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Dr. Benjamin Zolov

Benjamin Zolov

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44

PORTRAITS OF THE PAST: THE JEWS OF PORTLAND

The Jewish Bicentennial Oral History Program

Dr. Konnilyn G. Feig, Director

September 1, 1977

Commissioned by: The Jewish Federation of Southern Maine

The Maine Jewish Bicentennial Oral History Program

PORTRAITS OF THE PAST: THE JEWS OF PORTLAND

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Commissioned by:

The Jewish Federation of Southern Maine with the
support of the University of Maine, Portland/Gorham,
College of Arts and Sciences

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Matthew Goldfarb
Jerry Goldberg
Mrs. Stephen Levine
Mrs. Charles Mack
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Project Dates:

June 1, 1976 to September 15, 1977

PARTICIPANTS IN THE ORAL HISTORY

1. Judge Louis Bernstein
2. Mrs. Israel Bernstein (Rebecca)
3. Sumner Bernstein
4. Mrs. Louis Black (Selma)
5. Gerald Boxstein
6. Sam Cinamon
7. Robert Clenott
8. William Cohen
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10. Mrs. Maurice Drees (Mildred)
11. Rabbi Steven Dworken
12. Julius Elowitch
13. Daniel Epstein
14. Mrs. Abe Fineberg (Tama)
15. Mrs. Norman I. Godfrey (Ethel)
16. Jerome Goldberg
17. Arnold Goodman
18. Mrs. Arnold Goodman (Dorothy)
19. Julius Greenstein
20. Morris Isenman
21. Harry Judelshon
22. Mrs. Max Kaplan (Ethel)
23. Jules Krems
24. Mrs. Meyer Lerman (Ethel)
25. Mrs. Charles Mack (Cynthia)

26. Harold Nelson
27. Mrs. Harold Nelson (Mildred)
28. Arnold Potter
29. Mrs. Rebecca Rice
30. Maurice Rubinoff
31. Louis Seavey
32. Barnett Shur
33. Mrs. Barnett Shur (Clarice)
34. Bertram Silverman
35. Israel Silverman (Dean)
36. Rabbi Harry Sky
37. Jerry Slivka
38. Mrs. Ben Troen (Gertrude)
- *39. Harry Weinman
40. Louis Weisberg
41. Judge Sidney Wernick
42. Mrs. Sidney Wernick (Charlotte)
43. Mrs. Lester Willis (Rita)
44. Dr. Benjamin Zolov

* Deceased since interview

August, 1977

The Oral History Study

A Note to the Reader from the Director:

Background to the Study

Sometime in the early summer of 1975, a group of Jewish leaders appointed by the Jewish Federation of Southern Maine as a "Jewish Bicentennial Committee" met together at the home of Rabbi Sky. National and State Bicentennial planning was at its peak; and some Jews wanted the Jewish community to do something to emphasize the heritage, the presence, the tradition, or the contributions in Maine over the 200 years of a distinctive culture and religious community. They knew from heresay that the Jews had come early to Maine, formed significant communities and had made and were making a considerable impact on the past, present and future of the State. But what should they do? The American Bicentennial theme, "Heritage and Horizons," seemed to echo the Talmudic words: "Know whence you have come and wither you are going." So many possibilities existed, and the suggestions flowed freely. Should the plans be comprehensive and cover the entire State or should they emphasize only the larger communities? Should the program, whatever it became, be aimed at increasing the historical and cultural understanding of the general community, or should it be a kind of re-exploration, re-examination, reminder for the diverse Jewish community? Ought it take the form of some gift which a grateful Jewish community could present to the State which had so recently served as a haven or opportunity for all of their immigrant parents and grandparents? And what vehicles should it use - theatre, music, lectures, exhibits, discussion groups, dialogues? Whatever was done would have to be inexpensive, because the Federation Program Funds were already committed to a continuing project which by consensus the entire community agreed had an urgent priority - the resettlement in Portland of Russian Jewish families, fleeing from the

modern form of Soviet persecution. The Federation had always participated fully in national and international projects, and the Refugee Program received its usual alert and committed attention. So the Committee deliberated, argued, pondered, debated.

Finally, a member of the group hesitatingly suggested the sponsorship of a book - which would detail the entire history of the Jews of Maine. No information was available on the Jews of Maine with the single exception of a brief book, Portland Jewry, written by Ben Band in 1955, sponsored by a newly formed Jewish Historical Society, and published locally. Meant to be a beginning step in helping the Jewish community learn about itself, the book essentially tried to pull together the chronology of events in the formation of the Portland community and its institutions, and to identify some of the participants and leaders in that extraordinary development. The beginning step was a valiant one, but it ended there as did the Historical Society. The Portland Jews were too busy doing, building, creating, and helping Jews across the world. It was not yet the time for reflection, for stocktaking, for a thorough examination of the ROOTS of the community. But now, perhaps the time and energy had to be taken, lest the history disappear, never to be reclaimed; and the rich tradition never be transmitted accurately to the children and to the community.

Rabbi Sky mentioned that the American Jewish Committee was suggesting, in fact, encouraging, a series of Oral History Projects across the country, emphasizing that a well conceived multifaceted reconstruction of the past could surely help to create a balance, an awareness of the unfolding story of the American Jewish experience. Perhaps that thrust should be seized upon in Portland. But no one really knew what oral history meant, and additionally, who would do it? There were no Jewish historians in the State of Maine. Rabbi Sky alerted the Committee to the unusual fact that the Dean of Arts and Sciences

at the University of Maine at Portland-Gorham was a scholar of the Holocaust; and as an Associate Professor of History had initiated courses in Nazi Germany and the Holocaust. Perhaps Dr. Konnilyn Feig could be approached. Rabbi Sky knew that Dean Feig had a heavy schedule in her position; that she would never allow her additional commitment to the teaching of the Holocaust to be tampered with; and that in whatever free time she managed to find, she was writing her own book on Hitler's concentration camps - the capstone of fifteen years of research in Europe. It looked hopeless, but the Committee asked the Rabbi to try. And he persevered. And Dean Feig found herself volunteering her free time to create and direct the project.

When I entered the picture, I had the same overwhelming reservations which the Committee had already expressed. I had little time, and my interest and commitment centered on the Holocaust. Where would I ever find the space for such an enormous project, and who would help? We had no graduate program in Liberal Arts at the University. Where would I get the trained assistance I would need? I met with the Committee, outlined the limits of what could be done, and explained that the project could never be a book, but a re-beginning, another first step, which could be built upon in the succeeding years, and resulting perhaps, someday in a full and real history of Maine Jewry.

