

Bert Foer

Interviewee: Bert Foer
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Interviewed by: Barry Kessler
Transcribed by: Donna Williams, March 3, 2007

Qt: "I am Barry Kessler. Today is January 7th, 2007, and I am conducting an interview for the oral history program at the Shady Side Rural Heritage Society. [Slight pause.] Tell me something about yourself."

BF: "I'm Albert A. Foer, better known as Bert Foer; my father was Melvin Foer and mother was Frances Segal Foer, and grandfather, Albert Foer. It was my father's Uncle Frank Foer who apparently was the first of the family to be involved with Shady Side; he was a Mason. And my father and mother went down to Shady Side with some... I don't know with how much regularity, probably as part of the Brandeis Club that he belonged to. We have a picture of my father and mother before I was born, standing next to a volleyball net at Shady Side, probably about 1943, maybe. She didn't appear to be pregnant so it was probably around 1943 which he was probably in the Navy at that point so, possibly even on leave, or maybe they weren't married yet, I don't know.

But any way after I was born at some point in time, we began to go down there with more regularity and became members. At that point in time, there were quite a few members. The clubhouse was structured in a way where there were something like 16 rooms, none of which had walls that went to the ceiling. So there was very little privacy, in a tremendous sense of interaction and inter-family knowledge at that point in time. You had the long kitchen and everybody ate cooked in common. You had the outdoor plumbing. In the evenings the Great Room was filled with people. Typically the men would be playing cards around the table; the game I recall was 'Pitch'. I don't know how they played it. Cribbage was also a major sport in the evenings. And there were always ...unlike Pitch, where the game was a mystery, it was sort of like Yiddish that people would talk when they didn't want you to know what was going on. Cribbage was something that they were happy to teach you and play with. So the elders would play with the juniors into the evening.

You didn't have television at that point. The bathrooms were outdoors. The younger kids tended to sleep in the old part of the house in dormitories. The girls were upstairs, the boys were just off the porch. And on a hot night, a lot of people would migrate onto the porch and you'd see a line up of cots on the porch - it was screened in and cooler than the dormitory. The dormitory, I recall, also had these lockers along the wall, fishing lockers. And the people who would go fishing in the morning, and there were always two or three, would get up very early and they'd wake everybody else up clinking around in the lockers to get whatever they needed. And they really didn't care about our ability

to sleep through it. So they would go off and go fishing and show up some time later with a pail full of rockfish, also known as spot, in those days. They would come back

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and clean those fish out by, what was then, the shower area. I think today you have a boat on exhibit in that general area. And it was always a bloody, messy, smelly kind of thing, but there were certain members who really got a kick out of that and they would clean those fish. What do I remember? Go ahead.”

Qt: “Let’s take a moment and step back. Tell me about your parents. What kind of people were they? What kind of character can you tell me about, if there’s an anecdote that reveals who they were? And why do you think they got involved in the first place?”

BF: “They probably got involved through the Brandeis Club more than anything else. They were not Masons for that matter. I’m not sure any of the people I knew there were actually Masons. That had already come and gone by the 1950’s. My father and Art Sheinbaum were business partners. They were old fiends who got to know each other probably before they were twelve years old. And this Brandeis Club came into existence at an early point in their lives along with a number of other friends. Now the interaction between the Brandeis Club and Shady Side was always very substantial ...a lot of overlap in the membership. Brandeis Club meant that they would meet every Tuesday night in one of the member’s homes on a rotating basis. They would sit around. They would talk about their, in those days, their children or their potential children. They would talk about their businesses. They all did business with one another in one way or another. They were doctors and they were lawyers and they were retail jewelers, like my father and Art. And they would play cards. I think they were playing poker in those days but I don’t even know.

