is growing.

**SB:** It's different from when we first started.

**GG:** Right.

**SB:** It's evolving.

**GG:** When you come to certain events and on some Friday nights and all that and you look around and you see the young families, it makes you feel pretty good when on Friday nights the rabbi calls all the kids up to the bimah and on some nights there's just no room for another kid up

there. That's good.

**JG:** That's what was missing when they decided to move.

**GG:** Our rabbi, we've talked about before. Rabbi Goodman is doing great things here. He's a leader in the conservative movement outside of just the temple.

**SB:** He's nationally known.

**GG:** He is. I mean here's a guy that was invited to the White House twice to meet with the president on Israel. He gave the invocation on the House floor thanks to—

**FM:** Shelley.

**SB:** That was special.

**GG:** Yes. I mean he's really...the way he's known nationally helps us a lot. I mean we get...people move here and they know about him and they want to come.

**SB:** Can I say something else about Rabbi Goodman? He's very active in reaching out to the African-American communities here. I know he's very good friends with Reverend Fowler and a number of other reverends, pastors. They have more than a passing relationship. It's a “go out to lunch” relationship. I think that's very healthy for the Jewish community. He also, because of his Hispanic roots because he's from Mexico, he has a very, very good relationship with the Hispanic clergy and reaches out and that's important for us, as well. The Jewish community percentagewise is very small and the Hispanic community is growing. I think it's important for us to reach out and have relationships with other communities. You never know when you're going to need these relationships and you don't form them the day you need them. I think the rabbi has gone out of his way and has reached out to the community to cultivate friends on behalf of the Jewish community and Temple Beth Sholom with the Hispanic community, with the African-American community, and wouldn't be surprised with others as well. That's important

for us. And it's something that I suspect most of our congregants don't even know, but I've seen it and I appreciate it a lot.

**FM:** I see it. He's very good.

**GG:** He's also the evangelical community he's very close with at this point.

**SB:** Yes, he is because of his—

**FM:** And he's had an imam come and speak. That worked out very well. Yeah. No, that's been good.

**SB:** And Pastor Hagee.

**The Kristallnacht ceremony that was held here that he kind of organized and all that that was very moving. It was really nice.**

**FM:** It was wonderful. We have a wonderful war saw ghetto garden here, a memorial garden. I see nothing but good things for the future. It's a congregation that's very stable. I'm not saying it's going to be huge because the way the city is now there are so many different congregations. I don't see it being a thousand family congregation. Who knows, though? But I do see it being strong.

**JG:** Without a doubt.

**FM:** I see it being very strong.

**JS:** The last time I saw a count there were twenty-one congregations in Las Vegas alone. That's...

**JG:** And twenty-five years ago there were two or three.

**SB:** Thirty-five years ago there was one.

**GG:** But still with all the congregations that are in town, how spread out they are and all, Beth Sholom is still the go-to place.

**SB:** It's the mothership. There's no doubt about it.

**GG:** Nobody runs for office without coming here.

**FM:** That's it. That's a good word, mothership, yeah.

**GG:** Nobody does anything that concerns the Jewish community with checking in—taking the pulse of Temple Beth Sholom and seeing how we feel about it.

**FM:** Certainly, Ner Tamid is like that with the reform community.

**?JG:** Yeah, they're strong.

**FM:** Very strong. I'm actually very thrilled that they're so strong because they're our people and it's good. The ones who formed that temple were from us. So that's good.

**Well, I do look forward, just so you know, in March I just set a date with Carol that Rabbi Goodman is going to give me his personal oral history.**

**SB:** Great. That's good.

**FM:** That'll be interesting.

**So I look forward to hearing him talk about his history. He couldn't be here tonight.**

**GG:** Rabbi Goodman, is it? Will you have a translator with you?

**SB:** Tell him to talk slowly.

**I need to brush up on Hispanic accents.**

**FM:** You'll do fine.

**I'll be fine.**

**GG:** We say these things in front of him.

**No, I know.**

**JG:** And he doesn't appreciate them then, either.

**FM:** No, actually he's totally understandable in a small group. It's only from the bimah

sometimes that you need those little hearing things just to clarify the pronunciation. That's okay, too.

