

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ORAL HISTORIES

1. I am Helene Banks I am conducting an interview
with Leonard Wexler ✓ for the JFVS archives
on April 15, 2002.

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

My father came to the United States in approximately 1910 from Russia. My mother was born here in the U.S. Her parents, one sister and one brother also immigrated from Russia about the same time. They left Russia to escape oppression and came here for the opportunity in this country.

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

My father's name was Bert Wexler. He was born in Russia in or around Kiev. My mother's name is Eileen Wexler. She was born in New York City.

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 February 21, 1931 in Brooklyn, New York. English only was spoken in our home until we moved into my grandparent's house when I was about 5 years old. From then on English and Yiddish were spoken. I lived there until I was 17 years old. It was a two-family house - my aunt, uncle and cousins lived on the second floor. I had no brothers or sisters.

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 in terms of the economic scale was at the bottom, a working class neighborhood. It was predominantly Jewish but a fair number of non-Jews, mostly Italians and Irish also lived there. I did walk to school. I went to Chedar (after school Hebrew School). There was a little grocery store and a drug store in our area.

6. How were you affected by the 1937 flood?

We weren't in Louisville at the time of the flood, therefore, we weren't affected by it.

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

Up until the time I was probably in my teens I believe I never left New York other than an occasional auto trip to New Jersey or Philadelphia to visit people.

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

My family attended synagogue on occasion but were not active members of the synagogue.

9. What holidays and rituals were observed?

We observed Pesach very strictly. The house was thoroughly cleaned and the dishes changed. We also observed the High Holidays. I don't remember our family observing other Jewish holidays.

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

I attended Hebrew school and was Bar Mitzvah.

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

My undergraduate degree is from the University of Illinois and I received an MBA from the University of Chicago. My career, for the most part, was in corporate financial management.

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

I came to Louisville in 1979 for a new job with Glenmore Distilleries as Controller.

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

My wife, Frances, and I were introduced by a mutual friend in Chicago. We were married in Chicago in 1953. We had three children, Lawrence, Bruce and Donna.

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

When I lived in Chicago I had limited involvement in the Jewish community. We always belonged to a Temple as a family. All three of our children we Bar or Bat Mitzvah. After moving to Louisville, I became heavily involved with the Jewish Community. I was very actively involved in my Temple, Federation, Four Courts and Jewish Hospital. I am still active today serving on various boards.

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

I was too young to serve in World War II. My oldest cousin served and was wounded in Europe. We were not directly affected by the wars in Israel, but we have great concern and are supporters of the State of Israel.

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

I still, from time to time, think of and remember Seders at my grandparent's home when I was about 4 or 5 years old, even before we moved in with them. Religion has provided me with a moral compass.

17. What interests did you have?

I have a broad range of interests, everything from reading and attending the ballet to going bicycling riding, playing handball and golf.

18. What are your favorite family memories?

I took a number of trips as a family both when the children were youngsters and even more recently. These are my fondest memories (all of us being together at the same time).

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 hope I pass on to my children that they be honest, sincere and true to themselves. I want to be remembered in whatever fashion people want to remember me. I know a lot of different people within a number of different circumstances, and I'm sure they will each remember me in a different way. I really have given no thought to how I will be remembered.

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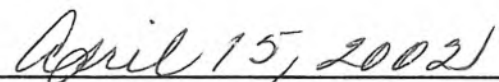
I do hereby give my permission to record my life history through the Jewish Family and Vocational Service, 3587 Dutchmans Lane, Louisville, Kentucky 40205. My story will be kept in the JFVS Library and can be accessed by interested people. It will be preserved archivally for future generations.



Participant



Witness



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