So Tuesday nights were sacred. When one of them was going to become engaged the others would have to interview the potential spouse...the putative spouse, and give approval. They wouldn’t give approval unless there was a waiver of Tuesday nights, so that was part of the game. This group had started out playing basketball together. They were involved at the Jewish Community Center down at 16th ... still down there at 16th and P Street, I think, or Q Street, North West, and I guess they lived not that far from there, and they would play basketball and they would do the other things that kids did together. They stayed together and continued to meet together until quite a few of them had passed away of old age.

Well, they also would spend time together at Shady Side. They weren’t all members – it wasn’t a total overlap but even the ones that weren’t members were frequent guests and visitors. And there were always visitors down there. It was wide open. You never knew who you were going to see or run into at what we called Shady Side. It was officially the Masonic Fishing and Country Club, but later when it really wasn’t Masonic in the least, they changed the name at least informally to ‘Our Place,’ and the plaque leading into the area said ‘Our Place.’ My parents...I don’t think, you know, but for the Brandeis

connection, I'm not sure they would have been involved. Mel really liked the Chesapeake Bay, he liked boating. He liked puttering around and cleaning things and fixing things ... and very, very 'hands on' kind of guy. I didn't follow in those footsteps

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or hand steps at all. He enjoyed the problems of keeping a place like that functioning. I think he and Art enjoyed having to clean the pool. There was a pool at one point in time. It was dug into the ground. It was a nice little pool and we all loved it. I'm not sure when that occurred or why although I suspect there was a period of time when seaweed was taking over the West River and it was no longer very pleasant to go off the pier and swim. In fact, I can remember days when the men would put on their swimming trunks and tennis shoes, I guess, and go into the water hip deep or chest deep, with these large band saws. And they would walk together to clear out the seaweed that was so thick. The Chesapeake was in real trouble at that point, and my guess is that's about when the swimming pool was put in because we simply weren't able to enjoy the river to the same degree. Later the bottom cleared up and fish came back and you could swim there again. But there was a period of time, for years, when it just wasn't very pleasant.

Swimming pool required maintenance as did the boats. If you wanted to swim in the pool, and you were a kid my age, it became mandatory that you would go down and spend at least a little bit of time scouring the tiles, sweeping the deck ..there was a shuffleboard area along the deck, and you had to keep that clean. And you had to take some responsibility for the pool if you were going to be allowed to use it. Naturally, we didn't like that at all. You even had to learn how to change the filters and make sure there was chlorine, so you know, I learned a few things there that came in handy in later life.

Boats, oh! Many of the members had boats over at Parish Creek, and the two larger boats were the '*Mel Art*', which was named after the jewelry store that Art and Mel had ...that Mel and Art had – Mel-Art; and the '*Sack Kam*' that was owned by the Sacks and Kamerows. '*Sack Kam*' was always a much nicer boat, a more distinguished vessel. '*Mel Art*' went through several transitions, from smaller to larger, to smaller but nicer; and at a certain point in time, the '*Mel Art*' became "*Foer Fun*", and Mel and Art decided not to maintain a boat together.

In any event, if you went out on a boat, and the boat came back into dock, it was time to clean it out. You had to swab the decks, and you had to clean everything up. And maintaining a wooden boat was quite an effort. It was something my father seemed to relish. To me it was a pain in the neck and not something that ever attracted me to the maritime life. But I enjoyed going out on a boat. I never enjoyed fishing particularly. I think my father was of the same persuasion. I think we both enjoyed being out on the water and maybe sitting back and drinking some beer, having a line over the side but hoping that nothing would interrupt the nice day, like a fish! I learned how to put a blood worm on the hook. I eventually learned how to take a fish off the hook if I was unfortunate enough to catch one.

Another kind of fish that would often bite would be the blowfish; it was a...also known as a toad. It was an ugly thing, kind of brown and white with flappers on the side, and just sort of fat. You couldn't eat it, it had nothing; it was inedible. And it was purely a disaster. It was like catching a shark. You didn't want it, and there were days when

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that's all that you caught. The ideal thing was to catch Spot, and they should be of sufficient size that you could bring them home and somebody would cook them.

