

## QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ORAL HISTORIES

1. I am Ann Friedman, I am conducting an interview  
with Les Aberson for the JFVS archives  
on February 4, 2002.

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

My maternal grandparents come from Latvia, Russia in the late 1890's. They came after the pogroms came into power for freedom. One of my mother's brothers was born in Russia. He was the only sibling to be born there. They came to New York and then moved to St. Louis. He was a blacksmith.

On my father's side, my grandparents came from Russia, moved to Germany, England, and then St. Louis. My father's mother was from Worcester England. My dad's father was a tailor, and made clothing.

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

My father, Hillard Aberson, was born 8/15/1903 in St. Louis. My mother Adele Wenneier Aberson, was born 2/10/1911 in St. Louis.

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?

I was born on 5/30/36. English was spoken in my house, but my mother would speak Yiddish when she wanted to say something secretly. My mother and sister lived in the house with me in St. Louis. My sister's name is Renee Aberson Hymson.

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?

I lived in a Will Simon neighborhood, you knew your neighbors. My oldest friends were Irish Catholic, white Jewish, and non-Jewish. There was no prejudice shown. There was an area with tough guys, but I always went with my Irish friends, and they left us alone. I walked alone to Delmar-Harned, my school, which was a few miles to walk to. I went to Hamley Junior High School, and we had moved far west to a larger home. I had a very long walk of two or three miles. Winters were cold and there was no bus. We moved to Lexington when I went to Lafayette High. I got my driver's license when I was 15, and I had skipped a grade. I drove the last few years to school.

*Shari Emet*  
I was part of the Sheramut Congregation in St. Louis. When we moved to Lexington I was part of Adath Israel. My family went to services. I blew the shofar on Rosh

Hashanah. They would pull pranks on me. One year there was streamers, one year confetti. When I blew the shofar herds would come. We had no air conditioning, and they would flock to the area.

In St. Louis Mr. Jaspers was the grocery store, but there was no drug store. Mr. Jaspers was very nice and let us have a pickle. You knew everybody.

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

We were not part of the flood.

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

Automobile

When we were very young we would always go with my parents on vacation. We went to Miami, Lexington, Louisville, and New England. When we were in Lexington there was a lot of family together; lots of aunts and uncles. We had lots of family picnics, and they were great.

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

My father was president of the brotherhood, and my mother was president of the sisterhood.

**9. What holidays and rituals were observed?**

All of the holidays were observed. Christmas was my parents' anniversary, and we had a big tree. We celebrated every major Jewish holiday.

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

I attended Adath Israel and was confirmed.

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

I got a BS from UK in 1957, and a law degree in 1960. My first job was attorney for the department of highways, appellate division. I would write briefs for court of appeals. I wrote the case: Low to value lease hold interests in to eminent domain. I wrote laws that are still in effect today. It was a precedent. It stands as a landmark case. I then went to trail as district attorney for Lexington, KY (27 counties). After a year the director of the Louisville department wanted to make me an assistant. We decided that we had to leave Lexington and turned down the big promotion.

I left and went with Shelly Wehers and Fred Goldberg. I was with them 2 years, and did general work. I wanted to do a different kind of law. I had been working for Jae Kaplan, and he hired me. He had a well respected practice. This was in 1963. I did trial work, business law, and estate work.

Today my law relates to business and real estate; it relates almost exclusively to corporate tax and estate work.

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

My position with Goldberg in 1961.

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

Genie was dating my little brother in my fraternity, and she broke up with him. I then started to date her.

Genie loved to go out to dinner. I never called her for a date, I just drove in and often she was on a date. Once I went there and I spent time with her folks. She asked me to marry her. I got her a watch for our engagement.

I hadn't packed to our honeymoon, and I also lost my pants. We had to go back and pack.

We were married at Brith Shalom October 16, 1960 by Martin Pereley and Joe Rosenbloom.

