Barbara Jacobs Transcript

ROSALIND HINTON: -- Southfork Drive, Apartment 406 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Today is Sunday November 5th, 2006. I'm conducting an interview for the Katrina's Jewish Voices project of the Jewish Women's Archive and the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life. Barbara, do you agree to be interviewed and understand that the interview will be video recorded?

BARBARA JACOBS: I do.

RH: And you can begin with a little of your family history and where you're from and how you got to New Orleans.

BJ: OK. Originally I was born in Indianapolis, Indiana, March 2nd, 1935. I ended up being an only child. I had an older sister and a younger sister who were both stillborn, so that's why I say I'm an only child, because they told me that I have two sisters. My parents, my mother was born in Indianapolis, my father was born in Indianapolis, and I was raised in Indianapolis, going to the Reform temple called "The Temple." That's what it was called, the Tenth Street Temple for a while. Because it was on Tenth Street. Now it's moved way out north like everything else. I had a large family. My mother came from -- there were six children in her family and there were four in my father's family. So there was always a lot of children and family involvement. Around 90% of us were Reform. My grandmother on my mother's side was Orthodox. My father's mother was -- was not Orthodox, she was Reform also. I never knew -- it's going to give a voice -- I don't even know where I was.

RH: Well you mentioned 90% were Reform.

BJ: Were Reform. My grandmother on my mother's side was Orthodox and one of my mother's sisters was Orthodox – was not Orthodox, but they didn't have any children, but we all got along very well. I went to camp most of my life. And most of my young life, let's put it that way. And when I was at a camp in Maine when I was a senior in college – senior in high school -- I met a girl there named Alice Koch from Dallas, and she went to Newcomb. Well I'd never heard of Newcomb. And all summer long all she talked about was Newcomb this, Newcomb that, and she was big girl on campus, and I came home that summer and I said to my parents, “Guess where I'm going to college,” and they said “where?”, and I said, “Newcomb.” And they said, “Where's that?” And I said, “New Orleans.” “No, you're not going down south to school, no, no, no, no. You go east to school.” “No, I don't want to go east to school, I want to go down to New Orleans.” Well my mother and I drove down. I took the test, I passed the test, I got into Newcomb. And we drove to New Orleans. Saw the college. And Mother came back and talked my father into, “oh let her go down there.” You know, what difference is it going to make where she goes if she's happy? That's fine. So that's how I got to New Orleans. Getting to New Orleans then, I've made a lot of friends in the Jewish community. I pledged A E Phi and was very happy at Newcomb College, although I didn't last the whole time because I met Roger then, Jacobs. Roger had been in school. He'd started college when he was 15, and that was too young, as he said. And so he sort of goofed off during part of his college years. Then he went back and also was in law school when the Korean War broke out. When it broke out they pulled he and another young man from Tulane into the war effort. And he was home on leave because he was going overseas, and that's how he and I met. You may recognize the name Jacobs due to the fact that his father was Henry S. Jacobs, Henry Switzer Jacobs. That's the camp for Reform Judaism in Utica, Mississippi. He also was -- his father was also the Director of Temple Sinai, Executive Director, and the organist for many years. We had belonged to Temple Sinai as his family had done for years. And then we switched to Gates of Prayer, just not that many years ago. Where do you want me to go from here now?

RH: That's good. Take this off. OK.

BJ: Between that and this we can have a good time.

RH: Have quite a background.

BJ: Background music.

RH: Yeah. Well tell me how come Camp Jacobs was named after Henry S. Jacobs.

BJ: He did a lot with the youth. He believed in the youth. Anybody that was at Sinai during their years growing up always knew Henry believed in the youth and that was the next generation. And he did so much with the youth that they -- after he passed away other people who were involved did decide to name the camp after him. And so that's where that came from. And the camp came into good use. During Katrina and before Katrina. The camp came into good use because our youngest son who is retarded and also has what's known as Sturges-Weber went to a school, a boarding school, in New Orleans, called the Louise S. Davis School. The school -- many years ago if you had a nursing home or if you had a special school, you had to be past I-12 if there was a hurricane. Well they searched and searched and searched for places to go and it was hard to find anyplace. And Roger said, you know what, let's talk to JC at the camp and see if he'll let these children who are handicapped come up there.

RH: So is JC the executive --

BJ: JC is the Executive Director of the camp. It was Macy. Macy was the Executive Director for years. Then Macy stepped down and JC became -- JC Cohen became involved. And Macy is involved with the Woldenberg Institute.

RH: For Southern Jewish Life.

BJ: Right. And so we drove up there. And with the director and another woman. And talked to JC and he said that'll be fine. If the camp is in session, something happens, bring them up, that's fine.

RH: And so this was an evacuation site for --

BJ: That was an evacuation site for the school.

RH: And how big was the school? How many --

BJ: They had a little over 100 children, handicapped children, there. Some of the parents would take them out -- like when there was an evacuation order we would always take Danny with us wherever we went. This was before, come to our house or wherever. But there are some families who never see their children, who never take them anywhere, or just are unable to deal with them, period. So they have to make provisions for the ones that are left. And usually there's anywhere from ten to 20 some odd children that are left up there. And it turned out the year before Katrina there was an evacuation. The staff came up there and the staff was also told they could bring their extended family members with them, which was fine, which meant husbands, grandmothers, grandchildren, anyone. And so they did do that, and then they had a bus and the vans, the nurses and all came -- brought some of the other children with them. The first year they loved it. There's two handicapped cabins that they use for what is known as Dream Street. Dream Street is two weeks out of the year, the first part of camp, when the counselors at the camp, each one has a one-on-one experience with a handicapped child from the Easter Seals Foundation in Meridian -- in Jackson, Mississippi, pardon me, wrong part of Mississippi. And so they have places set up for -- there are two cabins set up for children that can be in wheelchairs, wheelchair-accessible showers, bathrooms, etc. So this was perfect for them, and to tell you a funny incident that happened, the first time that they came up there one of the nurses, her husband and a grandchild arrived before the bus and some of the main caravan came. And they got

out of the car. And of course this was a nice Jewish Reform camp. And the man turns around, bends over to pick up a suitcase. And I say “oh boy are you in the wrong place”. It had Jesus Saves across the back of him. He says really. Then we told him what it was about. He said “well does that offend you that I wear this”, and he says “I'll go change”, I said “no, don't worry about it, it's perfectly fine”. But it was funny and humorous to think that that's what he had on. And the staff during that evacuation got a chance to go to the museum and see it and they loved it, they loved what they saw. It was an interesting, telling them things about Judaism that they had no idea about. So that was fun. Well of course the Katrina experience was not as fun.

RH: OK why don't we start with talking about Katrina. Tell me what you generally do to prepare for a storm and when you first started to realize you needed to do something for Katrina.