It would be an oral history folklore of Portland Jewry; but widened to use the group as a microcosm of Maine Jewry, an example of some kinds of experiences of American Jewry, a renewed acquaintance with the Old World Culture, and a picture of the often-repeated American immigrant story. It would result in a set of final transcripts, made available to the entire reading public. Thus, a small study, a beginning, with wide implications, centering in Portland but suggesting a state-wide impact, a re-examination for the Jewish community and a first reading understanding for the general community, a part of a picture

puzzle for an entire nation, a gift - to the Jewish community and to the Portland community. To my surprise, the Committee and the Federation voted to sponsor the project. I finally agreed to do it for two reasons. When I came to Portland, the Jewish community had been very good to me and had invited me to the Synagogues, the organizations and the homes to talk about the Holocaust. I felt some gratitude. But far more important, I felt a sense of shock when I, too, discovered the absence of any real research and history on one of Maine's most significant immigrant groups. I, too, felt the sense of urgency to re-begin before it really was too late.

Oral History as a Research Discipline

Oral History concerns itself with conservation of a special kind. It conserves the intimate knowledge and experience of humans who have made significant contributions to the life of the time, to a group, to an area, or who have been ideally posted to observe the major events and developments. These humans may be leaders and movers of history, such as Kennedy, Kruschev, and other notables. But oral history taken from those who "made history," only touches the tip of the iceberg when understanding of human cultures and the fabric of civilization is at issue. Perhaps, then, of even greater significance are oral histories taken from groups of ordinary human beings - men and women, known primarily to their neighbors, and perhaps in their towns and states, through whose lives have flowed the currents of an historical age; and whose reactions and understandings determine a collective impact upon a cultural grouping and a time; or upon whom a collective impact of a time and a culture can be measured, evaluated, analyzed, pondered.

The ways of life characteristic of earlier America are rapidly disappearing, but there are persons still alive today who remember them

vividly. Their memories will not be preserved by writing historical memoirs. Oral history projects have attempted to utilize individual recordings, which are admittedly fragmentary and highly personal, but when taken together provide a fund of color, detail, and incidents valuable for future historical research. Roots, centers, beginnings, road signs - all are critical ingredients to any portion of America's colorful culture, and to the essentials of every human being's possession of knowledge of his own individual and group past. And here it is that the necessity for an oral history project centering upon Jewish life in Maine reaches the critical level.

The Jews in Maine

That Jews have been deeply involved in the religious, educational, political, cultural, intellectual and economic life of the State of Maine is one of the best-kept secrets in historical and sociological literature. And Maine is one of the few states in America to be devoid of any major study of one of its important cultural influences. Since 1800 at least, Jews have been living in Maine, and since 1829 with the formation of a Jewish Community in Bangor, some Jewish community life has existed. By 1866, Jews had begun to settle in Portland in noticeable numbers. For nearly 100 years, then, Jews have been making a considerable contribution to and impact upon the state at every level and in every area.

The Jerusalem of the North - the term used so frequently in the past to refer to the Portland Jewish Community. Almost all of the Jews who immigrated to Portland came from Eastern Europe - from Poland, Russia, Latvia, Lithuania - and they brought with them the rich Ashkenazen Orthodox religious and cultural traditions. Orthodoxy found a new home in Portland, in a transplanted form, and held its strength and oneness far longer than most communities in the U.S.

Early twentieth century Portland might be described for the Jews as a community of eastern European shtetl survivors, a pious Orthodox community with several synagogues, central in the lives of the community members. Formal education played a minimal role in the lives of their parents, yet most of the children are learned in the study of the Talmud and graduated from college or comparable institutions. Here we have an unusual phenomena: parents are immigrants, starting out as peddlers or small shopkeepers, and in one generation, the children are college graduates. These college-educated men and women began in the Twenties and Thirties to question traditions which seemed to them troublesome in a modern world. In America, the land of freedom, of relief from pogroms and Russian Army conscription, where the streets were "paved with gold," the wall of Orthodox piety of Portland's Jews began to show cracks as these men and women struggled to educate and provide a better standard of living for themselves. Many had to break the holiness of the Sabbath to work.

Institutions had to be created. In the decade from 1920 to 1930 the Jewish Home for the Aged was built to accommodate family members who could no longer be cared for by their families. In the decade from 1930 to 1940 the idea of a new Jewish Community Center, with a gym, social rooms, kosher kitchens, and sauna and bathing facilities, culminated in the dedication of the present Center in 1938. Throughout the Forties and the Fifties this Center was the focus of family, social and athletic life and the focus of all Jewish functions in the city of Portland.

The winds of Conservatism and Reformism bypassed Portland and it was not until the decade from 1940 to 1950 that a demographic migration from the inner city to the outskirts of Portland, and a shared belief by many that options to Orthodoxy had to be created, resulted in the formation of Temple Beth El, as a Conservative Congregation. The Conservative movement wanted to conserve

that which was appealing in Orthodoxy, and to bring those who were no longer practicing Judaism back into a religious atmosphere. That decade also saw the organization of the Jewish Federation, and its international concern in the aftermath of the Holocaust and the birth of Israel. The funds raised to help Israel during those eventful years into the Fifties are impressive for a community which has relatively little Jewish wealth.

Jewish people succeeded during the next two decades in breaking down some of the barriers to those of their faith in clubs, organizations, professions, institutions, and geographic areas which had previously excluded them. The need for the construction of a new Orthodox Synagogue in the Temple Beth El area became clear during the early Fifties; and the Orthodox Shaarey Tphiloh Hebrew School and Synagogue on Noyes Street was erected. The Newbury Street Synagogue, Etz Chaim, and Anshe Sfaard maintained their separate identities, although many of the congregation members of Newbury Street became members of the new Synagogue. During the Sixties the Community Hebrew School was created.

Today Orthodoxy and Conservatism exist today side by side, strong, active enriched by each other. In the baggage which the immigrants, the founders of the Portland community and those who followed brought with them were two unflinching commitments and enduring dreams - education and public service, unfaltering, regardless of the cost. And the story which emerges is one of involvement and the mutually beneficial changes which come out of the tensions and reciprocal relationships between Maine society and Maine's Jews as individuals and as a community.

The Study

This transcript is only one of forty-four. It presents a portrait of a family, a story of generations, in America and in Europe. The reader would be doing himself a disservice to focus only on this transcript . All forty-four

volumes should be read, because they tell a different story - the story of a remarkable community, a courageous people. Each volume is a family story and one small part of a community folklore history. The full set of final transcripts will be readily available to the Jewish community in the Temple Beth El Library and to the public, in the Portland Public Library. In addition, a professional Permanent Photographic Exhibition containing mounted pictures of each interviewee and pictures of all of the buildings and places significant in Portland Jewish History has been presented to the Federation. It will reside in Temple Beth El.

The enormous project itself was completed under the Coordinator, Lisa Wilhelm, with two years of committed, continuous and volunteer help from a few undergraduate students trained by the Director and the Coordinator, and a few gentile and Jewish community volunteers who worked with incredible energy and dedication. Behind it was the unfailing sponsorship of the Jewish Federation. And, of course, central to it all are the human beings who are the study, the men and women who invited us into their lives and homes, and who so openly and compassionately shared their thoughts, their honest assessments, their feelings and intuitions, their remembrance of factual events, their hopes and their fears concerning the development of this exceptionally strong and traditionally Orthodox Jewish community over a period of seventy-five years, and its development in the future.