Crabbing was important to the kids. They liked to throw some bait over the side and wait for a crab down at the end of the pier. From Shady Side in front of the clubhouse, you could actually see the crabs approaching the bait often. It wasn't that deep and it wasn't that dirty except for the times of the seaweed, and you could angle for a crab and it was a little sport. The young kids liked it. There were crab fests in the evening, not from caught crabs but from purchased crabs, and you had most of the members ... I think all the members at that point were Jewish, so you had those who relished the crabs, and you had those who wouldn't touch the crabs. And somehow or other they coexisted. There was some chattering about that, but there was peaceful coexistence.

I do recall a story. My father liked to play practical jokes. You were asking me about him. And Art's wife, Goldie, was kosher. There was a time...it didn't happen at Shady Side, but there was a time when Goldie was...they were in a restaurant together, or perhaps at a reception. But any way, food had been served to them and they had a salad and there was something on the salad that was an animal protein. My father ate his and Goldie ate hers. Goldie said, 'that was good, what was that?' And my father said, telling her a lie but just to see what the reaction would be, he said, 'that was crabmeat' and Goldie then threw up! [Chuckling]

So his other practical jokes ranged fairly widely. I remember...this doesn't have anything to do with Shady Side. But in the days before people had car phones, he hooked up a telephone receiver, tied the cord to the steering wheel, and put a bicycle bell on the steering wheel. And he had a lot of fun driving up next to somebody at a stop light and he would pull the bicycle bell, and it would ring a few times and he would pick up the phone and he said, 'Yes. Yes?' and he would reach out across to the car standing next to him and say, 'It's for you!' [Laughs] They would take the phone and ...Ok, a little bit of 'Candid Camera' type of playing. But he would do that sort of thing. What else about Shady Side?"

Qt: "Well how about your mother? What was her connection to Shady Side? What did she do there?"

BF: "I think she enjoyed it. She liked sports. She liked to play horseshoes. We had a horseshoe pit over ... looking out toward the water on the far right along the fence, there was a horseshoe pit, and we frequently played horseshoes together over there. She loved to play badminton, which we had this volleyball net, occasionally played volleyball, more

often badminton out there. You had the swimming, you had the diving, you had the boating life. We played a lot of catch in the big backyard. That was my favorite thing. My mother would sometimes participate in that. I think she enjoyed going down there. I think, sometimes maybe the...so much ...everybody on top of everybody, and everybody in everybody's business may have gotten to her occasionally a little bit. But by and

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large, she was a good sport and found plenty of things to do and to enjoy out there.

And of course, for a young woman with children, at that point it was me and Laura, and later it was Gordy and Paul, this was a great place to bring your children. I mean, what do you do with kids on the weekend? Now it involved, to come out to Shady Side on a weekend, which was typically what happened during the summer, it involved packing up the car, including all the food you were going to need, driving ...now this was before Rt 50. It was a fairly significant drive and a long enough drive to be a serious commitment of time. I think it was about two hours. You didn't have open highway, you had stop lights. It was a half-way point around Largo and one would often stop to buy bloodworms and other supplies. Sometimes you'd buy your supplies when you got into Shady Side itself. Rennos was the store that we would typically stop at. There was Wayson's Crossroads somewhere along the way, and it wasn't at all unusual, particularly going home on a hot summer night on Sunday night, where we'd stop at Wayson's and [get] some ice cream. I think they had some slot machines in those days and the way that the long trip back became tolerable to the kids was knowing you were going to stop at Wayson's Crossroads. Later Rt. 50 was developed and you could make the trip in under an hour. It became a pretty easy commute.

But typically, you'd go up on a Friday night, come back on a Sunday night; and some time during the course of the summer, you would go to stay for a week or two weeks. Those were fun...you know, a very relaxing time. The fathers would typically come out in the evening after work, if they didn't have the week off, maybe they would take one week off and work the other week, but they would show up in the evening, usually, it wasn't that far. If it was that far, then they would stay in their homes and come out part of the time. So there's the mothers and the kids... but you didn't typically have more than two families staying at a given time, so it was not a real busy situation, it was very relaxing.