BJ: Well of course because we have children that are handicapped we know we’ve got to get out of there as fast as we can. The only storm that we ever survived in was Betsy in 1965, probably before a lot of the viewers even knew that there was a storm. And we stayed there in New Orleans and our house was fine. My mother-in-law -- my father-in-law had passed away by then. My mother-in-law went down to live on the corner of Jackson Avenue and Saint Charles Avenue and I can't think of the name of the place now but it's a motel now. And Williams Grocery Store that was across the street had a slate roof and those slates came through her windows and if she hadn't been lying in her bed with covers pulled over her face -- because she was afraid, she would have been decapitated because they came through the window and went right into the walls. So that was not a fun experience for her. There was never another major storm until a couple of years ago. And Ivan, I think was the name of it, was the one that we evacuated for first. Katrina was the second one and we realized as we always have that if he says leave, the Mayor says leave, on a Sunday, we leave on a Saturday. We always leave 24, 48 hours before they say to go. At Katrina we didn't have a dog. We had a dog the

time before. We sort of caravanned up there with kids and dogs in one car and an adult and a dog in another car. So we get up to the camp. We left on a Saturday. The storm hit on a Monday. There were a lot of people up there. There were people from all over Louisiana that had come from the south part of Louisiana, from the north shore, from the south shore. Joel, the cantor at Sinai --

RH: Colman.

BJ: Colman, he and his dog and his family were up there, he and his dog and his family. The new Rabbi from Touro, that was his first experience, welcome to New Orleans, he came to the camp. And it was a scary experience for a lot of them. We didn't think it was going to be so bad. We thought OK three days' worth of clothing, that's all we need, shorts and just be prepared for a couple days, we'll go back home. Little did we know it's now over a year and I'm still not back home. It took a terrible toll on New Orleans as you know. It took a terrible toll on the Gulf Coast also. And Monday morning -- now the storm is hitting Mississippi but Monday morning we could feel this up in Utica because the lights were flickering and then all of a sudden the electricity's gone. All right, we'll live with a little electricity gone. By nighttime though the water supply was gone because they didn't have a generator to run that. And that was a little bit scary. Then the storm came through. And the rooms were rattling, the lights were off, there was no plumbing, you were back to the old-fashioned days of living, if that's what you can call it. The next day --

RH: So did you have two children with you?

BJ: I had -- yes two children with me. And the next day we decided this was not a good idea. It was becoming very difficult. In fact if you ever hear a child say I want some ice cream for breakfast and you tell him you can't have any, guess what, the freezers were going, the refrigeration was going, and so we had little boxes of cereal and the kids and everybody was told you want some milk on your cereal, go stand in line where the ice

cream is and pour it over the cereal. So kids loved that. All these handicapped kids, they thought that was wonderful. It became very hard on --

RH: So did you go up with the handicapped --

BJ: No, no, we went up before. And they came up on a bus.

RH: And about how many of them were there?

BJ: Twenty-some odd children were there and then the extended family, there was about 40 people there. We could have gone to Houston, that's where my husband's sister's from. But we didn't, we just thought it was our obligation because we had committed to this place for the children, to Danny's school. And we ought to be there. So we did go. We both were very strong in the feelings if you make a commitment you stick to it, and that's what we did with them. They didn't -- the children didn't understand what was going on. Even the normal children didn't understand quite what was happening, that it was going to be as severe as it was. We left. That was a Monday that it hit. By Wednesday morning it was quite clear that this was not going to be a short duration that we could stick it out up there. We'd seen pictures. People had TVs in their cars. And that's what they used for the electricity. And they'd turn on the TVs, you could see New Orleans just overwashed with water, and you didn't know where your neighborhood was. You didn't know. All you knew was that the London Avenue Canal broke, the 17th Street Canal broke, and they kept saying it broke on the Orleans Parish. So we thought OK we're OK. Well we weren't OK, it backed up into Old Metairie.

RH: So tell about your neighborhood.

BJ: Our neighborhood was 42 townhouses. It was behind Metairie Country Club. And we had three feet of water in our homes. You could not get to it for a week. It was two weeks before the water went down, that you could fully get into it. And then there was just nothing but muck and I'm sure everybody's got pictures like we have 100,000

pictures, everybody else has pictures of their house and what it looked like and what the street looked like. And how you could get to it. And you could only get to it by boat for a while, and then you could get to it by walking through the muck and the flies and everything. It was just -- it's something like you thought you were in a Third World country. I've never realized what a Third World country looked like. I've seen it in some respects traveling, but I've never lived it, let's put it that way, I've seen it but I've never lived it. And I think New Orleans to this day, this is 2007? This is November --

RH: 2006.

BJ: 6 rather, this is 2006. See what happens with Katrina, your mind goes one way or the other. What mind you have left. 2006 we're still feeling the effects of it. I don't know how many years it'll be. And my husband did pass away seven weeks ago. And before he died he had a heart attack, and we both attributed that to the stress of Katrina, living here, he was semipracticing law. And then going back and forth, worrying about where our two children were going to be. Wondering what to do with them, how to do, what to do with the house and all, and he was a Katrina victim even though it was a year later. We were both convinced that this was due to Katrina. As many of them were. Others, innumerable funerals that we went to that we could attribute this to Katrina, more than anything.

RH: Really. You've been to quite a few.

BJ: A number, a number of funerals. Last year we went to them in a group. There was just like -- there were two of them on one day. One of them the person had been sick for a while. The other one they weren't. People were just going for no reason. Not no reason. We don't know what the reasons are, but yeah it's definitely Katrina-related on something like that.

RH: So if the breach was on the New Orleans side, what happened?

BJ: I wish I knew, because I wasn't there, but all I know is that it backed up. Now how did it back up? Where did it back up from? Did it go down, come out on the Orleans side and then back up that way? The 17th Street Canal also drains Old Metairie as well as New Orleans uptown. And when we lived uptown we lived on Jefferson Avenue. My husband -- let's go back. My husband was born in New Orleans. He lived uptown. Many years ago the feeling was if you lived uptown you always stayed uptown, if you lived in Gentilly you always stayed in Gentilly. Generations did this. You stayed in one place. And when he became President -- was going to become President of the National Federation of Temple Brotherhoods in North America, which is Canada and the United States, he decided that having an office downtown he needed to join up with something that was in Metairie. And that was the only way he joined a law firm in Metairie and that was the only way we ended up moving out to Metairie, because that was like taboo, oh you don't move to Metairie if you're born uptown, no indeed you don't move to Metairie if you're born uptown. But he did, and a lot of -- those days are gone. I mean, they're gone forever. So how the water got to us I don't know, all I know is that my son flew in from Tallahassee to Dallas first time, Houston the second time, and they drove to New Orleans on the day they were supposed to be able to be get into Metairie. Got to the interchange at Causeway and Airline, you know the interchange that's there? OK that interchange, he took some pictures looking toward New Orleans down Airline. And when he got back home and he showed them to somebody, said what river is that that you're taking a picture of. He says that's no river, he says that's not a river, that was -- that's the highway. He says a what. Yeah we're up here and you see that big tower in the background, that's where my mom and dad's house is. But we can't get to it because it's got water and the only way you can get to it is by boat and they won't let you go in. So how -- if it came in through the sewers -- I mean through the drainage system back that way or if it came in through Carrollton and backed all the way down, I don't know, nobody has really told me yet. It's just something that may happen again for all we know.

RH: So you realized pretty soon that you couldn't go back to New Orleans.

BJ: We realized it immediately.

RH: And that Camp Jacobs was really not inhabitable either.