Contained within their words is an intricate web of Jewish concerns which bear significance not only to the present and future generations of this community, but also to the broader realm of American Jewry. The project raised as many questions as it answered, questions of considerable scope which could affect American Judaism in the future: What does being

Jewish mean to you? Of what significance is Israel to you in your life? How do you feel about intermarriage and assimilation, and how will these facts affect Judaism? What trends have you observed in the Jewish institutions in this city, and where are these trends leading you? What have been the changes in your Jewish family life - which traditions, cultural and religious, remain with you and which have been discarded?

The majority of interviewees are over the age of fifty, born of immigrant parents or immigrants themselves, who carried with them to Portland the traditions of the Eastern European shtetl and who have watched that ghettoized secure life in the "Jerusalem of the North" be slowly supplanted by a more modern, urbane existence of the present-day Jews.

They represent a heterogeneous group but with a strong linkage. Each is an inspiration, and each reflects commitment, dedication, humanness. As individuals, each has something to say about himself, his life, his hopes, his dreams, his thoughts, his sadnesses. And if the group is placed together, the picture that this gathering together paints, patch-work quilted as it may be, kaleidoscopic as it may seem, has an artistic potential for richness, continuity, color, form and spirit.

Those of the older generation miss the piety of the "Jerusalem of the North": the days when on a Friday afternoon the smells of the Sabbath baking emanated from Jewish neighborhoods; when the men gathered after the daily minyan within the confines of their synagogues to share their thoughts, discuss business, or play cards; when Bar Mitzvah celebrations were simple, with a little herring and kichel, and pure; and when the younger generation shared their lives with the older generation. Today the traditional, Orthodox ways are melded with a modern age, and Jews realize that they can be both good Americans and good Jews. The Jewish Family Services has successfully

brought about, during the past three decades, a transition from the old belief that Jews should take care of their own to an enlightened view that Jews should take advantage of community services. Citizens are now aware of Jewish contributions to the general community, and the "Jewish tokenism" of past decades is disappearing. While there are as many definitions of Judaism as there are Jews, ranging from ultra-Orthodox to minimal identification with any aspect of Judaism, there is little to support the belief of one of our interviewees that the American Jew "will sink into the fading sunset." Many view Judaism, to some degree, as a continuum which has survived for centuries. Many also talk about it as a cultural identification, a combination of religion and common ancestry in terms of the Bible and mystical in the sense that it is inexplicable. Judaism is more than good works and ethics. It includes that mystical, spiritual something which ties all Jews from all times together in their diversity - that mystical tie which all of our interviewees struggled to define when speaking of their own Judaism.

To everyone the state of Israel has some degree of significance. "A Homeland." "A fountainhead with which all Jews can identify." "A place that worries about Jews - just in case." "A unifying structure of Judaism." "The yearning of a 2,000-year-old culture." "It shows the world that Judaism lives." "Israel made the Jew an important human being in today's world." "A paradise built from a wasteland." These are just a few of many reasons why Israel must survive for the Portland Jews.

It is with a depth of gratitude that I express my final thanks to these forty-four individuals who have allowed all of us from the outside to view for the first time a picture of the Jerusalem of the North, to understand

the background and traditions of this community, and to realize the commitment and contribution, past and present, of Portland Jewry.

Dr. Konnilyn G. Feig
August 25, 1977

JEWISH BICENTENNIAL ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEWEE: Dr. Benjamin Zolov

INTERVIEWER: Dr. Konnilyn Feig

PROJECT ASSISTANT: Lisa Wilhelm
Cheryl Greaney
Martha Browne

PLACE: 296 Congress Street
Portland, Maine

DATE: September 7, 1976

PLACE: 5:00 p.m.

BENJAMIN ZOLOV

In 1909, Dr. Benjamin Zolov was born in Portland of immigrant parents. His father came from a small community outside of Moscow. He traveled to America alone as a young man after his parents died and came to Portland where he worked in a shoe shop. Dr. Zolov's mother, born in Poland, came with her parents, the Tabachnicks, who began as peddlers in Portland. Dr. Zolov's father bought a small variety store and then married. He moved to South Portland with another store and finally bought a variety store which he had for 20 years. Only Yiddish was spoken in the home, and the four children began working in the variety store as youngsters.

After graduating from Portland High School in 1927, Dr. Zolov went on to Bowdoin College and graduated from Tufts Medical School in 1934. He did his internship at Boston City Hospital from 1934 to 1936. Since 1936, Dr. Zolov has been a Portland physician with his own office. From 1946, Dr. Zolov has been Chief of Allergy at Maine Medical Center and Medical Director of the Portland City Hospital. Dr. Zolov served as a surgeon of the United States Public Health Service from 1943 to 1945.

In 1932 he married a Jewish woman from New York City whom he met in Boston. His wife has a degree in Business Administration from Bowdoin and then a law degree. She taught in the public schools and at Casco College and is presently the business manager for Dr. Zolov's office. They have three children. David, 38-years-old, went to Bowdoin, later graduated from Tufts Medical School in 1963, and is an allergist in Danbury, Connecticut. Donna, 36-years-old, graduated from Emerson College in 1960, taught brain-damaged and deaf children for six years, and presently resides in New York with her husband and two children. Debra, 34-years-old, graduated from the University of Connecticut in 1963 and is currently doing special work in psychology and hypertension.

Dr. Zolov is widely known in the medical community of New England. He remembers that in his first year of practice during the Depression he delivered 25 babies in their homes and received as payment one cocker spaniel! From 1937 to 1945 he was Assistant City Physician, and Medical Examiner of Cumberland County from 1942 to 1946. He was the first President of the Portland City Hospital medical staff. He was President of the Portland Medical Club in 1961. He is Chairman of the Executive Committee of the City Hospital, and Senior Physician on the medical staff of Maine Medical Center. From 1972 to 1974, Dr. Zolov served as Assistant Clinical Professor of Medicine at Tufts, and as President of the Maine Society of Internal Medicine. From 1976 to the present he is Assistant Clinical Professor at Tufts Medical School. In 1976 he was elected President of the Maine Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology.

Dr. Zolov is a member of the Cumberland County Medical Association, Maine Medical Association and an American Fellow, American College of Chest Physicians. He is also a Fellow in the American College of Allergists and a member of the American Academy of Allergy of the Jerusalem Academy of Medicine and Physicians Fellowship. A member of the West Coast Allergy Society, the greater Boston Medical Society and a Fellow in the American Academy of Psychosomatic medicine, Dr. Zolov is the author of 15 articles of allergy research published in the Maine Medical Journal, New England Medical, and National Allergy Journals.

Dr. Zolov's prestige in the medical profession has been equaled only by his outstanding and continuous commitment to the Jewish Community of Maine. He was on the original Board of Directors of Temple Beth El. As President of the State of Maine B'nai B'rith Council, he took an active role in combating resort discrimination. He is Vice-President of the New England Regional Board of the Anti-Defamation League. He is also past president of the Maine State Council of B'nai B'rith and was Chairman of the State of Maine Equal Opportunity Committee in 1959. In 1954 he received the Distinguished Service Award of the Anti-Defamation League of the New England Region. Dr. Zolov has been committed to the creation and the strengthening of religious education. He was the original

director of the Hebrew School. He prepared a comprehensive program of adult Jewish studies in 1943 with classes in bible, History of Zionism, Jewish law, and the Hebrew speaking language.