There were places to eat, apart from eating in the ...let's talk about eating for a minute. The long kitchen was quite a culture of its own, everybody knew what everybody else was eating. Occasionally, families would eat together at a table, but you had your own table. You had your own refrigerator and you had the stove that you shared with one other family. This was in the older days before the consolidation and I guess we should talk about. What would you do in the evening if you wanted to eat and you didn't want to cook? There were some places in Shady Side itself that ... none of them seemed to have a very long life; but there were places where you could get great fried chicken or fried shrimp, right in Shady Side. And then the other thing was to get into a boat and go over

to Galesville or Deale, where there were lots of restaurants and, typically, restaurants located at the end of a pier...the land end of the pier. And you could pull up and go in and that was a very nice way to spend an evening.

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You'd come back, and it would probably be dark, by the time you came back to Parish Creek, and it was a certain spookiness to that, quite a bit of spookiness, now that I remember. First was the challenge of getting your boat into the slip safely and securely. And then, it could be very dark...very, very dark, as you would walk back on the pier and then across the land to where the car was parked. And it's one of the things about that era in Shady Side is at night, things were dark. There was a lot of room for imagination for a child, and even on those occasions when you had to go to the bathroom in the middle of the night, your imagination could take over. Because you had to go...you had to leave the house without waking anybody up, and go out of doors where the dinosaurs might be lurking, and go into one of those, strange... even in those days we thought they were primitive bathrooms. In the men's room, there was a long trough, and a little sign over the trough that I think everybody remembers that said, 'Please don't throw your cigarette butts here. It makes them soggy, damp and hard to light.' [Chuckles] And the seating, if you were inclined to sit, it was like in a military barracks where you have 3 or 4 seats parallel ... next to each other and no privacy whatsoever. So it was good preparation for military life. That was on the men's side. I can't talk about the women's side 'cause we weren't permitted in there."

Qt: "Since we were talking about the trip, let's imagine that it's 1952, a summer weekend, and your family, the four of you...four Foers...have just arrived at Shady Side. See if you can walk me through to what happens from that point you're getting through till your departure, from your point of view, what you are going to be thinking, feeling and doing."

BF: "Well, I'm probably half asleep at that point because, the likelihood is that by the time we arrived, it was dark. And we may have eaten on the road or eaten beforehand, I don't know. Probably just unload the car, which was a task. You know, everybody had to participate...and there were chests of food that had to be unloaded, bags with clothing, and so forth. We would unload it, take it to the various rooms. My parents had a room upstairs. I had a bed in the boy's dorm. My sister had one upstairs in the girl's dorm. And most probably, we then, prepared for bed, which would include going out to the outhouse to brush teeth and take care of things. I think we tended to wear pajamas, and we'd go to bed and I would bed down, there'd be some other young kids in the room most likely. Other people would come in later and sleep through the night, with luck. In the morning, there'd be these noises, you know, eventually you'd wake up, get dressed. There were showers available, but I think that you tended to take a shower only after ... before and after bathing. That tended to be the way if you went into the river or later in

the swimming pool. You would breakfast in the long room and usually that would be cereal and milk kind of breakfast.

And then the day would begin. What would you do during the day? You might play catch with somebody in the yard in the morning before it's really warm enough to swim, or go over to the tennis courts. There were public ... I don't remember when these were built, but at some point in time, down the road there were tennis courts, public courts and a baseball field. And we would use those with some frequency, at least later on. I was ...