BJ: No.

RH: So what happened after that? Where did you go?

BJ: After that we left. We caravanned again. We went to Dallas first.

RH: Was this just your family?

BJ: Yes, just the family because the school, the school went to a place in Pineville, which is near Alexandria, and they met somebody from a nursing -- the nursing home agreed to let all these children and people in. Some of them then were sent up to Shreveport. Some of them stayed in Pineville, but this was through the graces of a nursing home personnel who did what they could do for them. And we thought it'd be best just to take our children and go, be less burden on anybody. The more people that could leave the camp the better off you were, because it was -- nobody knew when the lights and electricity and when the facilities were going to be turned back on. So that's why everybody did leave probably by Wednesday, Thursday. Maybe there were just a few people left that stayed there. But with some of the children you can't do that. They have medication needs, they have special needs. So you have to leave and --

RH: And how about your kids? Did they have a lot of special needs?

BJ: Yeah two of them do. And so we did go to Dallas first where another brother-in-law lives. And we stayed there for about two weeks. Then we decided well, you know, you can't get back to New Orleans to do anything from Dallas. That's too far. So we went down to Houston where my husband's sister lives. And at least it's workable. You were able to get to New Orleans in a workable manner, in a timely manner I guess you could

say. My husband's building when they did go back in, it wasn't -- he was on the third floor, which was the top floor of the building, but the roof was blown off. So he lost everything in his office. He was able to retrieve some files and his computer, which he'd happened to put underneath the conference table before we left. Don't ask me why he did that, he just went over there and decided to put it underneath there. Better thing would have been if he'd have put it in the trunk and just taken it with us. But nobody realized how bad it was going to be. That was the worst feature. We came, we stayed in Houston for two months. The children were put into schools there. That didn't work out with the state of Louisiana.

RH: Explain that.

BJ: This would take about four hours to explain.

RH: I've got all day.

BJ: Yeah you do but nobody else wants to hear this. Louisiana has a Medicaid system and they were able to get their medicine from all around, anywhere we went, they were able to get their medicine, that and Louisiana, Texas worked together on that, as many other states did. Then paying for them in the special need places, Louisiana said by December, forget it, we're not paying anymore, we can't do it, we're broke already. There's so much alphabet soup in the thing, ADOBDC and it goes on and on and on, that it would be very difficult for somebody who's not involved in this to understand it. But believe me, we tried as hard as we could, because the children were very happy. We found out that wasn't going to work. So we drove, we came to Baton Rouge. Good friends of ours have a child who -- a child, she's 44, who lives here. Edie Bender, Edie and Ralph Bender. Ralph did a lot during the hurricane. Roger and my son Kenny came in here and stayed with them one time, they came in a second time and stayed with them. We came in and stayed with them. It was like a bunkhouse for refugees. Her parents were living there, her sister came in and stayed with them. I mean, people were

just giving any inch of room they had so that you could stay somewhere. And we found that at least we thought oh well we'll be in by maybe March or June at the latest. Because we're closer. Wrong. That doesn't work. Number one, contractors if you can find one, which we had one, took on more than they could chew. And OK they work for you for ten minutes and they go work for somebody else for an hour or two and you for two hours and that's just one -- this is still going on more or less. And that's what's made it very difficult. Also getting materials was not easy in New Orleans. Getting materials in Baton Rouge wasn't easy. Before we left Houston I had gone to Sears and looked at all the appliances I could find, took down the name of them and all. Governor Blanco last December, which is 2005 [sic], gave us a tax free day to buy anything you wanted related to hurricane things. So here I go with my list in hand, go here to Baton Rouge, and pick out all the appliances, the refrigerator, the freezer, the stove, the dishwasher, and because I had all the numbers from Houston. And so I thought, well gee, that's really great. Then my husband picks out the television set too. He says we might as well get another television set. So we got a break on that one. And they said to me we can't deliver these till February. I said no problem whatsoever, I don't care, February, that's fine with me, they won't be able to go in that quick anyway. I said to myself that anyway. So they came in February. Certainly did, February 6th they were brought to New Orleans. We put them in the garage at this point. The house you were able to put things in there. I didn't have electricity yet but you're still able to put things in there. About March, all my kitchen cabinets came. They came a little bit early too. They were put in the garage. And nothing went in. Well we finally got electricity, but nothing went in until -- what is this, this is November? It went in in August.

RH: Wow. So it just sat in the --

BJ: It sat in the garage. And I got so excited last week because I got my countertops. Every now and then people would say can't you move back in, no, don't have any running water downstairs, don't have any countertops, can't do anything, so at least I've

got countertops now. My biggest loss was my piano. Since I've been five years of age, and I'm now 71, I played the piano every single day of my life.

RH: Oh my God.

BJ: And this piano was given to me by my aunt. And I dearly loved it. It had the real ivory on it too. That's what you don't find anymore because they're not allowed to kill elephants just to get the ivory. So that was very traumatic because everybody knew boy if you ever have a fire in the house go get Barbara's piano out of there. My kids knew that. You know, everybody knew that. I'm going to --

RH: You were talking about --

BJ: My piano.

RH: -- going back and what your house and the shape your house was in.

BJ: Yeah but the worst thing was my piano. And I went over to -- it's called O'Neill's Piano Place in Baton Rouge. This was last May. Just to look at pianos. Now, don't forget this -- I hadn't played a piano since last August. August before. So I go into the place and tell the man that I'm looking at a piano. I think I'll be back in in a month or so, which of course isn't true, but I don't know that. You just keep thinking every month you're going to be going in in another month or so. I start sitting down, playing the piano. And I start crying and all these big crocodile tears start coming down and he says to me what's wrong. And I told him the story. And he said oh. So he said well we have a piano sale in August from LSU, Yamaha donates to LSU as a number of other music schools around the country brand new pianos. And every year, and they sell the pianos from the year before. LSU gets a break and you get a break. You can buy them. And he said would you like me to put you on the list. I said sure, thinking I won't be here, won't have to worry about that, I'll be in New Orleans, I'll probably find a piano there. That didn't happen. August 18th Roger and I go to LSU School of Music, sit down at the

pianos, they have like 80 pianos, which not all of them are baby grands, which mine was. So that's all I wanted to see. And I sit down and I start crying again, and the man walks in, he says oh I know you, you're the lady from May who started crying when she played the piano. And I say yeah that's true. Well to make a long story short, I did buy a piano. And it'll never take the place of my piano that I had for all those years, but it will come close, you see I can't -- I talk about piano, what happens, I start crying again.

RH: It's got a good sound?

BJ: Yeah. Yeah it does. So --

RH: Nice touch?

BJ: Well yes but you know what, doesn't have the ivory. So I call it the slippery keyboard is what I call them, because ivory doesn't, your fingers don't slip on there as much.

RH: What do you like to play?