The Maine Equal Opportunities Committee, for which he was Chairman, assisted in obtaining passage by the Maine Legislature of a law banning discrimination by hotels and resorts by race, color and creed. In 1960, the Federation's Community Relations Committee made Dr. Zolov its chairman. He was President of the Jewish Federation from 1964 to 1966, is a life member of the Board of Directors of the Jewish Community Center, is a Director of Temple Beth El, was President of the Brotherhood, and is a Director of the Jewish Home for the Aged. He has been active in all of the Jewish community's fundraising campaigns and in 1969 received the outstanding award for the Israel Bond Drive.

Dr. Zolov has been a Zionist since early childhood and has made some 17 trips to Israel since 1960. He has also visited most of the European countries except Russia. About Israel he says: "I love the country. I love the Bible. It is almost a second home." For years, Dr. Zolov has donated his medical services to the Jewish Home for the Aged and Jewish Family Services. In the midst of his busy life, he can be found every Friday morning and every Saturday morning at the Temple forming a minyan. When questioned about his accomplishments and his effort in terms of humanism and equal opportunity, he would simply respond by saying, "We try."

Dr. Zolov is a musician and he plays the violin as a hobby. He also enjoys traveling. He and his wife have eight grandchildren.

Dr. Zolov and his wife reside at 430 Baxter Boulevard.

August, 1977

JEWISH BICENTENNIAL PROJECT

Portland, Maine

1976

ORIGINAL TRANSCRIPT

Interviewee Name Benjamin Zlot, M.D.

I certify that I have transcribed the Interview Tapes to the best of my ability, as accurately and clearly as possible. I have discussed the contents of the tapes and transcripts with no one.

Transcriber:

Name Judith Goldberg
Signature Judith Goldberg
Date December 15, 1976

Ok'd by: K. Feig
Project Director

Jewish Bicentennial Project
Dr. Konnilyn Feig, Director
1976

JEWISH BICENTENNIAL PROJECT

Portland, Maine

1976

EDITED TRANSCRIPT

Interviewee Name Benjamin Zolov

I certify that I have edited the Original Transcript to the best of my ability, checking carefully on all unclear sounds and omissions from the tape. I have added no material of substance and changed no ideas. The editing goals were completion, clarity, removal of redundancy, removal of unnecessary comments and "chatter" non central to the interview, and grammatical clarification. The prime goal was a transcript which read well, flowed, and presented the ideas clearly, while always retaining the mechanisms and responses which kept intact the personality, state of mind, and beliefs of the interviewee.

Editor:

Name and Title DR. Konnilyn Feig

Signature Konnilyn Feig

Date 2/5/77

Reread and Rechecked and held Confidential by

Name Yisa Wilhelm (signature)

Date 2/6/77

Name _____ (signature)

Date _____

Typist:

I certify that I have typed this transcript accurately and held the contents confidential.

Name Jessica Shubert (signature)

Date 3-14-77

Jewish Bicentennial Project
Dr. Konnilyn Feig, Director
1976

JEWISH BICENTENNIAL ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEWEE: Dr. Benjamin Zolov

INTERVIEWER: Dr. Konnilyn Feig

DATE: September 7, 1976

F: This is an interview with Dr. Benjamin Zolov for the Jewish Federation and the University of Maine, College of Arts and Sciences, Portland, Maine, the Jewish Bicentennial Oral History Project, by Dr. Konnilyn Feig and her assistants Lisa Wilhelm, Cheryl Greaney and Martha Browne at 296 Congress Street, Portland, Maine, on September 7, 1976, at 5:00 p.m.

F: Now you were born and raised in Portland. What about your parents?

Z: My mother was born in Poland.

F: Do you know where?

Z: I don't remember. And my father came from Russia. Some small community outside of Moscow.

F: Did your mother come from a small town, too?

Z: She came from a small town.

F: Would either of them have come from what you might call a shtetl?

Z: I think my father did. I'm not sure about my mother and her family.

F: When your mother came over, did she come over by herself or did her parents bring her?

Z: She came over with her parents.

F: And when your father came over?

Z: He came over alone. His parents were dead.

F: Now, when your mother's parents talked about their parents and their parents before that . . .

Z: They all lived in the same area.

F: Was the same true for your father?

Z: Yes.

F: How old was your mother when she came? Do you have any idea?

Z: I know she was a young woman, I think in her early teens.

F: And your father?

Z: My father was in his twenties when he came.

F: Well, let's take your mother first. She grew up in this town in Poland [Z: Right] and what did her parents do in Poland? Do you remember?

Z: I don't recall. When they came here, her father was in the junk business.

F: He came directly to Portland?

Z: Apparently they came to Portland. There were two big places where they came. A lot of them came to Montreal and some came directly to Portland.

F: Did they have relatives here already?

Z: No.

F: Why Portland then?

Z: It's interesting about that. I've asked that about many people who settled in Portland. My father had a sister who went to Montreal and stayed there. And a lot of them were on their way to Boston. Many people will tell you that if they came to Portland on a Friday afternoon, close to the Sabbath, somebody would take care of them and convince them to stay here. It happened many, many times. That happened to the families of the outstanding people in Portland.

F: It was by chance then.

Z: Yes, just by chance. But my father settled here and worked in a shoe shop.

F: What did he say was the reason that he left Russia?

Z: There were something like eleven people in his family, brothers and sisters, and most of them had to go into the Army. He left because he didn't want to go in the Army or stay in the Army. So he got out. That was the cause that most of them, I think, left.

F: And your mother's parents?

Z: I don't know about that. I mean, it just might have been the migration at that time from that area. Anybody who could get out, got out.

F: Do you think that both your mother and your father grew up in strictly formalized Orthodox homes?

Z: I know my mother did. My father may have, I'm not sure. He never mentioned too much about his family except the family who came over here - an older brother and a sister. One went to Boston and one stayed in Montreal.

F: Now, your mother's parents, what did they do in Portland?

Z: When I was small they were in the junk business.

F: What was their last name?

Z: Tabachnick.

F: And as far as you remember they were in the junk business.

Z: As far as I can recall they were peddlers. Maybe peddling might have been a part of that. All I know is that my grandfather retired at a very, very early age. And he lived with my mother from about age fifty. I think he retired at 50. I wish I could have [F: Laughs]!

F: And your father worked in a shoe shop?

Z: A shoe shop first and then he gave that up and bought a small variety store at 22 Beach Street, right across the street from the gas company. That's the first place I remember.

F: Now he married your mother quite soon after he got here, right?

Z: Correct. Correct. I think he was in his twenties.

F: What year were you born?

Z: 1909.

F: So do you suppose they both came over about 1900?