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baseball was my number one joy in life and I would play whenever possible. Frequently have [Phone rings in background.] So we might go over and play some tennis. We might hit fungoes on the baseball field. It was not at all unusual to bring birthday parties out there. We'd get our friends together and a caravan of cars and kids would come out and we'd play baseball. We'd play tennis. You could play basketball there. We would take them out on the pier and go crabbing, or we might jump off of the pier into the water, or we might use the swimming pool. We might be playing Frisbee in the yard, badminton, volleyball, whiffle ball... baseball games with whiffle balls in the yard.

If it was a birthday party, my father would certainly take everybody out on the boat for a boat ride. We'd go maybe on the Rhode River and jump off the boat, maybe even picnic out there. It wasn't a very long ride, and that was nice to go across the West River into the Rhode and very picturesque back there. And there was a cove we liked to go into and we could anchor off this little sandy beach, and you could swim into the beach. You could picnic on the beach. You could do a lot of different things and that was not unusual. The lovely thing about that area is there are so many nooks and crannies to explore with a boat. There wasn't as much to do on foot, but you could go for nice walks around the peninsula, and we would do that. A lot of it was just making use of the grassy facilities.

And there was a hammock, for instance. Everybody loved the hammock, especially after lunch. That was located right out at the waterfront, and there was even just a park bench sitting out by the waterfront looking out toward what later was the Bay Bridge. You could see that on a clear day, not directly in front, but off to the right a little bit. You could look out there and make out the Bay Bridge and see Beverly Beach across the way. Looking up and down the river, you would see piers and, usually, a fair number of boats. It was always a very pleasant perspective, and you could just sit there on that park bench and look out, if you had nothing else to do. Reading was a big pastime, I mean, a lot of people spent time reading either on the porch, or we had rocking chairs and stable chairs were out of doors.

Of course one of the major entertainments was the big green swing. I don't know how old that swing was. The men spent a lot of time keeping it in shape and paint it all the time, and they had to fix broken planks, and the metal would fatigue...break with fatigue,

but the children and the adults were very frequently on those swings. There were two swings, and that was great fun. Even the youngest, very youngest kids were able to make their way onto the swing and make it work and not get hurt too badly. So a typical day would involve many of those things. Lunchtime would be...often be a picnic outside. Or perhaps you were out on the boat and having lunch on the boat or even going over to Galesville or something. More of the same in the afternoon, sometimes you'd take a nap. It was very conducive to falling asleep in the afternoon after a good lunch. In the evening we talked about the card playing. Television was never a real option. At some point, fairly late in the history of 'Our Place', a very small television made its appearance in the

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Big Room, and it could pick up the Redskin game, early in the football season. Typically, these would be exhibition games, but everybody was a Redskins fan, and a number of the members had season tickets, so this was a subject of interest. Washington Senators was a subject of interest until they left. Politics would be discussed. The lawyers, Stanley Kamerow, in particular, would always have some tales of battles being fought. One could sit around and listen to the conversation and learn a good bit. Let's see. Give me another question. Let's take another direction."

Qt: "You mentioned Beverly Beach, and that reminds me that this was a group of Jewish families in an area that was ... that didn't really have any Jewish residents in it. Did you ever experience or did any of the other people that you, you know, the members that you knew there, experience any conflict or anti-Semitism in all the years that you went down there?"

BF: "We knew we were a minority, but our neighbors...and we weren't close with very many of the neighbors. The Dunns, of course, were very close; they were almost members. But there were no hostilities that I'm aware of at Shady Side. What I am aware of is at Beverly Beach, at Bay Ridge, maybe some of the other beach resorts in the vicinity. They were very clear. It wasn't subtle. It was 'No Jews Allowed'. And we resented that strongly. We were aware of it and it was something we would joke about or talk about as kids and with the adults. It was an injustice and an insult that we didn't like. But in terms of Shady Side itself, I am not aware of any particular problems. I think that we were accepted as people that, you know, weren't really causing any trouble. We kept to ourselves pretty much in that house and land, and we were members in the community, part time. And that's another thing, I mean, you know, we just weren't there all the time. We frequented the grocery stores and the restaurants. Most of the interaction, I think, probably related to the boats and fishing, and I think there, there was sort of a camaraderie of the water that didn't necessarily give a lot of weight to religion and possibly even to race, in a strange way. I mean, I think that, you know, even though this was very Southern and rural, and there were a lot of African Americans in the vicinity and then in Shady Side...I mean the interactions seemed to relate around boats and water more than anything else, and those seemed to be largely based on if you knew what you were talking about and knew what you were doing, and that's what counted."