BJ: Classical and popular. I play for nursing homes and things. I volunteered at the zoo for over 20 years in New Orleans and in doing so we would go to nursing homes, special ed classes, prisons, hospitals, any time I saw a piano on my day anyway I would wander over to it, think of it this way, the old people that are in nursing homes today they've not heard half of this new music, they don't know what it is, you can mention it to them, they wouldn't know what you're talking about. But they do know old music and they like to sing. And so that's what I would do. I would sit down. After we'd finished our presentation with the animals I would sit down and play the piano for them. We'd have a sing-along for a little while. So that was always fun. And I enjoyed it. And I played for different organizations in the city sometimes. I played at Temple Sinai when I was younger for different skits and things that you do when you're in Sisterhood and things of this nature. And I just always have enjoyed music and so that's what I did. The other thing that makes me cry is the loss of my husband because that was a Katrina-related

incident.

RH: So he was -- the two of you, he was healthy prior to the storm.

BJ: Yeah yeah very healthy and --

RH: And so you two made decisions together to evacuate.

BJ: We made all the decisions together, the furniture, everything that we were buying, where we were going, what we were doing with it. Danny our youngest is up here, Debbie our oldest is in New Orleans living independently. And Danny is so happy here in his group home that we decided well we'll just -- we're going to let him stay here. There is no place in New Orleans. There's nothing, no place for special needs children, I don't care what your religion is, there's no place for them. There will be one day but it won't be in my lifetime I don't believe. So we have this condominium that we had to purchase rather than rent because there was nothing available last year.

RH: And so you and your husband made the decision.

BJ: We made the decision.

RH: At some point to come to Baton Rouge. Well because your children, you had to have the Medicaid --

BJ: We had to go back to the state that they were funded from. And Debbie had to literally go back to get a Waiver program for Independent Living. She had to go back to the state school to get on the top of the Waiver program. Unfortunately the way things work in the United States, or elsewhere in the world I guess, it's not who you know sometimes, it's not even what you know. Sometimes you have to follow the protocol. If Debbie would have stayed with us and we tried to get her into independent living because they closed down Belle Chasse State School or MDC, Metropolitan

Developmental Center, she would have been number 1,000, 15,500 and something. She may have gotten her own apartment seven to ten years from now. If she went back to MDC from Texas, straight back, she would be eligible to get to the top of the list. She's on the top of the list, she's got an automatic waiver.

RH: So is this a -- she physically had to move into MDC is --

BJ: Metropolitan Developmental Center. It was a state-run school for handicapped. And they have now closed it.

RH: Really?

BJ: Yes, it's not a good sign because they moved some of the more severe cases to different places in the state. I mean, the school was not affected by the hurricane except -- no flooding. It was on the other side of the Mississippi, the Algiers side of the Mississippi. So they were able to just sustain wind damage. Then the National Guard came in. They fixed some of the roof damage. And then they proceeded to take things that they wanted, and it became a very unhappy sight over there after a while. Computers were missing and things were taken that shouldn't have been taken.

RH: So do you think it was the Guard that took them or the building wasn't secure?

BJ: So it was hard for the school to -- no, it was not just -- it was buildings. No, it was the Guard that took all these different things. First they helped to make sure they were going to be dry while they were there I guess, and then they ended up taking the things. And so it was hard for the state to get its act together back there again. And they subsequently are closing the school, they closed it down.

RH: So where's your daughter now?

BJ: She's in Independent Living. She lives in an apartment in New Orleans, and that's hard to find. You realize how expensive it is since Katrina to find apartments? If anything is worth living in the prices are astronomical. Food is astronomical. I even hear that, gee, people come as far away from New Orleans as to Gonzales to buy their food. They say it's so more expensive in New Orleans than it was before the storm. So she's living in New Orleans and she has round the clock help that lives with her and Danny is living here at a group home and so we were going to keep our condo here in Baton Rouge as a safety net. You'd be surprised. There are other people who have bought into the same condo with the same reasoning behind them to do the same thing.

RH: So for if you have to evacuate in the future you'd have a place to be?

BJ: Yeah right and then if I come up here once a month and take Danny out and he can stay here for the weekend. And so that'll be fine. It's going to be a little bit harder now. I mean, Katrina's made everything hard, but this is going to make it even harder.

RH: This being that you're on your own.

BJ: Just me yeah.

RH: You don't have your husband. Did he -- you said he lost his business in a sense or did he decide to close --

BJ: No, he was partially retired, he was semiretired, not partially, he was semiretired, he kept a few good clients and that's all he wanted to do because then we were able to travel or do different things. But it didn't work out all the way. Some of the files in a filing cabinet you'd open a drawer and all you'd have was a bunch of paper with water. So yes you do lose files, and there's still people who call, they have to go back through the court system and find their way out, because once they're gone they're gone. People are finding this out all throughout the state. I always said you come in this world with nothing, and you're going to go out the same way. And Katrina has just about done that to

everyone I think. It's put a burden on them, it's put a burden on the three Reform temples in New Orleans. They've lost a lot of membership. And an interesting feature of Gates of Prayer was Rabbi Loewy was in Houston when we were in Houston. We went to a service at a temple there that he gave the service for one night. And as he was able to move on, he moved back to New Orleans, and then Baton Rouge, and they were able to give services, hold services, joint services up here for people who were displaced from the storm.

RH: Did you connect in any way to the Jewish community in Houston?

BJ: In which way?

RH: Use of the Federation? Use of any services?

BJ: No, we were fortunate to have my husband's sister and brother-in-law. And there was anything we needed, their friends and they were able to give us. Our names were given to Federation so people could keep track of where anybody was. The same thing when we came here, the names were then transferred to Baton Rouge. So if people are looking for you through the Jewish geography list you can keep track of people. I know a whole bunch of people that live in Montgomery and some of our real good friends have moved to Atlanta now. They're going to stay there, they're not coming back. Another good friend has moved from New Orleans to Dallas. He lost his wife while he was there and I can't say it was Katrina-related, but it maybe hastened it. He's living in Dallas. So now we spend more time talking on cell phones I guess to people around the country than we did before, because everybody was at home. You had your own little group at home and our own little -- what is it they say, the gang of mine, is broken up. There was a bunch of us that played bridge. We all took lessons together. There were six couples, 12 people, three tables of bridge. And three of those are now gone -- I mean not three of those, three couples are gone now.

RH: Gone --

BJ: To other parts of the country, they live in other parts, they're not coming back. No reason to come back they said. And so people, generations from now, if they look at these tapes and want to know anything about disasters, this was a great disaster, this is a great disaster, because it's still occurring. New Orleans will never be the same city that it was. When it does come back it will probably be a different type of a city. I don't know what it will be like in ten years from now even. I don't know what the Jewish population will be like, what will it embrace. They've lost an awful lot. They lost -- you probably have seen the pictures of them holding the scrolls in the temple on Canal Street, Canal Boulevard, over their heads, going out in the water. If you take a picture of that temple today, it's just devastation around it. There's nothing, nothing around it. Was a beautiful area. Do people want to come back to that? I don't know.

RH: So why are you going back?

BJ: Because most of my friends are back there. I think you go where you have your biggest support system. We both liked it in Baton Rouge but he was 75 and I'm 71 and at that age it's hard to -- it's not impossible to make friends. Because we have made friends. And some of the friends from New Orleans have moved up here. There are two couples who've moved up here we were friendly with. But I guess New Orleans wanted to drag Roger back because he was the fifth generation to be born in New Orleans. And our grandson was born in Tallahassee. He tried to bribe my daughter-in-law to come over here to New Orleans to have the baby here so he could say six -- I mean seven generations because then our son was the sixth born there and he would have been the seventh born there. So we had six generations of Jacobs born in New Orleans. The house on Saint Charles Avenue, it was just torn down recently.

