

## QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ORAL HISTORIES

1. I am Ann Friedman, I am conducting an interview with Madeline Bernstein ✓ for the JFVS archives.

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

My father came from Minsh, Russia before World War I in 1915. My mother came to this country in 1924 from Estonia, Russia.

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

Father – Julius Solavich, he didn't make his name clear so they put down Soloff. He was born in 1898 and died in 1944. He had typhoid fever when he was in his teens and lost his hair. He had a terrific sense of humor and loved people. He was in the scrap metal business and then opened a little store. His first wife died of consumption when their son, my half brother was ten years old. On her deathbed she wished that my father would bring her sister over to help take care of them. My mother, Mary Marher, was born August 18, 1904. She was engaged to be married to a medical student in Estonia and she came to the United States to take care of my half brother. Her fiancé was to come to the United States after he became a M.D. and they were to be married. When she got to Mexico they would not let her in the country unless she was married or had a blood relative. My father came to get her and married her. I was born two years later.

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 in May 22, 1926. Yiddish, Russian and English were spoken at home. When my parents didn't want me to know what was going on they spoke Russian. We lived above our clothing store on Willard Avenue in Michigan City. My mother, father, half brother and my sister, Pearl was born six years later, she lived there too. Milton, my half brother, died during the war in November 1944. He had only been married for six months when he died. He married his first cousin, Sarah. They had a daughter, Margie who was born after Milton died.

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?

My neighborhood was mostly gentile. Polish and German. There were no Jews in the neighborhood and few in Michigan City. A Jewish family from Chicago moved in one summer. I walked to school about a mile away. I went to Sunday school (Chador) 8-12. We had a synagogue – orthodox and we were very religious. There was a neighborhood grocery and drug store. We had a little clothing store and we lived over the store.

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

If we traveled we took a bus or train, we didn't have a car. When I was young we traveled to Fort Wayne and South Bend Indiana. We didn't travel much because we lived on Lake Michigan. Our family would visit us!

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

We would attend the synagogue for High Holidays. My parents were too busy working. We didn't have a full time Rabbi.

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

Chanukah, Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah and Passover were all observed. We would fast for Yom Kippur.

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

I attended Chador and I was not confirmed or Bat Mitzvah.

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

I graduated from high school and went to Indiana State to become a teacher. When my dad and brother died I had to come home. I was eighteen years old when my dad died. I got a job at a lumber company at a secretary. I went to college on scholarship for one semester. My mother met Conrad Linde and they were married. I saved money from working and with a scholarship I decided to go to Indiana University. I met a good friend and we went to the university together. I never graduated from Indiana University.

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

I came to Louisville in 1948 with my husband, Sylvain.

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

I met Sylvain at Hillel my first year at Indiana University. He was a junior looking at the new freshman. We dated a year before we became engaged. I went back to school in 1946 and we eloped and married in Martinsville, Indiana. A justice of the peace married us. He wore marine greens and boots and his wife was the witness. We had three children. Jim born in 1950, Hank born in 1953 and Amy born in 1956.

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

We all belonged to the Jewish Community Center. The boys belonged to the club as well as Amy. I worked at J.C.C. I belonged to the sisterhood and was vice president. I was also

involved with Kosair Hospital with epileptic children. Sylvain was involved in J.C.C., Shriners and was Temple brotherhood president.

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

My brother was killed in the war. My mother's brother lived in Poland and had four children. He had to shoot and bury them and then he was killed.

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

My favorite spiritual memories were associated with my mom. Kassals came into their village to kill. My mother's parents were killed but mother and her siblings survived. She always believed that God watched over them. I feel that God has kept me in good health. Religion affects my life all the time. I learned this through Judaism. One is good to others, especially older people who can't get out.

**16. What interests did you have?**

Bridge, Maj Jong, reading, cross stitching, people, volunteer work, Home of the Innocents, Diabetic Foundation and the Temple.

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

My family coming to visit in Michigan City. My whole family would come, cousins, aunts and uncles, everyone.

**18. 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 friend and giving of myself. I hope that many values have been passed on to my children. They are very caring and giving of themselves. When I die I want people to celebrate my life. I have three wonderful children and I couldn't ask for more than that. My mother was my greatest influence. She was the kind of person that I wanted to be.



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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 unless I choose to keep it myself.

*Madeline Bernstein*  
 Participant

*Anne P. Friedman*  
 Witness

*7-23-01*  
 Date Signed

JFVS/aj 5/14/01  
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## QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ORAL HISTORIES

I am Ann Friedman?, I am conducting an interview with: Madeleine Bernstein for the JFCS archives.