We had three children. Karen Lowenstein Aberson Mengel married Dr. Barry Mengel and had two children, Abigail Fae Mengel and Jashua Sonley. Angela Lynn Aberson Weildstein married Daniel Weildstein and had two children, Max and Charles. Leslie Hillard Aberson married DJacqueline and had two children, Jordon Hunter and Gabriella Ashley.

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

I was president of Bnai Brith, Brith Shalom, and the temple men's club. I was on the Jewish Hospital board, public capital campaign chair for Jewish Hospital, capital campaign chair for Temple, and a board member for the conference of Christians and Jews.

Genie was part of the sisterhood, and my children were in religious clubs; my whole family was involved in temple.

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

During WWII all of my cousins were in the Pacific and Europe. My mother helped with the Red Cross, and my father was also involved. All of my cousins came back.

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

Rabbi Gordon from St. Louis was a fabulous guy. When he spoke it was as if G-d was speaking.

My parents' values were unbelievable.

All of the arts are important, they set the example. I had a very special mom and dad that always made time.

When I was in grade school a teacher asked me to write an essay about the man you most admired and I wrote about my dad. I was the only one.

I am awed by nature.

I try to follow Jewish values; it's the values as much as the religion. It's not the ritual it's who and what you are.

**17. What interests do you have?**

Professionally, well read, business I am in, and friendships are my interests.

**18. What are your favorite family memories?**

Holidays were fabulous. I remember my dad's mother, she was the only grandparent alive, special occasions, my birthday, Christmas, we had Hershey and no one could get it, we had a party at my parents' at Christmas. For my parents' big occasions we had big parties. All of my life cycle events were important.

**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?**

That others had learned values from me and people are proud of me and love me. I want them to think of the great memories we had together. I want people to think of me as a good person.

It is important to be caring and honest. Good character leaves a good name.

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*Lesiee Aberson*

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**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:**

I do hereby give my permission to record my life history through the Jewish Family and Vocational Service, 3587 Dutchmans Lane, Louisville, Kentucky 40205. My story will be kept in the JFVS Library and can be accessed by interested people. It will be preserved archivally for future generations.

*[Signature]*  
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Participant

*Ann P. Friedman*  
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Witness

*2/4/02*  
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**LESLIE D. ABERSON****PERSONAL INFORMATION:**PROFESSIONAL:

Member of law firm **Rothschild, Aberson, Miller & Goodin**

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND:

Bachelor of Science Degree - University of Kentucky - 1957  
Juris Doctor - University of Kentucky - 1960

**CURRENT MEMBERSHIPS AND ORGANIZATIONS:**

Director - University of Kentucky Law School Foundation since 1987

Fellow - University of Kentucky

Director - Louisville Free Public Library Foundation since 1988

Director - Kentucky Athletic Hall of Fame since 1963

Director - MidAmerica Bancorp (Bank of Louisville) since 1982

Member - Jewish Hospital Institutional Review Committee

Director - The Temple

**RECENT PAST MEMBERSHIPS AND ORGANIZATIONS:**

Member Kentucky Council on Higher Education until 1992

Director - Jewish Hospital of Louisville

Director - Louisville Medical Research Foundation

President & Director - B'rith Sholom Temple

Director - National Conference of Christians and Jews

Vice President & Director - Jewish Community Federation of Louisville

Leslie D. Aberson  
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**PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS:**

Louisville Bar Association

Kentucky Bar Association

Kentucky Trial Lawyer's Association

American Trial Lawyer's Association

Admitted to practice - State of Kentucky, United States Tax Court  
and Supreme Court of the United States

**MISCELLANEOUS:**

Recipient - Louis Cole Young Leadership Award

Married - former Regene Jo Lowenstein. Three children: Karen A.  
Mangel, Angie A. Wildstein and Leslie H Aberson. Three  
grandchildren: Abigail and Josh Mangel and Maxwell H. Wildstein.

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Director - MidAmerica Bancorp (Bank of Louisville) since 1982  
Member - Jewish Hospital Institutional Review Committee  
Director - The Temple and current Chairman of The Temple Capital Campaign Drive  
Fellow - University of Kentucky

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