RH: Do you remember the cross street?

BJ: Yeah it was Saint Charles and Melpomene.

RH: Melpomene.

BJ: We've got a picture courtesy of Albert Frankel who was Roger's first cousin, took of that house. And it's just a lot now. And then we also have pictures that I don't have with me, they're in New Orleans, of all the -- of my husband's grandmother as a baby, as a child, and Albert's grandmother as a child standing on the front porch along with her father, the Switzers. And I guess it's something like that. All the generations you do stay around. My son, one son now lives in Tallahassee, Florida, so he won't be following the same path of staying in New Orleans. But it's funny, when he came here during the funeral and he stayed for a while, we went to lunch at Mandina's, dinner at Mandina's. Mandina's was a place in New Orleans that he remembers going to. And he looks up on the wall and he sees these posters this man's done from houses in New Orleans and restaurants in New Orleans and bars in New Orleans. And he says ooh, look at all those bars that I went to when I was growing up. And he wanted to get a picture of -- he wanted to know where he could get those, so he still has ties to New Orleans because he still wants things that deal with New Orleans. I know when I go back I'll still go back to WYES, which is a PBS station in New Orleans, which I worked and dealt with volunteering 40 years I guess or more. At the zoo I may be getting too old to be picking up animals, I don't know. But I'll figure out something to do. There was National Council of Jewish Women started a program at WDSU, which is a TV affiliate in New Orleans, called 6 on Your Side. Well since the storm -- I volunteered there for four years before the storm. And since the storm they've taken over that same WDSU is 6 on Your Side, but they still have the program running. So I may go back and do some more with that. Anything, if you live in a community you should give back to the community. Anything you can do to give back to the community, I don't care where it is. You live in a little community, if you live in a big community, there's always somebody that can use your help somewhere along the line, just like you appreciate help that people have given us

during our trek from Mississippi to Dallas to Houston to Baton Rouge and back to New Orleans, if there's any way to repay them back there should be a way that you can help if you're going to live there.

RH: Tell me about having to be a volunteer and to be able to give and then suddenly be on the side where you have to ask people for help. What's that like?

BJ: That's hard. You don't realize how hard it is until you've lost part of your life or something. Even your family, you're asking you to help them because you're asking to stay at their house. It's not the same thing as going for a visit. You go to somebody and some relative's house for a couple of weeks or you're sick and you'd have to stay there with them for a while. It's not the same thing as when you're starting all over again. When we bought this apartment we moved the sofa that I'm sitting on that was on the second floor of our house, and that was fine. Our bed was fine. We had to go out and buy things such as a trashcan. You literally start from scratch, just like you would be setting up housekeeping when you're in your early 20s. You don't realize all the stuff you need. And the emotional support is there still from the family, and the physical support they still come and help. But it's a different situation where you are able to help people in ways that you don't know that you're helping them almost, through volunteerism and different ways. And in asking somebody to help you it's a hard pill to swallow to ask somebody, it's a different feeling, believe me, it's a real different feeling. I'd rather be on the other side.

RH: Where have you gotten the most help from? What sustained you the most in this incredible loss?

BJ: I guess, well, family has sustained us the most I guess more than anything. And people are just there saying can I help you. Anything I can do to help you, just let me know. Even my family that's all over the country, it's still -- it's hard for them to understand if they've not been down here to see it. If you haven't seen what Katrina's

done it's like looking at a book and flipping through the pages. If you remember -- Roger said that when he first came back, the first day they came back to the house, he says he remembers seeing pages of Berlin bombed out during the war. Nothing, just nothing was there, but just buildings with shadows of buildings. And just heaps of debris, that's what our neighborhood in Old Metairie looked like, heaps of debris, just heaps of it. You take all, you take your 50 years -- at that point it had been 50 years, 51 years now -- of life together and put it out on the sidewalk for the trash collector to come get. That's hard too. You remember what I said, you come in this world with nothing, you go out. That's about what it is.

RH: Has that been a lesson you've learned from Katrina?

BJ: Yeah.

RH: Do you remember when you first went back what that was like, how you decided to go back and --

BJ: We had to go back just to help get the house cleaned out. What it was like, just like what I've described. It's like going back into a Third World country. We had gone to -- the summer of 2005 we had taken a trip down the Danube to Constanta, which is right on the Black Sea. We'd gone through Bulgaria, we'd gone through Serbia, we'd gone through countries that were Third World countries. And you know what? I felt like we were right back. I felt like New Orleans was a Third World country when I saw it. Parts of it still look like a Third World country. I'm sure you've seen it and you would agree that it's just -- it doesn't make sense how the United States can just let a piece of the country go. And yet call itself the United States. I feel like we're not part of the United States anymore hardly. I don't know what it is. It maybe is the same feeling that when my father says no you're not going down South to school, that a lot of people up North have, that same feeling about the South. I may be wrong, I don't know.

RH: So what do you think of the response from the Mayor to the city to the state to the federal government?

BJ: OK, there's two feelings. The first feeling -- I'm going to cough.

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RH: Barbara, I guess I was asking you right before we put on the tape if you connected in any way, because you've really been here almost a year.

BJ: Right.

RH: Had you been able to connect to the Jewish community here in Baton Rouge?

BJ: The Jewish community by -- not as far as Federation and things like that go. Been to the temple a couple of times. And the people that we are friends with here are Jewish. And I think that the people who live here, who had lived here before Katrina and who work -- dedicated themselves almost helping people from the catastrophe, have done a wonderful job. Ralph Bender I know himself took a group of SWAT members from Baton Rouge, went to New Orleans with a list of Jewish people who were still left in their homes and tried to get them out. I mean, that to me is unbelievable. Some he was successful in making them leave, others he was not, they were not successful, I think they went down there two times though to try and do this. This is when the waters were still high. Old Metairie had never flooded. There was a fairly decent Jewish population there. Some of them, they didn't think -- hurricane? Well, we've been through every hurricane, there's not going to be anything wrong. Others just stayed, had to be rescued. And some of them are coming back, some of them left permanently, they're not coming back anymore.