Qt: “Who were some of the other people that were down...you talked about the communal life. But tell me about the group of people who were there when you were young and who you were friends with. What was the dynamic?”

BF: “There was one generation pretty that was pretty much of the same age. Counting me and my sister, who was about three years younger, you had the Kamerows, and the Sacks and Sheinbaums. Remember, all the men had grown up together and they got married about the same...they were the same age, they got married the same time, and had children the same time. So there was this interaction among these families. There were others...other families came and went and there were people our age. There was the Yochelsons, Jerry and Sue; there was Eddie Goldberg, who was several years older.

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He was older, he was like a half a generation older, I think. And we were always bringing friends. So any given weekend, you'd probably have six or ten people in the same general age group who could do things together. And those were the things that we would all do. The girls tended to be with the girls, the boys with the boys at that age. It was not a fertile ground for romances or that kind of thing.”

Qt: “You talked about the consolidation. What happened during the course of the time that your family was going down there as far as the membership and the structure of the organization?”

BF: “The organization was an eleemosynary institution chartered in Washington, DC, which means it was a charitable non-profit. Exactly who the owners were is very unclear. Originally, it was the National Masonic Fishing & Country Club, and there were members. Some members had stock. I guess all of them were issued stock at one point in time...and later it became...when we made some changes figuring out who had stock and where it was and how to retrieve it became quite complicated. But, and that gets into the later story of how it was transferred to the Shady Side Rural Heritage Society. But what I remember earliest was an organization, and they did have organizational meetings only attended by the men, as I recall. This was a very male-driven operation, and they had a chairman and they had committees. And there was a pool committee and a house committee and there was a treasurer, and so forth. There were Minutes; in fact, I don't know whether I still have all the Minutes. At one point in time, I had all of these documents. Your members were entitled to a room, and they paid an annual membership fee. There were occasional times when you had to pay a little bit more so that we could meet the bills or upgrade something when a major repair occurred, but that's where the money came in. It was through the annual membership fees.

And it was operated very much like a, well I would say, like a kibbutz. I don't think there was any ideology involved, it just kind of developed that you would have a large common area, a large common kitchen but with areas divided up and assigned to people, common bunk rooms, and then individual rooms that were tiny...no more room in there than for a bed...and a bed and a dresser, that was about it. And that was sort of the

private property aspect but it was all very communal. You probably wouldn't see that today.

There came a time when they realized there were going to be some major renovations needed...major expenses needed, and people were less...some were more engaged than others. I don't know exactly how it occurred, but they made a decision, a fundamental decision, that they would change the structure physically and politically. The physical change would be that the upstairs would be renovated into... I think it was six separate bedrooms. Each bedroom would actually have walls to the ceiling, and it would include a bathroom...a modern bathroom, at least a toilet and a sink. I think a shower was installed at the end of the kitchen, and that was everybody's shower. It was all in-house now. You didn't have to go outside any more. I believe that they re-did the roof and they did a few other things to modernize the entire facility, but the burden of all these

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expenses now fell on the six families. I'm not sure about the number, but approximately six, who became resident members. Everyone else was still a member but ...and they were entitled to come down for the day when they wanted; but what happened was they ...it became practically limited to the owner-members. They were the ones who were present and who were caring for the place, and it was up to them to do all of the care-taking for the physical facility and to pay for it.