Z: I would say maybe a little beyond that. I think it was after the turn of the century, 1904, 1903, something like that.

F: When you remember first growing up, what was spoken in the home?

Z: Yiddish was spoken in the home and we lived with my grandparents for four years. They lived down here. I was born right down here on the corner of India Street and Newbury Street, two blocks from here. We lived with my grandparents until I was about four and a half, so there was a large family there. Three or four uncles lived there who were not married. This is on the Tabachnick side. There must have been 12 people in that household.

F: And how big a house was it?

Z: Tremendous house - three stories. And they took a whole half down there at Newbury and India Street. Right now there is a house that's split in two instead of one house - a brick home, and we lived in one half of it.

F: And you remember having a bathroom?

Z: Oh, yuh, oh, yuh.

F: And gas light.

Z: Oh, yes, we had gas in those days, sure.

F: So you were living in luxury then.

Z: I called it luxury, yes.

F: Well, we've heard some other stories about . . .

Z: No, you know . . .

F: No bathrooms and all this . . .

Z: No, there were bathrooms there.

F: Well, then you moved .

Z: We moved to Beach Street, 23 Beach Street. Right across the street, there was a new house put up there. The entire area down there was all Polish. A Polish community.

F: Not Jewish? Polish?

Z: Polish. There were no Jewish people there. One Jewish person, Carl Ginsburg, who had a little variety store came a few years after my father got down there: on the corner of Clark Street and Summer Street. There was no other Jewish family. We were the only Jewish family there.

F: And you had an adequate house?

Z: Yuh. It was a three-story house. We were on the first floor, because my father had a store on the ground floor.

F: Oh, really?

Z: Yuh. It was a variety store. Poolroom variety store on the ground floor and then others lived in the second and third floor.

F: Were you the first-born?

Z: Second.

F: What children did they have?

Z: Four children. My older brother is Carl.

F: Where does he live or did he live?

Z: He lives out in South Portland now and he runs the Maine Beauty Supply Company.

F: Did he go to college?

Z: No.

F: Then came you.

Z: Yes.

F: And then . . .

Z: And then a brother who passed away when he was 16 of a ruptured appendix, and a sister who is alive.

F: And where does she live?

Z: She lives on Berkeley Street.

F: And she lives in Portland?

Z: Yes. Stern is her name now. They run Village Variety out in South Portland.

F: Did she go to college?

Z: Yes, she went to Westbrook Junior.

F: Now when you were growing up in your home, do you remember it being very strictly Orthodox?

Z: In the home, yes - yes. Strictly Orthodox home. I went to Hebrew School and I used to walk six miles, three miles up and back. The school was right next to Pearl Street there, on Vine Street. But I didn't last very long there. I just didn't like it.

F: And you were Bar Mitzvahed?

Z: I was Bar Mitzvahed, oh, yes. After 1920, we moved up to Munjoy Hill.

F: What did your father continue to do?

Z: My father ran this variety store on Beach Street from about 1914 until about 1918. Then he bought a place called Whitehall out in South Portland. It was a tremendous place. It had a variety store, dancehall. There used to be a meeting hall for all the organizations out there and a poolroom. He kept that for about two years. Finally he sold that in 1920 and we moved to East Deering. It was a question of whether we were going to settle in South Portland, away from most of the family or East Deering. So we bought a variety store out there [Laughs], right next to Burnham and Morrill. We kept that for 20 years.

F: Did he retire from that, then?

Z: Yes. He retired. He developed a cerebral accident and he lived about 10 or 12 years beyond that. He more or less retired, sort of a forced retirement in a way. The State insisted on taking that roadway across Tukey's bridge, and so by eminent domain they took this apartment house and store. And that was the end. So when they took that, he retired and got out of the business.

F: Did he keep his business open on Saturdays?

Z: Yes.

F: So as far as the business life was concerned . . .

Z: My mother kept a kosher home and observed all the holidays. My father observed all the holidays and closed the place up.

F: But did he . . .

Z: But not on Saturday.

F: And he didn't go to Shul every Friday night.

Z: Oh, no, no. I started that [Laughs].

F: And he didn't sit and read the Talmud or anything.

Z: No, no. He probably was not that interested, although you know, he went to Synagogue on the various holidays and he pretty much made us aware of that.

F: Now did both boys, Carl and Benjamin, work in the variety stores when they were kids?

Z: All our lives.

F: You worked in the variety stores when you went to school?

Z: Did all my lessons in the variety store. Carried everything there from a loaf of bread to gasoline. Sold everything - vegetables, canned goods. It was a real variety store, at least the last one that he had out in East Deering, corner of Water Street and Washington Avenue. He used to keep long hours from 6 a.m.

F: You sat around and marked goods and did all that stuff?

Z: Six a.m. until 12 midnight. Also, there was a poolroom out there.

F: Did he pay you?

Z: Never got a dime. I got everything I wanted, but I never got a salary.

F: When I got to be thirteen, I worked at a variety store for a year at 35 cents an hour, marking all the stuff. Just enough to want to get a college education.

Z: I never was denied anything I wanted. We got whatever we wanted financially from him.

F: Now, when you went to high school, I imagine you were a good student?

Z: Yes. I don't know, around a 90 average when I graduated.

F: When did you decide to go to college? It doesn't look like there was a heavy emphasis in your family.

- Z: Well, my brother who was a Brown Medal Scholar wanted to go to Yale. And then he got tied up in this Beauty Parlor business. He went to work for them, I think, when he was either a junior or senior and he decided to go into the business aspect of it. He was the one on whom they set their sights, as to going to college. I took a college course and decided to go to Bowdoin in my junior year.
- F: But you didn't make up your mind to be a doctor then?
- Z: Well, I think in my senior year. I had an uncle who was a physician, and I sort of set my sights on studying medicine. When I got into Bowdoin, I definitely made up my mind that I wanted to study medicine. It was sort of an undecided thing, but maybe a little leaning toward it in high school.
- F: So you graduated from high school in 1927.
- Z: Right.
- F: And then you graduated from Bowdoin in 1931.
- Z: No. I got out of Bowdoin in three years. I got into Medical School in three years.
- F: And so you entered Medical School in 1930.
- Z: 1930.
- F: And when did you get your degree?
- Z: M.D. Degree in the class of 1934. At Tufts.
- F: Then you interned at Boston City Hospital.
- Z: Right. For about two years.
- F: In medical school you got married.
- Z: I got married in my second year of medical school, 1932.
- F: How did you pay for your medical school?
- Z: It was something interesting. My wife went to B.U. and she worked part-time. But in those days I would get \$15 a week. When I got married, my folks would send me \$15 a week. We got board and room and two meals a day for \$12 in a private home out in Roxbury. A family by the name of Ganz ran a summer camp

up here, and one of their son-in-laws went to medical school. He was a year behind me and I got to know him. There was an ad one day in the Boston University paper that said they were looking for some young people to live with them. So we lived with them for my junior year.

F: Did you have scholarships also?