RH: So we were also talking about the response by the federal government and the state and --

BJ: Well I have two feelings. Before the hurricane hit you always saw on television if the big disaster comes the water will fill New Orleans like a soup bowl and this is what'll happen and it'll take weeks. Well they were wrong on that. It's taken months. For the water to drain out again. And people will be severely impacted because there won't be stores or electricity or any sanitary facilities. And they kept saying get out, get out, if you have an old friend, old neighbor on your block, pick the old neighbor up. Take her with you, take him with you, take them with you. People that don't have ways and means to get out on your block, help them. And that was pounded, I heard that a million times for two years. And before the hurricane hit I can remember hearing Bob Breck on whatever channel he was on then -- so many by now I can't remember -- saying get out of town. I heard Mayor Nagin saying get out of town. You got to get out of town. People didn't listen, they really didn't listen. I had a 96-year-old -- not 96, 92-year-old aunt who's still alive, she's 93 this year, we celebrated her birthday this summer, she lived at Park Esplanade. Friday before the hurricane when we could see it was maybe coming our way Roger called and said Aunt Elise, come on, go with us, we'll take you to the camp with us. No indeed. I'm getting ready to go to the beauty parlor, you know, a lady's got to keep up her pretty looks while she can. And I lived through every hurricane there is, you don't think I'm leaving now, do you? And she didn't leave. And we didn't know if she was alive or dead for five days. It turned out that she didn't leave her apartment -- she was in her apartment. And this was on Monday. She was evacuated on the Thursday. They were told they could go into their apartment, the Park Esplanade, and bring out a little bag, like a plastic grocery bag or something that big, of things, and that was it. And they stood in line, the people who didn't leave, downstairs, and waited while they were ferried in a boat over to City Park. From City Park they were flown to the New Orleans --

RH: Airport?

BJ: -- Airport yeah, you see how things go from your mind? They were triaged there. And she had cut her arm, but it'd been a couple of days before that, going up and down

the steps with no lights on. Emergency steps with no lights. She had cut her arm but it was too late to do anything. So they then took her by plane to San Antonio. Now this is 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning when she gets to San Antonio and they said you can call anybody you want now. She looked at the time, she says I'm not waking my children up at this time of the morning, she says I'll call them in an hour or so when it's reasonable. Well she didn't realize her children are -- we all, and her nieces and nephews which we were, were devastated. What was going on? We just were sure she must have been dead by this time. How could she survive for five days without hearing from her? So she calls her son who lives up in Washington, DC in that area. He calls my sister-in-law who's in Houston. We're not down to Houston by then. We're still in Dallas. And tells her guess what, your aunt is over in San Antonio, which is an hour and a half's drive from Dallas. Go get her. My brother-in-law and her son who had evacuated got in the car and went to San Antonio to pick her up. And she's in a thing called -- there's Section A where there's 3,000 people or something. They get there and they say where is Elise Jacobs, and they said I don't know. Well where's Section A? Oh it's over there. So they go over there and here's these 3,000 people just milling around. Her son happens to recognize the back of her hair. And finds her. And they do bring her back. First thing she wants is a drink. A bath. A drink. Some food. And a good night's sleep. And then she'll go to the beauty parlor the next day of course. Because she missed her beauty parlor appointment. From there, after she'd had all those for a couple days, she was flown up to New York -- I mean up to Washington to stay with him. You know what she was unhappy about all those months she stayed there? She was unhappy because she plays duplicate bridge every day of her life. And there was nobody up there to go play bridge with. And she couldn't get out of the house half the time, because the two -- her children work. So she just sat there and watched QVC all the time as she said. So she was happy to get back to New Orleans because she could go play bridge again. What she didn't know is bridge has moved all the way out to Kenner. So she had to drive -- here she is, 92 years old, Driving Miss Daisy, all the way out to Kenner every day to play

bridge. So she didn't even listen to the words evacuate. And in Houston and in Dallas where we were, and people were beating themselves and calling Nagin crazy and this one lazy and that one names, everything went along. And we were both sitting there saying no, they told you to get out. But you didn't listen. You didn't listen to get out. They told you to go get your neighbor. But you didn't listen to get out. We defended part of the people part of the time. Now in part of Metairie I know people were not defending Aaron Broussard because he sent the people with the pumps, which didn't affect us. We're still the 17th Street Canal. But it did affect an awful lot of people in New Orleans, and that's why everybody has said he was the fall guy for that one.

RH: You said you were of two feelings.

BJ: I'm going to get to the second feeling.

RH: I'm sorry.

BJ: The second feeling, here both Roger and I are defending everybody from Texas for a number of months. We moved to Baton Rouge, we're still defending. And all of a sudden Nagin goes and makes his Chocolate City remark. And I said something's wrong. Here we're defending the guy the whole time and now he acts like he's completely nuts. And so the more we stayed in Louisiana, the more we heard, maybe people knew something we didn't know. I think he truly -- it was just truly too much for him to handle. He just -- he couldn't take it. And Blanco has not been able to. Nobody was prepared for this type of disaster, nobody. And I'm not sure that any of us could have done any better. I would hope somebody could do better. I really would, and I think maybe yeah, now that the horse is out of the barn it's too late, isn't it. But that was my two feelings. First I'm defending and next I'm knocking him. I don't know which is right, but I don't think everything was done since then should have been done. There are still plenty of things that they're not doing, they don't get it.

RH: And so what do you think they should be doing?

BJ: I think they should be trying to figure it out. But I don't know how. I was surprised he got reelected again. I was deeply surprised that he got reelected with all the gaffes that he made.

RH: So what are your feelings about the recovery?

BJ: It's too slow, much too slow. Not just from my area, from areas where there are people who -- they say you can get back to New Orleans and get your house going. Where are they going to stay? Where are people going to stay? Some people -- I have asthmatic bronchitis. I couldn't go back and stay in the house while they were doing it. Sure I probably would have had the house done by now. But I couldn't do it. How about people that don't have the resources to get back? See that's where my volunteerism comes in I guess. I see the other side of the world. I see the people who can't afford it, who can't get back. They want to get back, they can't do it. They don't have the resources to do it. Where are they going to live while they're getting their act together? I don't know. Debbie has two ladies that work with her. I told you she has them around the clock, our daughter. Both of them are trying to get their houses completely back together. And they were able to stay with somebody. And one of them at least stays with Debbie at night. That's the only place she's got. That's really a very strange scenario. Katrina has done harm physically, mentally and impoverished people. And everybody's been on the receiving end of it from the top to the bottom.

RH: From rich to poor.

BJ: Yeah from rich to poor. It's a signal that help is needed somewhere in the United States. And how can -- the United States can't do everything for you, you got to do some things for yourself. But in a situation like this, we heard stories about how trucks were sent away with trucks full of water and food. We actually know a fact where the National

Guard came in and commandeered some of the gasoline that was supposed to go to the -- no. Not the National Guard, Harry Lee's men from Jefferson Parish came in and commandeered some places where it was supposed to go to the National Guard because he couldn't get stuff for himself. And there were a lot of situations like that, a lot of situations that were wrong. I don't know how you make them right. I'm not sure anybody knows how to ever make something like this right again. Because it happened so fast.

RH: You think -- we were talking a little about it -- directly if we could, about race in the storm?

BJ: I wasn't there. Only know what I saw. And what I saw was ugly. And I don't know that it was necessarily black against white or white against black. I'm not sure that's a fair assessment. The people that were there committing the crimes knew they were committing the crimes, no question about it. And they didn't care what was happening. They didn't care if they stole from a church, a synagogue, a children's hospital, charity hospital.

RH: So when you say what you saw, what you saw on TV or --

BJ: That's what we saw on TV. We weren't there. And you only can see what they're going to let you see from television. And we've heard stories from people who tried to get other people out, but it's not right to say that Nagin said at one point what -- or not Nagin, maybe it was somebody else that said they bombed the levees so that the black people would die. That's absurd. But somebody's going to believe it one day, just like they're going to believe anything. People will say strange things, and other people will sit there and believe them.