So the others became less and less frequent visitors. For example, the Sacks and the Kamerows had this very nice boat, and they would spend their time on the boat. This went on for a number of years. And my wife and I became members and had a room, my father and his wife had a room. At one point, my brother-in-law and sister-in-law did, my sister and her husband did, so quite a few Foers at this point in time. You still had Sheinbaums and Yochelsons – by golly, I'm not sure if there was anybody else at that stage. So time passed, and we realized that major expenses were in the offing. We had to worry about the swimming pool, which was probably going to need to be invested in very substantially. The roof was going again. The rocks on the shore that were holding back the water and keeping the land from eroding needed a major re-working. The pier probably needed to be updated. We saw those expenses coming, and we also saw that among the three of the six were getting older and were really not interested in doing the work that needed to be done. Their children, with the exception of the Foers, were not coming around very much and were not standing in a position of inheritance. They just weren't interested in taking over the parents' rooms or the responsibilities. I'd purchased a house that had a swimming pool and no longer felt the need to come down, to drive for an hour in order to swim. And I was finding that, you know, more and more of the work was falling on me and on my sister's husband, and we just weren't interested in doing it.

So the question came, 'What do we do with the property and who's going to put the money in that was necessary?' My younger brother, Paul, was quite interested and he would've become a member had he not been black-balled by one of the other families. And he would've had ...he lived in that area, he loved the water. He would've probably

been in a position to take care of things and managed. That was not going to happen. So we decided that we needed to figure out what to do. What were the options? One option would have been to sell it outright. Some of the older members said, 'You can't do that, or if you do, we have to give the money to charity', because the way this was set up initially, whether it's legally compelled or not, we feel morally compelled to say that nobody should make a profit on the sale. And obviously, the land with substantial frontage on a river was quite valuable. But we knew that if anyone was going to receive that value, anyone who was an owner-member, there would probably be a legal fight and it would be a lot of unhappiness within the larger family, the Shady Side family; and so we decided that was not the right way to go.

Then there were questions of, 'Well, we could sell it commercially and donate the money to a charity'. And we talked through that and began to argue about which charity. That could probably have been resolved. We talked about 'well, maybe there's some

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organization that would really appreciate the land and take care of it and do something with it'. At that point, Paul was very instrumental and he began to talk to Sylvia Jennings and other people associated with the State of Maryland and with Shady Side, and the Shady Side Rural Heritage Society began to show interest in the property and to find support within the state to help accomplish a transition of ownership. We liked that idea. I thought that was an ideal solution that would satisfy the existing owners, who would liked to have seen somebody get some money out of it. It would've satisfied the non-resident members and probably would've satisfied the spirit of all those who came before. So, then how do you do this?

Well, one of the things that we came up with was the owners, that is to say the 'six' who had lent money to 'Our Place' in order to accomplish the upgrading and pay the taxes and do all the other things, and we felt entitled to at least have those loans paid back. And...but not to make a profit. And that's how we arrived at a dollar value, which in return for paying off those loans, the deed was turned over to the Shady Side Rural Heritage Society. Basically, everybody came away happy. The Rural Heritage Society got a really interesting piece of property, including the historical old building, for a very reasonable price. The money was made available in a variety of ways with help from the state. The membership...nobody got exactly what they would've wanted, whether it would've been a hunk of money or a donation to their favorite charity or whatever. It was a satisfactory and, even more than that, it was a feel-good kind of transaction that allowed us to bring this period of history to a close in a mutually acceptable way that held promise for the future and that the National Masonic Fishing & Country Club and 'Our Place' would have a place in history and would not be forgotten, and the best use we could think of for the land would occur.

Part of the transaction required the Heritage Society to do a history of the land and the property. They were required to do that as a term of the contract, and they did it, and

we're glad to see them continuing this interest in history through what you're doing there."

Qt: "When that took place what kinds of feelings did you have personally about the end of the era?"