**SB:** Actually, when Rabbi Goodman first came, I think for the first few years I didn't understand a word he said to me and I nodded politely and said a word or two in between his sentences.

**JG:** I think we all did the same thing.

**SB:** But—I'm sure of that.

**JS:** My mother, it killed her.

**SB:** But the longer I actually listened to what he had to say and I realize what a gem he is for us and has been for us.

**GG:** His sermons are—

**SB:** Excellent. He gets better with every passing year. We're very lucky to have him.

**That's good. Any last thoughts each of you may have to share?**

**JS:** We get a chance to edit this, right?

**Pardon? You do what?**

**JS:** I said we get a chance to edit everything we've said?

**Absolutely not.**

**JS:** Thank you. I just want to—that's fine.

**No. The round tables we don't. We will transcribe it and we will do editing with the video. We really appreciate you letting us videotape this. It makes it easier to transcribe. And we are going to be using...the video is done in broadcast quality. We are capturing parts of other round tables and activities that we do so that we can tell this whole story of the Jewish history of Las Vegas.**

**I have to say that as a person who came into this project August first, I did a lot of**

**research. I listened to some of your stories. I never converted. I am Jewish by identity. I have Jewish children and a husband. So I am part of the community in that way. It's really interesting to hear the stories about how this community grew and the roots of Beth Sholom. And I really appreciate hearing it and that you've given us your time.**

**JS:** Are you doing all the synagogues?

**Eventually I will do Ner Tamid and Midbar Kodesh and I think there's one other that we've—**

**JS:** Are you going to do a chabad?

**I have interviewed Rabbi Harlig already.**

**SB:** I love him. I love him.

**Yeah, I learned so much that day. My husband has relatives who practice that way, but they don't really like talking to me. So it was like—but he really taught me a lot.**

**JS:** Which Harlig?

**SB:** Shea, of course.

**Shea, yeah.**

**JS:** Okay. I want to make—well, there's two of them.

**SB:** Right. He's Menu's brother.

**GG:** I thought there were seventeen of them.

**SB:** When he first came to Las Vegas, he called. I was working at the Sands at the time and he called to come up and see me. So, of course, I would never say no to a rabbi. I said, “Of course, come up.” And we had a wonderful conversation. He walked out of my door. I said, “Not a chance. A chabad will never survive in Las Vegas.” He's flourished actually and he's done a remarkable job and I'm very, very proud of him. I consider him a very, very close friend. We



talk a lot and about very personal things. I think he's great. But I never dreamed in a million years that Las Vegas would absorb and allow that there would be a place for a chabad and now we have four chabad synagogues in the community.

**It's amazing.**

**SB:** It is amazing.

**Yes, it is.**

**JBo:** I remember when they first came to town, the first thing they did was in front of the Imperial Palace at night where we all went there in solidarity because of the Hitler cars and everything that Engelstad had there and that's when I first met Rabbi Harlig and when he first moved here. Very interesting.

**Well, when you talk to him, will you please encourage him to come to our community advisory committee? I haven't heard back from him.**

**SB:** I will.

**AR:** And a comment from me. And I served on the library board at UNLV. You guys are doing great work and this is a great thing that you're doing. We're very happy to participate.

**JG:** You bet.

**AR:** I think all of us are to be able to do it.

**JG:** You bet.

**SB:** I think it's an honor for us to do this.

**AR:** It's an honor for us to be able to do it.

**FM:** You'll be checking the facts because we're talking and remembering and we may not have everything straight.

**Well, I may give a copy of the transcript to Sandy and maybe she can give it to some to do**

**the background checking. That's the only reason. I don't normally do this. But I gathered this information from a couple of publications, a Web site; that type of thing.**

**JG:** It's pretty close with its dates and its names.

**And anything else you want me to add or correct, just e-mail me or whatever. I'll be happy to do it. This is just a working living document right now.**

**SB:** Thank you very much for letting us participate.

**Thank you so very much. Appreciate it.**

**[End of recorded discussion]**