

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ORAL HISTORIES

1. I am Helene Banks, I am conducting an interview with Herta Beskin for the JFVS archives on August 1, 2001.

2. Can you tell me how and why your family originally came to this country and when?

My parents and I came to the United States in 1941 from Reckendorf, Germany. We traveled first to Lisbon, then to Portugal, and lastly to New York. We settled in Cleveland, Ohio because my Uncle Gus was already there. Also, my brother Milton Schmidt had arrived in Cleveland in 1936, my brother Walter Schmidt arrived in 1938, and my grandmother Regina Goldschmidt in 1939. I was 13 years old when I came to the United States.

3. What were your parents' names and where were they born?

My parents, Isadore and Jenny Schmidt were both born in Reckendorf, Germany.

4. What is your birth date? What language(s) were spoken in your home? Where did you live then? Who lived in the same house with you – Grandparents? Uncles/aunts? Brothers? Sisters?

My birth date is September 3, 1927. German was spoken in our home. I lived in out house in Reckendorf with my mother, father, two brothers, and grandmother.

5. What was your neighborhood like? Were there other Jews living in the neighborhood? Did you walk to school? Sunday School? Temple? Was there a neighborhood grocery? Drug store?

Our neighborhood was a rural village with only six other Jewish families. I walked to school. Once a week a Jewish teacher came from a nearby town to teach Jewish history to the eight Jewish children that there were. There was a small grocery but no drugstore.

6. How did the 1937 flood affect you and your family?

Not asked during this interview.

7. If you wished to travel what kind of transportation did you use? Did you travel when you were young? If so, where?

8. Was your family involved in a synagogue / temple?

My family was involved in the small local synagogue.

9. What holidays and rituals were observed?

All Jewish holidays and rituals were observed, and both of my brothers had a bar mitzvah.

10. Did you attend religious school? Were you confirmed? Bar Mitzvah?

I did not actually attend religious school except what was previously mentioned. My brothers trained for their Bar Mitzvahs in the town from where the teacher came. I was confirmed in Cleveland, Ohio when I was 15.

11. What is your educational background? What was your career?

I attended junior and senior high school in Cleveland and graduated from Ohio University in Athens, Ohio in 1949. I completed college in 3 years with a BS degree in Education. I was an elementary school teacher in Cleveland and am still teaching preschool at Adath Jeshurun Synagogue.

12. What brought you to Louisville and when did you come?

My husband was transferred to Louisville, Kentucky in 1969 from Cincinnati, Ohio where we had lived for 3 years.

13. How did you meet your husband/wife? Where and when were you married? Did you have children?

I met my husband Elliot Beskin at Ohio University. We married on June 18, 1950 in Cleveland. Elliott passed away on August 4, 1983. We had 3 daughters, Carol Klein, Lynn Rozelman, and Lisa George.

14. Tell about your involvement in the Jewish Community? Was your whole family involved?

I taught Sunday School at Adath Jeshurun and 3 years of preschool at the Jewish day school. My whole family was and is definitely still involved in the Jewish community.

15. How was your family affected by the World Wars? Wars in Israel?

Both of my brothers served in the U.S. army and my husband served in the U.S. army in Germany at the end of WWII when Jewish prisoners were liberated from the concentration camps. Survivors of the death camps did not at first trust him because of his uniform until he spoke with them in Yiddish. WWII in Europe affected me and my family greatly, because we had to flee Germany in order to survive. Except for my concern, I have not been directly affected by the wars in Israel.

16. What are your favorite spiritual memories? How did religion affect your life?

Spending the Jewish holidays in synagogue with my family is my favorite spiritual memory. My religion has always been the basis of my life.

17. What interests do you have?

Teaching my children and my grandchildren has always been my main interest.

18. What are your favorite family memories?

The weddings of my three daughters and the bar and bat mitzvahs of four of my grandchildren are my favorite memories.

19. What is your legacy? How would you like to be remembered? What values would you like to pass on to those you leave behind?

I would like to be remembered as a good wife and mother. My daughter Lisa says I have taught her how to be a good mother to her children. I am leaving a good reputation as a teacher of many years, especially in the Jewish community.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I do hereby give my permission to record my life history thugh the Jewish Family
and Vocational Service, 3587 Dutchmans Lane, Louisville, Kentucky 40205.

My story will be kept in the JFVS library unless I choose to keep it myself.

Herta Beskin ✓

Participant

Helene P. Banks

Witness

8-1-01

Date Signed