

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ORAL HISTORIES

I am Jerry Fleischer, I am conducting an interview with: Estelle Gordon Cohen for the JFCS archives on July 15, 2011.

- 1. Tell me how and why your family originally came to this country and when? How did they travel?**

My mother was born in Philadelphia in 1907; my father was born in Riga, Latvia in 1898. He and his brother walked from Riga to Germany. They eventually landed in Philadelphia.

- 2. Tell me about your parents - their names and where were they born? Have there been other family names used in the past? Where, when, and why was it changed?**

My father's original name was Yudelefsky and then Gordon; my mother's name was Sacks.

- 3. What is your birth date? What language(s) were spoken in your home?**

I was born March 14, 1928 in Salisbury, MD. We spoke English only and Yiddish to disguise what was being said.

- 4. Where did you live as a child? Who lived in the same house with you – Grandparents? Uncles/Aunts? Brothers? Sisters?**

- 5. What brought you or your family to Louisville, Kentucky and when did you come? How did they travel? Did they share any unusual experiences with you?**

During the depression my father had a clothing store in 1935. We traveled by car. I saw my first car.

- 6. What was your neighborhood like? Were there other Jews living in the neighborhood? Did you walk to school? Sunday school? Synagogue/Temple? What kind of shops were in your neighborhood?**

We lived on Market Street where my father had a clothing store. When I was in kindergarten our neighborhood was only white. We moved to Highland Park where my father had a grocery store. I went to Adath Jeshurun Sunday school; I took the streetcar by myself (5-6 year old). There was a drug store next to the grocery store, a barber shop (the owner was a bookie) and Silverman's Department Store.

- 7. If you or your family lived in Louisville at the time - how did the 1937 flood affect you and your loved ones?**

I was 9 years old when the flood started downtown. It did not affect Highland Park (I lived on Wawa Street). Everything in the store was confiscated. There was no electricity, and there were 18 people in the house. The school gave out oil for lamps (there was no school for kids.) Eight brothers and sisters all had grocery stores.

- 8. If you wished to travel within the city limits what kind of transportation did you use? Did you travel out of town when you were young? What kind of transportation did you use**

when you traveled out of town? And if so, where did you go? What special memories do you have of those trips?

We traveled by trolley. We went by train to Charlestown, W.Va and Philadelphia.

9. Was your family involved in a synagogue/temple? Were your parents or other family members religious?

I was sent to Adath Jeshurun for Sunday school. My family was non-religious.

10. What holidays and rituals were observed in your family? Do you have any significant memories surrounding Jewish celebrations and what was special about those occasions?

We only observed the High Holy Days.

11. Did you attend Sunday School or other religious schools? Were you confirmed? Did you have a Bar/Bat Mitzvah? What are your memories from that time? Are you still in touch with some of the people that attended Sunday school with you?

I was confirmed at Adath Jeshurun. I kept in touch with Alan Slyn.

12. What is your educational background? What was your occupation? Who or what influenced you to choose your career? What kind of preparation or training was required for your career?

I went to Girls High School; graduated from U of L with an LLB degree in law. My occupation was as an attorney in New Jersey. I worked for the Tax Department (NJ). I practiced law and became a judge (NJ). There was a quota for women; women were barred from the Bar. Women were lawyers in NJ. I was influenced by Alex Berman. My preparation was in law school.

13. How did you meet your mate? At what point did you realize that this was the one you wanted to marry? Where and when were you married? Do you have children? Grandchildren?

On boat raced on VJ day in Louisville. Soldiers from Fort Knox were on boat ride. We married 8/20/50 at the Kentucky Hotel; Rabbi Gittleman officiated. We have two daughters and four grandchildren. Both daughters are lawyers.

14. Discuss your involvement in the Jewish Community outside of your temple or synagogue when you were growing up.

I went to the Y.M.H.A. during World War II. I got a scholarship from Hadassah in 1949 to go to Brandeis Camp Institute during the summer.

15. What was your involvement in the non- Jewish community? Did you witness any anti-Semitism living in Louisville? If so, how was this incident handled?

I was involved with non-Jews in Highland Park—I was the only Jewish child in the neighborhood. I went to every church in the neighborhood with friends. I saw no anti-Semitism in Louisville. There was a “Bund Rally” in Philadelphia by Germans.

16. How was your family affected by the World Wars? Wars in Israel? Pearl Harbor? What are your earliest recollections when thinking about major events in history?

I had forty-three first cousins; the boys went into the army in World War II.

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

Not affected.

18. What interests or hobbies did you have when you were young and what are they now? What schools did you attend and are there any memories that stand out from that time in your life?

I went to the theatre then and now. I go to Center Stage, the Broadway Series at the Kentucky Center for the Arts, and to the opera (here and in Europe).

19. What are your favorite family memories – whether it was with your family of origin, or your extended family and friends?

Family parties for Bar Mitzvahs; I had lots of fun with family.

20. What is your legacy? How would you like to be remembered? What message do you want to leave for your children and future generations?

If you want to do something, do it. Don't be influenced by others—do your own thing.



For Every Season Of Your Life

Board of Directors

President
Jay Klempner

Vice Presidents
Debbie Friedman
Sandi Friedson
Reed Weinberg

Treasurer
Mark Ament

Immediate Past President
Barbara Goldberg

Past President
Lowell D. Katz

Directors
Greg Berman
Lance Gilbert
Alyson Goldberg
Ariel Kronenberg
Martin Margulis
Sheilah Abramson Miles
Stephanie Mutcnick
Peter Resnik
Marsha Beck Roth
Hunt Schuster
Brian Segal
Bernard Sweet
"Visotsky
"Wojt

Executive Director
Judy Freundlich Tiel

Past Presidents
Mitchell Charney
Jane Goldstein
Marjorie B. Kohn
Robert Levine
Howard Markus
Shirley Markus
Gail Pohn
Lillian Seigman
Steve Shapiro
Jeffrey Weiss

Honorary Directors
Arthur Grossman
Shelton R. Weber

Rabbi David Ariel-Joel
Rabbi Avrohom Litvin
Rabbi Stanley Miles
Rabbi Joe Rooks Rapport
Rabbi Gaylia R. Rooks
Rabbi Robert Slosberg

Association of Jewish
Family & Children's Agencies

International Association of
Jewish Vocational Services

To Whom It May Concern:

I do hereby give my permission to record my life history through
the Jewish Family & Career Services Oral History Project,
2821 Klempner Way, Louisville, Kentucky 40205.

My completed story will be sent to me and a second
copy will be kept in the JFCS library unless
otherwise stipulated in writing by me.

Estelle Gordon Cohen

Participant

Jerome T. Fleischer

Interviewer

Friday, 7/15/14

Date



Lee & Lee Roth Family Center • 2821 Klempner Way • Louisville, Kentucky 40205
502-452-6341 • FAX: 502-452-6718 • www.jfcsloisville.org

Career Services | Multicultural Services | Counseling Services | Klein Older Adult Services