Z: I got scholarships at Tufts through Bowdoin College. Tufts didn't know I had no money. But Bowdoin College had a fund - the Garcelon Fund - which is still very active. It was something like \$300 or \$400 a year, I think, that I used to get from them at that time.

F: Well, did you go hungry in medical school?

Z: No, no. Folks used to send things down and I lived in this fraternity house after my first four months in medical school. We had no problems in going to medical school. And when we were married, my wife, as I said, did a little part-time work, secretarial and so forth, and it's amazing how we got along. It cost you 5 cents to get in town [Laughs] from out in Roxbury. And at some of the clinics, you'd have your lunch. Of course, in the senior year, you didn't have to worry at all. You were just moving around from one hospital to another and it didn't cost you anything at all.

F: When you were at Bowdoin, were there a lot of Jewish students there?

Z: When I was at Bowdoin there were, I think, about 12 Jewish students in the whole school. They didn't allow any Jewish students, at that time, to be accepted in any of the fraternities. But there were about 100 students who didn't belong to a fraternity. So that non-fraternity group usually got together and spent a lot of time together socially. We weren't invited into anything at all. I can't recall getting one invite to a fraternity house in the three years I was at Bowdoin College. But there were times when the non-fraternity people got together and had a few functions of their own. Most of the social life was off campus.

F: Were you there with any of the people who live in this town like Bert Silverman?

Z: No, I think they came later. There was a Howard Sapiro, Dr. Sapiro who now lives down in Brockton. Howard and I roomed together our first year. And then a fellow by the name of Edward Schwartz. He's down in Philadelphia now. I roomed with him for a couple of years.

F: Let's go back then. When you grew up in this area, were you aware that you were Jewish?

Z: Oh, yes.

F: But did other people make you aware of it? Like the non-Jews?

Z: There were a few incidents that came up. Maybe a little later when I did some waiting on tables at one of the inns, I became a little bit more aware of that. And, of course, when my father ran a store, there were certain times - the Saturday night crowds where somebody would come in intoxicated and hurl a few slang phrases, anti-Jewish. But really, the very first time that I became aware of being singled out is when the Klu Klux Klan came to town in 1922 or 1923. I was just about 13 years old at the time, but I remember. There were two people in the city of Portland who received letters that they were going to be tarred and feathered and sent out of town. And one of them was Jacob Burnham. I remember him. He was an outstanding attorney, one of the outstanding attorneys in Portland. He received a letter. I don't know if it was published, and my father received a letter.

F: Your father was one of the two? I've heard about the two.

Z: Yuh, my father was. And so on this particular Sunday night, I remember it quite well. They said they were going to tar and feather him at 9 p.m. On Sunday my father had his store open, and there was a tremendous crowd in this store; no policemen, but there was a newspaper man there. Of course, nothing happened - absolutely nothing happened. And then we found out that all of these people who lived around there and most of the young people who worked in Burnham's were all members of the Klu Klux Klan. With \$10, you could join the Klu Klux Klan. Never heard anything more about it after that. Except I remember over where Forest Park is now . . .

F: They burned some crosses, didn't they?

Z: Every week. They used to burn crosses over there. It was Friday night.

F: Were they most agitated about the Jews or the Catholics?

Z: Well, I don't know. They didn't bother anybody. They wrote all kinds of letters. They marched around town. They all bought white sheets. They marched right up Congress Street. But they became quite a political force. Brewster, as a matter of fact, one of the Governors, was elected with the help of the Klu Klux Klan.

F: Yuh.

- Z: In high school, Antisemitism didn't mean too much to me. But that was the first thing I can recall. Of course, somebody gets mad or gets drunk and calls you a God damn Jew or something like that. That, you know, you can blame on the fact that here were very fine and intelligent and respected people who got a little liquor into them and those things came out.
- F: They also might say a God damn Pole, a God damn . . .
- Z: They could, they could . . .
- F: You could rationalize in that way.
- Z: You got more or less used to hearing it. It didn't bother you, you know. There were many Jewish students who went to high school, so I had no discriminatory feeling at all in Portland High School.
- F: Then you went to Bowdoin.
- Z: Then I went to Bowdoin and that's where you began to feel the difference. I had a classmate of mine who lived right across the hall from me at Bowdoin College. Why he cried like a baby when he found out that there was a discriminatory clause in the fraternity house saying that no Jews were allowed to be members. He wanted to present my name. I said, "Don't upset yourself, don't embarrass yourself, because you will find out that your laws . . ." He didn't believe it. So he looked it up and he found out that there was something on the books that said that there were no Jews to be taken in. I said, "Don't worry about it. It doesn't bother me any. It's water off a duck's back." But, it bothered a lot of people. I recall one young Catholic classmate of mine who never returned to Bowdoin after his first year. He was an excellent student. See, I thought I was more or less concerned. He was concerned. He thought that it was terrible that they wouldn't accept him on the campus. This was his feeling, you know, from his point of view. So I said why should I worry, it was his deep concern. [Laughs]
- F: But first of all, all the social life revolved, of course, around the fraternity, didn't it?
- Z: Right, right. We had none of that at all. But I enjoyed Bowdoin.
- F: But other than the fact that you were excluded from the major parts of the social life of Bowdoin . . .

Z: That didn't bother me at all. I participated in everything up there. There is only one black mark on the college that I'll hold against them for the rest of my natural days. I happen to be a musician of sorts, and I played in the high school orchestra.

F: What do you play?

Z: Violin. I played the violin for three years while I was in Portland High School. Anyway, when I went to Bowdoin College I decided to join the musical group up there. They had a nice orchestra. The musician who played next to me was a black student by the name of William Dean. He later became an assistant to Ralph Bunch in the United Nations. Well, I played with him for about three years. We got to know each other quite well. At the end of the year, they used to have what they called a spring festival for the group. And we traveled all the way through New England and New York and played at different cities. I remember the first place we played was in Danvers. Now there were about 45 students in this group. Some sang in the choral group and some played. There were no hotels in these small towns, so individual homes took care of most of the students. And when you got to a small town, the director would come along and say, "Smith, you go here - Zolov, you'll go here" and so forth. Well, they paired everybody off when we got to Danvers. But when it came to Dean, he was left out as a loner, and I said, "Where are you going?" He says, "I am going to the Danvers State Hospital." I said, "What!" He said, "Yes, the director of the hospital has asked me to stay with him." Well, I says, "How come you are not going to any one of these homes?" He says, "Well, forget about it." So I says, "I think I'll go to the Danvers State Hospital with you." So the director came over to me and said, "Zolov, don't give us any trouble. We've already made arrangements for you." So I says, "I'm going to go with Bill Dean - they've got plenty of room at the Danvers State Hospital." [F: Laughs] So we went up there and they couldn't have been nicer to us. They gave us a beautiful room, took care of us after the affair. So when we got to the hospital that evening, after the concert, I said to Dean, "This is the first time I realized now that they are going to be putting you one place and the white boys somewhere else." So he said, "Well, don't make an issue of it. When we get into Boston there will be no problem because most of them stay in a hotel, but in the small communities around Boston they send me back to the YMCA." I said, "Fine." The next concert was right outside of Boston. Sure enough we got there by bus. We got paired off. They have me paired off with the Principal of Quincy High School. I went over to Bill Dean and I said, "Bill, where are you staying?" He says, "I'm

going back to the Boston YMCA." I says, "Fine, I'm going back there with you." So the director came over again to me and he said, "You know, we haven't had this problem at all since I've been a director. You know, we make all these arrangements and we don't like to have any interference." I said, "Why? It doesn't bother me at all. It's just as easy for me to go back and keep Bill Dean company." Well, Bill Dean stayed with me in the principal's house. And for the next three years, we never had any trouble. We could room anywhere. And as a matter of fact, I remember the principal. He was so nice that the next day he even gave us his car and took us down to Plymouth Rock. The first time I ever saw Plymouth Rock! [Laughs] My freshman year at Bowdoin.