BF: "Well, I've got a lot of memories, of course, and they were all good memories. And as we were looking through the photograph book earlier today, all those memories came back. But when it actually occurred to do it, I was more immersed in the details of how are we going to accomplish this, and how do we keep everybody happy and on the same page to make this happen. At that point in time, there was a certain relief in figuring how to get out of it because it was no longer working. And we could see the future didn't work for the way it had developed. So, I don't know how sad one can be. It was a mixed feeling that it had been part of my life for probably 40 years, and it was going to end. And that's sad, but on the other hand, life was full, there was a lot to do, a lot of other things to think about and do. So, you know, I didn't sit around moping about it or

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worrying about it and I've been back a number of times to see what has been done, and I love it. I really think they accomplished what we wanted them to accomplish. So in that way, I'm very pleased."

Qt: "Tell me about say just one or two of the happiest memories that, when you look back, jump out at you."

BF: "Probably birthday parties or even events when I was in the law firm, I brought a number of my colleagues." [Slight pause, then answers.] "Some of my happiest memories were special events and parties that we would have out there and I brought my people from my law firm, friends from my law firm." [Slight pause and coughing.] "Of course, birthday parties were de rigueur. We had a number of them over the years, and people loved coming out there. It was a great occasion for them, and we always felt good about it, going out on the boat with friends, and so forth. Another thing that I remember would be the 4th of July evenings. First of all you would always have the special, you know, corn on the cob, and then nice food on those occasions. You would also have, after dark, large firework displays in the distance. You would see them out over the river and the big bursts of fireworks, but the other thing was this. Somebody who will remain nameless, because I don't know his name, had a position with the State of Maryland that involved confiscating illegal fireworks [chuckles], and they would bring those fireworks out to our neighborhood and a lot of them would be dispelled out on the yard. And, for example, we had this cherry bomb that would be placed on a tube...under a tube, put a tennis ball on top of it, and they would shoot the tennis ball way up into the air, and we'd all run around and try to catch it. You'd have sparklers, even the infants would run around burning themselves with sparklers, and all kinds of explosives. So we had a lot of fireworks right there on the property every year. And I remember that as being quite a bit of fun."

Qt: “Good. We just have another minute. I’m wondering if there’s some way in which you feel growing up in part in Shady Side has affected your life, and made you the person that you are today as many other Shady Side Fishing Club people have told me?”

BF: “Well, I mean, it has to have some impact when you spend a lot of time...it gives me a feeling for the water and the life on the water. It’s not a life that I’ve done much with myself, but I understand it intuitively and I respect it. I would say, though, that probably a more important impact on my life was the interaction with adults and a lot of other people. But in particular, with adults, whether sitting around in the evenings and listening to their conversations and trying to participate, or playing cribbage...learning how to play cribbage with these older folks and being taken, more or less, as an equal. So you had this inter-generational opportunity to work with a lot of different people...not work... but to interact with a lot of different people and gradually be taken on as an equal, at least, in certain respects. I think that that experience in the communal setting, what’s the old ... the Hillary Clinton idea that ‘It takes a village’ ... this was a village. And you were being overseen and observed and receiving feedback from a lot of people

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in addition to your parents, some of whom were very difficult people. And you had to learn how to get along with...you had to learn how to cope with a variety of different personalities, somewhat different values. And I think that that experience really did help me be able to deal with different people successfully, more successfully than I might otherwise have. I would put that pretty high up in terms of the impact on my own life.”

At: “Great. Well, thank you very much. I really enjoyed hearing your memories and stories about Shady Side.”

BF: “Thank you, Barry. I appreciate what you’re doing.”

[Interview ends.]

Notes from Paul Foer regarding this interview (Paul is Bert's youngest brother)

Bill Goldberg was the big morning/locker room offender (not necessarily important, but...)
Rockfish was not spot--Norfolk Spot is a different fish (this should probably be amended--it's a factual error)

the photo from the brandeis club was August Of 1941

various notes and minutes may have gone to Virginia Fitz who was the historian who wrote the book about the house and the club for the SSRHS--Janet should know

the pool was in 1957