RH: What would you like to see for New Orleans, the New Orleans you're going to go back and build?

BJ: Well, I'm not young enough to see the final end of New Orleans. The building, I'd like to see it be some of the fun city that it was. To have better dialog between the races or between the young people and the older people. I worked, I wasn't young when -- I was young when I first started volunteering and doing things, and that's one thing, but you're seeing older people now, I am they. In other words I don't know what I expect to see. I don't have any expectations because it's just too soon to have any expectations. It's not all together yet, so you can't have expectations if it's not all together. I don't even see the -- what is it they say, the light at the end of the tunnel? I don't see that light. The politics are going to be like politics of old, are they going to be like politics of new? I think that's something that we all just have to wait and see what's going to happen. I don't think there is an expectation out there, it's too soon, it's only a year.

RH: What did you like to do when you were in New Orleans? What did you do with your husband? What were the favorite things you guys liked to do?

BJ: Well in New Orleans? What do people in New Orleans like? Eat. Naturally. That's what we like to do. What do you think we did in Baton Rouge? Ate. We went to more restaurants here than some of the people who've lived here. We found more restaurants. We had a good time doing that, good time with taking trips and all. He was on the Board at one time of Dillard University -- not on the Board, but he was with the Black-Jewish Relations of Dillard and he was one of the ones that started it. And Sam Cook called Roger his mentor at one point. He was President of Dillard University. And he always called him my good friend Roger. And so I'd like to see relationships like that continue. I don't know anything is possible anymore, I have no idea. I'd like to see some of the fun things happen. I'd like to see the zoos back and the aquariums back, you can tell I like animals, the zoos back and the aquariums back. Your synagogues are back and I think you've got a lot of people really thinking hard now. Used to collect food every year in your drives in the synagogues for the needy. We are they sometimes. There was an interesting scenario that's come out of all this with my husband dying. Right after the

hurricane people all across the United States were sending food and clothing to where? I don't know where it went but I know bundles of it were destroyed, a lot of clothing, nobody wanted clothing, there was just too much, just way too much clothing. When he died seven weeks ago we couldn't find a place that would take clothing. Good clothing. And finally one place opened up -- it's on Jefferson Highway, I can't think of what it's called now.

RH: In New Orleans.

BJ: In New Orleans.

RH: The Salvation Army?

BJ: No, wasn't Salvation Army or Goodwill, they didn't want clothing. Bridge House. Bridge House, if you don't know it, helps people in need that have addictions and things like this. And they finally started taking clothing and I said hurray. But it was funny because my son was here from Tallahassee, said well if we have to we'll drag it back to Tallahassee and give it to them. My sister who was here from Houston said I can't believe nobody wants clothing. You realize the people that want the clothing aren't back in New Orleans yet. Why take something that they can't use again? And so we were to -- I had people scouring everything to find out who in the world will take clothing. That may sound like a simple thing because you and I are used to just carting our clothing to Salvation Army or put it in a drop box, Volunteers of America or somebody, take it to your synagogue and they'll take it, give it to somebody. Nobody wanted it.

RH: I had the same thing happen. I found Bridge House.

BJ: Did you?

RH: Yes. Coincidentally. Tell me how do you think the Jewish community has conducted itself --

BJ: I think it did admirably. I don't know what it did in New Orleans because I wasn't there. I only know what I've heard that they did very well. And especially in Baton Rouge I know how well they've done. In Houston they did very well. Because I've heard through my sister-in-law and brother-in-law who do a lot of work in Houston that they did a wonderful job. And finding out where people were, that seemed to be the most important thing. Somebody was always looking for somebody, and where did they disappear to, and I think they've done a real good job of networking I guess is what it's called. And when you move they do a good job of networking, because we were on the list in Houston because we lived there for two months. Now we're on the list in Baton Rouge. Pretty soon we'll maybe be off that list and be on the list in the Federation in New Orleans.

RH: What has the Jewish community meant to you during this experience?

BJ: I don't think it's had the same meaning that it would have had. I don't understand really what you want me to say on that in a way.

RH: I don't really want you to say anything --

BJ: I know you don't want me to say --

RH: I can move on.

BJ: It's just --

RH: Has your relationship to the Jewish community changed?

BJ: No. No, relationship has stayed the same. I don't mind telling anybody I'm Jewish. I'm Jewish and I'll help anybody, I don't care what they are.

RH: Has being Jewish meant anything to you?

BJ: It's not any more than anything else I guess. It's just during the time of crisis nobody cares what you are, who you are or anything, they don't care. They don't care if you're a pauper, they don't care if you're a president. Well maybe I should say they care if you're a president. But that's going a little bit too high. But --

RH: Well has any of your relationship or your understanding of God changed? Any sense of belonging to the community changed in any way?

BJ: No, you still feel like you belong to the community and the Jewish community, which my friends are all part of in New Orleans, I still belong to that community. And people up here have asked us, asked me now, to stay up here with the Jewish community and the people I've met here. It's funny, New Orleans is known mostly as a Catholic city. So of course what do we know? Everything there is to know about Catholicism almost. When we first came to Baton Rouge, the building that I'm staying in has 120 condominiums in it. So there's a number of people in it, and everybody was very very nice. And they all thought we were Catholic because we came from New Orleans. They didn't know we were Jewish. Finally we told them we were Jewish. They said really, well, how do you know so much about Catholic things, what happens. And I said because it's a Catholic city, that's how. One interesting thing, in 1976 I was Co-chairman of WYES TV's public auction along with another friend. One was always -- seemed to be always Jewish and one was always Gentile. And Ann Conroy was my co-partner and we've become very very good friends. And we've stayed friends, she and her husband and Roger and I have been friends now since the '70s. They have come to things of ours. They understand Judaism. We understand Catholicism. When the Pope came to visit in New Orleans she called me one day and she says “Barbara I want you to be on the committee for the Pope,” and I said, “Ann, I'm Jewish, remember.” I don't know what to do. She says don't worry, there'll be somebody downstairs that'll know something about the parishes and everything, just hand the phone to them if there's any problems. So I was the one Jewish person there and there was somebody else who was Episcopal there. That was the only

people there were. I didn't care. They knew I was Jewish, didn't make any difference to me. In fact I had two nuns who used to babysit for our son, the youngest one, Danny I was telling you about. And they were wonderful with him. One day we come in from a trip and Sister Green says to Sister Eileen you tell her. No you tell her. No you tell her. OK when we sit down to dinner she'll see the difference. They'll see the difference. And we sat down to dinner. And of course they're always crossing themselves. So what's Danny doing? Da da da da da da da da da da da. She said see, I told you they'd see something different. By the time we got back, well those two nuns were really excited because working with the Pope I was able to give them tickets to be in the Mass at the Saint Louis Cathedral. And of course they had their own tickets to get into the big Mass out at the lakefront. And then when the Pope came back to the residence, the Archbishop's residence, each of us were given a pass so they could go see him almost in person. And they were given those. The day of the Mass. Because I was Jewish and it didn't mean anything to me. I stayed up on Carrollton in the residence up there where I could give out the tickets to people who were late or something, because I didn't have to worry about things like that. So that part, like I said, Jewish, you don't have to hide it. You have to be proud of it. And --

RH: What's distinct to you? That's certainly something distinct about the Jewish community in New Orleans is this mixing with --

BJ: That was -- when I moved to New Orleans, and you'll hear a lot of people when they come to New Orleans, they'll say -- when they want to live there they'll say where's the Jewish place where all the Jewish people live. There is no such thing. And that's hard to believe, because in every part of the country you go to almost, up north anyway, the Jewish people live in this section, you're new to the city, you want to go here, OK that's where the Jewish people live, you go there. They can ask you that a thousand times and you say hey go from the Lakefront to Metairie to the Garden District to Gentilly, anywhere you want to live. No, there must be someplace where they all live. No, no, they're

scattered everywhere. I always found that the relationship between Jewish and Gentile were much better than they -- in the -- down in New Orleans anyway than they were anywhere else. I think same holds true for Mobile, because my roommate from college was from Mobile and she found the same thing. Didn't make any difference. And with it being such a Catholic city you'd think that's not going to happen.