F: Yuh, but it bothered you at the time.

Z: It bothered me at that time.

F: Because I had exactly the same experience in 1956. I toured with our university orchestra and there was one black student in the entire State. One black student in the entire State of Montana. She played second chair oboe, right next to me. And we got into concerts in Montana. And we were put into somebody's home: a very well-known judge. There were three of us: Ruthie, this other girl and myself in the house, and I didn't know anything then. So I walked in and this judge's wife came down and she said, "This won't do." She said, "You can just get that colored girl out of here." So we went down and checked into a hotel. Caused a lot of trouble but it's a horrible feeling the first time it happens.

Z: Yes, it bothered me because I just wasn't particularly brought up that way. But it irked me no end. This boy, Bill Dean, graduated from Bowdoin College. There is no student who will ever reach the goal that that fellow had. He graduated top man in his class, outstanding. Here was this outstanding student who was ahead of everybody in every single area that he went into, besides being a fine athlete. And two weeks before graduation he automatically, being the highest man in the history class, was to be given a scholarship to go to Harvard. And then the professor of history at Bowdoin College who came from the South, refused to give him the honor. Bill came over to my room and cried like a baby. He wanted to quit school. Here he was, graduating the top man in his class in two weeks. I said, "You can't do a thing like that, just because of a Southern history teacher." So he says, "What will I do?" I said, "Go over and talk to the Dean and in the meantime you'll get a chance to cool off." You know, they never were able to change that history teacher's decision.

Bowdoin College let the man next to him get the honor. I like Bowdoin College, and always will support it, but I never forgot that. He graduated. He went to Harvard Law School, one of the top men in his class, and then went on to government work.

F: Well, I take it you had no difficulty in medical school yourself.

Z: It was quite a contrast going from Bowdoin College, a shtetl [All: Laughs], into Boston where probably 1/3 of my class was Jewish, 1/3 Catholic. It seems that most of my classmates came from Boston College in those days, and Boston was a great relief. It was a wonderful community, for students anyway, with the social life and what have you.

F: When did you finish?

Z: I got through in 1936. I had a straight internship of just plain medicine, good old-fashioned medicine at Boston City Hospital. I thought I was coming back to this community to practice. If I had to do some general work, I had no obstetrical experience, so I found out that there was one unit of medicine in the country that had a three month obstetrical internship out in Chicago called the Chicago Maternity Center. The head of it was world famous as an obstetrician and had written great books about obstetrics. And so I spent three months out there doing home obstetrics. I delivered about 200 babies in the home [F: Laughs] most of them in the black area, and then came back to Portland.

F: So you were gone from Portland about 10 years, I think.

Z: Well, roughly about that. Originally, I was promised an internship in the Maine Medical Center and when I got through medical school there was a fellow by the name of Brown who was the Director of Maine Medical Center at that time. It was called the Maine General Hospital then. Well, about a month before the internships were to begin, he said he changed his mind. He had to give one of his fraternity brothers the appointment up there [Laughs]. So it left me stranded trying to get an appointment. It wasn't very easy to get an internship in those days. It was in the Depression and many students and physicians hated to leave their internships, so I went back to Boston and took the exam for Boston City Hospital. There were about 200 students trying to vie for some six places, and luckily I got the last of these.

F: Well then, when you came back to Portland, did you immediately set up private practice?

Z: I set up a private practice, about 100 feet in front of this building, up on 296 Congress Street, and became a general practitioner. I thought I was going to lean toward obstetrics for

awhile. I think I delivered about 25 women in their home in my first year in practice, and I collected a cocker spaniel for all my efforts.

F: And that was it?

Z: That was it. Everybody was on the dole. I remember before coming here when I was in Chicago, Dr. DeeLee was getting \$1,000 a delivery. His first assistant was getting \$500.

F: And you got a cocker spaniel puppy.

Z: Yuh, and I said, "Obstetrics, that's the thing for me," and I came back to Portland to find out that most of the doctors were getting \$25 for an obstetrical case. And one specialist was getting \$50 and that was the highest that anybody was getting. But I wanted to keep busy so I used to go out with the Public Health Department. They loved the idea of doing some home obstetrics. Nobody else would do it, so I did it for about a year. And I decided that I had all the experience that I wanted in obstetrics [laughs] and gave it up, and got interested in children's allergies down here at the old dispensary on India Street. It is now where they keep all the alcoholics. [F: Laughs] They had a marvelous clinic then.

F: So you got interested in . . .

Z: I got interested. There I used to go down and spend two or three days a week in different clinics, studied medicine down there.

F: And that's how you learned it.

Z: Well, then I used to go out to the City Hospital. I just wanted to keep my interest up in something. There was very little money around. The average call was \$2 for an office visit if you could get it, most people didn't have it, and \$3 for a house visit. I remember there was an outstanding cardiologist, Eugene Drake. He would call me once in a while and say, "Would you make a call for me," particularly in this end of the city. I went around to different doctors and said, "Do you need any help in this end of the city? Please let me know." I got a call to see one of Drake's patients who was having an attack of angina, spent about an hour in the home, and presented my bill of \$3. The guy said, "Why should I pay you \$3 when I pay Dr. Drake \$3? All you are worth is \$2!" [F: Laughs] So for one year I wouldn't take the \$2. Finally I did at the end of the year [F: Laughs].

F: Were you the only Jewish doctor in Portland at that time?

Z: No. There were about seven Jewish doctors.