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

My father came from Minsk, Russia before World War I in 1915. My mother came to this country in 1924 from Estonia, Russia.

**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?**

Father – Julius Solavich; he didn't make his name clear so they put down Soloff. He was born in 1898 and died in 1944. He had typhoid fever when he was in his teens and lost his hair. He had a terrific sense of humor and loved people. He was in the scrap metal business and then opened a little store. His first wife died of consumption when their son, my half-brother, was ten years old. On her deathbed she wished that my father would bring her sister over to help take care of them. My mother, Mary Marher, was born August 18, 1904. She was engaged to be married to a medical student in Estonia and she came to the United States to take care of my half-brother. Her fiancé was to come to the United States after he became an M.D. and they were to be married. When she got to Mexico they would not let her in the country unless she was married or had a blood relative. My father came to get her and married her. I was born two years later.

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

My birthdate is May 22, 1926. Yiddish, Russian and English were spoken at home. When my parents didn't want me to know what was going on they spoke Russian.

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

We lived above our clothing store on Willard Avenue in Michigan City. My mother, father, half-brother and my sister Pearl, who was born six years later, lived there, too. Milton, my half-brother, died during the war in November, 1944. He had only been married for six months when he died. He married his first cousin, Sarah. They had a daughter, Margie, who was born after Milton died.

**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?**

I came to Louisville in 1948 with my husband, Sylvain.

**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?**

My neighborhood was mostly gentile, Polish and German. There were no Jews in the neighborhood and few in Michigan City. A Jewish family from Chicago moved in one summer. I walked to school about a mile away. I went to Sunday school (Chador) 8-12. We had a synagogue – orthodox, and we were very religious. There was a neighborhood grocery and drug store. We had a little clothing store and we lived over the store.

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

NA

**6. 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?**

If we traveled, we took a bus or train. We didn't have a car. When I was young we traveled to Fort Wayne and South Bend, Indiana. We didn't travel much because we lived on Lake Michigan. Our family would visit us!

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

We would attend the synagogue for High Holidays. My parents were too busy working. We didn't have a full-time rabbi.

**8. 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?**

Chanukah, Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah and Passover were all observed. We would fast for Yom Kippur.

**9. 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 attended Chador and I was not confirmed or Bat Mitzvah.

**10. 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 graduated from high school and went to Indiana State to become a teacher. When my dad and brother died I had to come home. I was eighteen years old when my dad died. I got a job at a lumber company as a secretary. I went to college on scholarship for one semester. My mother met Conrad

Linde and they were married. I saved money from working and with a scholarship I decided to go to Indiana University. I met a good friend and we went to the university together. I never graduated from Indiana University.

**11. 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?**

I met Sylvain at Hillel my first year at Indiana University. He was a junior looking at the new freshman. We dated a year before we became engaged. I went back to school in 1946 and we eloped and married in Martinsville, Indiana. A justice of the peace married us. He wore marine greens and boots and his wife was the witness. We had three children: Jim, born in 1950; Hank, born in 1953; and Amy, born in 1956.

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

We belonged to the Jewish Community Center. The boys belonged to the club, as well as Amy. I worked at J.C.C. I belonged to the sisterhood and was vice president. I was also involved with Kosair Hospital with epileptic children. Sylvain was involved in J.C.C., Shriners, and was The Temple brotherhood president.

**13. 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?**

NA

**14. 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?**

My brother was killed in the war. My mother's brother lived in Poland and had four children. He had to shoot and bury them and then he was killed.

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

My favorite spiritual memories were associated with my mom. Kassals came into their village to kill. My mother's parents were killed but mother and her siblings survived. She always believed that God watched over them. I feel that God has kept me in good health. Religion affects my life all the time. I learned this through Judaism. One is good to others, especially older people who can't get out.

**16. 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?**

Bridge, Mah Jongg, reading, cross-stitching, people, volunteer work, Home of the Innocents, Diabetic Foundation and The Temple.

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

My family coming to visit in Michigan City. My whole family would come, cousins, aunts and uncles, everyone.

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

I would like to be remembered as a good friend and giving of myself. I hope that many values have been passed on to my children. They are very caring and giving of themselves. When I die, I want people to celebrate my life. I have three wonderful children and I couldn't ask for more than that. My mother was my greatest influence. She was the kind of person that I wanted to be.