RH: What's it like to marry into a family that's fifth generation Jewish --

BJ: I wouldn't know any different.

RH: -- not fifth generation Jewish but being in --

BJ: In the city.

RH: -- in the city.

BJ: Well, back in the '50s it was interesting. You'd walk up to somebody and say your name and they'd say who's your grandmother. Oh I know who you are now. That's what it was like. Then you sort of made your own way after that. But you were always accepted. It's a different hierarchy than it is now. You don't find that as much anymore. But you did find that back in those days. All you had to do was go back a couple of generations and say -- or a generation even, say who your parents were, who the grandparents were.

RH: Are there any concepts in Judaism that have helped you frame this past year?

BJ: Some of the old prayers. I say the old prayers. It was interesting because both of us being Reform, we grew up Reform, we grew up with the old prayer book. I'm sure you remember the old prayer book. And it has changed so many times as Roger used to say they're now trying to make it politically correct because they've added Esther and Ruth and everybody else into the mix instead of God he, it's whatever. And I think just

because I'm listening to my son now who's 48 and he's saying man, some of these things that they're talking about now, I don't know what they're doing. They're ruining all the prayers. I went pardon me. That's my generation saying that, that's not your generation saying that. And when Roger passed away Rabbi Loewy came here and I said we want a memorial service. We want a happy service. We don't want a traditional old hang your head service thing. I said because Roger loved life and the one thing he would like above all if you would do it is use the old prayer book. Use some of -- and there were two old prayers in there that he said he would use. And he did. And it was a celebration of life rather than a memorial service rather. Some of my friends have said to me, because you don't know what's going on that day, did you see everybody that was sitting in the temple when you came to those two -- when they said the two prayers. They were all saying it. Because that's our generation, that's what we knew. Maybe we're harder to change than the younger generation, I don't know.

RH: Can you remember the prayers?

BJ: I knew you were going to ask that, didn't I? No.

RH: No.

BJ: No. I know them as well as I know my own name and I'll tell them to you about ten minutes from now but I don't know them now. I knew you were going to say that too.

RH: Well it's just --

BJ: When I got into --

RH: -- so there.

BJ: I know it is there. One was -- I can't even think of it. Need some prompts. Where's the rest of my family to prompt me?

RH: What was it like having Rabbi Loewy come up here? He came up to Baton Rouge?

BJ: Yeah, he came to Baton Rouge. That was very comforting to know that somebody would do something like that. And maybe it's because -- well I used to think Baton Rouge is so far away. It's not anymore when you drive it couple times a week. I thought it was very nice of him because he would do the same thing if he was in New Orleans. Any Rabbi would, I hope they would, anyway, would come to meet the family and find out what their wishes are and find out more about them. But to travel all the way up here was fine. And that was very comforting. And he put that in, some of the words that we used and some of the thoughts we used those days was in the celebration service that we had.

RH: What did you do with your husband? Did you take him back to New Orleans? Do you want to --

BJ: I don't know if I should, but do you want me to?

RH: Yeah, I think it's beautiful.

BJ: OK, he was cremated, which our son looked at me and says Mom I thought you all had plots. I says you know what, we decided we don't want to take up any more space. Nobody's going to see us after we're gone. I said you won't be coming back to New Orleans, you're not going to go trekking out to wherever we are, so I thought we would do something with your dad that was appropriate. I said it was all a celebration. He loved Tulane University. And of course this is football season. And he played on the football team, kind of played, back in the '40s. So I said we're going to take his tickets and they're going to be cremated with him. And if he wants to go to any of the games or see any of the games he's going to have to sift through the ashes of himself to find out where his seats are, what he wants to do. So sure enough I did that, had that. Then a couple weeks later his sister Sandy Breslauer from Houston and a good friend of his, Cathy

Kahn, Cahn Kahn, well it was Cahn before, C-A-H-N, then it changed to K-A-H-N. Her maiden name was Cahn, her married name was Kahn. Her husband had passed away the year before and I said that we were very good friends throughout his life. He was always good friends with them. The three of us divided up, divvied up Roger's ashes and spread a little of them out on Tulane's campus where he spent many an hour. And spots where he played football, we put a little on the 50-yard line, little on the goal line or whatever. Then as a youngster he was in Audubon Park, because they lived close to Audubon Park. And when our children were little we'd go to Audubon Park, and he would go fishing with our middle son a lot in Audubon Park. So the lagoon's got a little bit of history, a little bit of Roger. Then we went out to the lakefront. Of course he went fishing all the time in Lake Pontchartrain. We go out to the point, where we thought well this would be a good place. Here everybody is out there fishing. We said no, forget that, we're not going to dispose of some of him here. So we found another spot. And all three of us felt so much better after he'd been finally put to rest back in New Orleans. His great-grandparents, his great-great-grandparents, his grandparents and his parents all are resting in New Orleans, and so is he now. And I guess that's the end of the story.

RH: I have a few more questions. I can always ask another question. Tell me what you've learned about yourself this past year.

BJ: I don't know that I've learned anything about myself. I just -- you just carry on. That's all. I've been taught to carry on with dealing with our two kids the way we've dealt with them over the years. You've learned to just go forward one step at a time and move on. And that's what we've done. One step at a time and moved on. Both of us did that. Now there's me doing that.

RH: Is there anything in your life now that you would do differently or that you want to do that you haven't been able to do before?

BJ: No, it's going to be harder now. It's the antithesis of what you just said. I've been told don't make any rash decisions, and I'm not. So I can't tell you where my life is going to lead me or what I'm going to do or what I would do different. I don't know. This is a new game, it's not a fun game but it's a game.

RH: Do you have an idea of the first thing you want to do when you get back into your house?

BJ: No, because I've spent a couple of times staying there at night. I just want to be back to where my friends are so that we can see each other every day rather than talk on the phone.

RH: Is there anything else you'd like to tell us?

BJ: I think I've told you a lot, haven't I?

RH: You've told me a marvelous lot.

BJ: I can't think of anything else. Just I hope this never happens again to anyone. It's a tough pill to swallow.

RH: Thank you.

BJ: OK, I'm finished.

[END OF INTERVIEW]