- F: So being a Jewish doctor didn't help much either, huh?
- Z: Well, I don't know. In this area, when I opened up my office, there were 22 doctors within one block.
- F: Oh, I see.
- Z: Every single apartment house had doctors, and all the way up to Pearl Street on this side and all the way up to India Street on the other. Every building had a doctor! There were 22 of us. When the war started, most of them moved away. Some went into the service and then went back to other parts of the city, so that after the war I was the only one here besides one other physician who came back. So from 22, we came down to just myself. In the meantime, I got interested in allergy.
- F: When did you really start specializing in allergy?
- Z: Well, in 1939 I became interested in allergenic children out at the City Hospital. But first I might tell you this. Dr. Bramhall, who was the chief at the City Hospital, asked me if I would be willing to help out at the hospital. One of the doctors was sick. He asked me if I would spend a week. And I've been there ever since 1937. I am the Director of the hospital.
- F: The Medical Director?
- Z: Yuh.
- F: What does that mean you do? Is that that place out on Brighton Avenue?
- Z: Yuh, right on the right hand side. Looks like a Grandma Moses painting.
- F: Isn't that the place where they put all these old cancer patients?
- Z: No, it is a chronic hospital, not particularly cancer. We have a few cancer patients out there. These are elderly people. Most of them are people who have multiple sclerosis, people who've had cerebral accidents, heart disease, chronic lung disease.
- F: And you are in charge actually of medicine for that community hospital?
- Z: Yuh, I'm in charge of the whole hospital. We have a staff of about 38 doctors, and I spend time out there almost every single morning. There is a lot of paperwork to be done. I have a few medical patients that I see.
- F: And you enjoy that.

Z: I enjoy that very much.

F: Well, somehow during the war you went with the United States Health Service.

Z: No. When the war started in 1941, they had two units here. The first medical unit was from the Maine Medical Center. They took that unit, the first one. Then they started a second unit, but they never called up the second unit at all. So I decided to join any one of the areas that I could have, and joined Public Health.

F: So you stayed right here.

Z: I stayed right in Portland. I was never called up. After I got into the Public Health, two things happened. In 1941, right after the war started, a resident at the Maine Medical Center and myself joined up for the Air Force. We were the first two in this community to join. We went over and got examined. I signed a waiver. I happened to get into an automobile accident in 1940, injured my neck and lost the use of both of my arms.

F: For how long?

Z: I was out for about three months. Broke my neck, lost the use of my arms . . .

F: Got back to normal eventually?

Z: Yuh, yuh. No problem, no problem. So I signed a waiver on the accident. I signed a waiver on the accident and the colonel came down, told me to take my family away for about a month or so, close up the office. So that's what I did. We went away for a month's holiday. I wrote letters, closed my office and waited for the Army to call me up. The first week of September this Dr. Buckley, who was the other one who joined the Air Force, got a telegram telling him to report at once. And I waited and about 48 hours later I got a telegram telling me that they couldn't accept me in the Air Force but would accept me in the Army and wait for further orders. In the meantime, I came back and opened up my office and two months later, in November, they rejected me for the regular Army, and said that I could try anywhere else in the other services.

F: So you stayed right here.

Z: I stayed in Portland, yuh.

F: Now, when did you get involved with Maine Medical? You hold a position there now, don't you?

- Z: Yes. I am Chief of the Allergy Clinic. Well, in 1939 I went back to Boston and studied for five years. From 1939 to about 1944, I used to go down to Boston twice a week to the allergy clinic down there.
- F: At night, do you mean?
- Z: All day. I took two whole days out of my work here.
- F: Why?
- Z: Because I wanted to study!
- F: Well, how could you live? What were you living on?
- Z: Well, we got by [Laughs].
- F: Well, you certainly weren't rich.
- Z: No, no. I guess not.
- F: Wasn't it a struggle in those days?
- Z: Well, it wasn't easy, but we got along all right. I was busy the other four days or three days a week. I used to go down to Boston. The clinic would open about 10 a.m. I'd either take an early morning train out or drive a car down if the weather was good and come back on the 11 p.m. train, get in at about 2 a.m., 3 a.m.
- F: Do you have interns and everything at this clinic?
- Z: Oh, yes. It's a teaching clinic for those who want to participate. Once a week now.
- F: Well, do you take one day a week up there?
- Z: In the morning.
- F: When do you have time to see your own patients?
- Z: Well, I'm lucky now. I have an assistant with me, Dr. Rubins, who is here three days a week. We start our office here at 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. every day, four days a week.
- F: All right, now. You have three children?
- Z: Three children.

F: Let's start with the oldest. David?

Z: David, yuh.

F: He went to Bowdoin also?

Z: David went to Bowdoin, Tufts Medical.

F: Graduated from Tufts and where is he living now?

Z: David practices in Danbury, Connecticut, but he lives in New Town, Connecticut.

F: Is he married?

Z: Married and has four children.

F: A Jewish woman?

Z: Oh, yes.

F: All right. And Donna?

Z: Donna lives in New York. She spends the whole summer in Portland. She lives in New York, married to an attorney, has two children.

F: Is she married to a Jewish man?

Z: Yuh.

F: Is everybody in your family?

Z: Yuh.

F: You understand why I am asking that question?

Z: Sure.

F: It's a great worry in the Jewish community that they keep expressing.

Z: Right, right.

F: And Deborah?

Z: Deborah. She is married to an optometrist. She lives in Brookfield Center, Connecticut.

F: And they are all doing something that has something to do with medicine in one way or another.

Z: Yes. My older daughter is a speech therapist. Graduated from Emerson, taught at the Speech Center in New York for about eight years.

F: How did you meet your wife?

Z: I met my wife on the holiest day of the year - on Yom Kippur, when I was in medical school. She happened to have a friend of hers who had to go to the Synagogue to say special prayers, the Yizkor prayers there. So her friend knew one of my friends at the fraternity house. My wife stayed at the fraternity house for a couple of hours until she came out of the Synagogue. Temple Israel was right around the corner. Well, that's how we got to know one another.

F: And she had gone to B.U.?

Z: She was at B.U.

F: And what was her degree in?

Z: She got a degree in business administration and then law, teaching law.

F: Has she worked in this town, then?

Z: I think she taught everything in the Portland schools over the years, as a substitute. She refused to take a regular job. She taught out in Deering High School. They wanted to give her a permanent position out there. She's taught in Casco College.

F: Well, is she retired now from teaching?

Z: She works for me now.

F: Well, what does she do?

Z: She's my business manager! She's been in the office the last two years [Laughs]. I put her to work!

F: So you do a lot of things together, right?

Z: Oh, yes.

F: Now, when you are 90 or 100 you will retire, right?

Z: Absolutely.

- F: Now, in your business, did it matter one way or another whether you were Jewish? As a doctor?
- Z: As a physician? I find little or nothing in medicine. Of all the different areas that I think anybody could get into, I think they'd have the least problem in medicine.
- F: I would think so.
- Z: Really, you think back to the different professions that you might have some difficulty getting into. You might have difficulty getting appointments, you know, in either certain institutions or teaching or something like that. That might have been difficult way back. But, I think most of that has gone by the wayside, you know. For instance, I happen to be an assistant professor of medicine now at Tufts Medical and it would be an unheard of thing 30 years ago to get that honor, you know. Every once in a while I read about some of these men who've been working even at Harvard for 30 years. And then two years before retirement, they make them a real professor or something like that. Now I think medicine, really, in general is the least discriminatory profession. At least I've found it that way.
- F: Now did your kids go to Hebrew School?
- Z: Oh, yes.
- F: Bar Mitzvahed?
- Z: Just my son. The girls went to Hebrew School - Bas Mitzvah for them. You know we have a Bar Mitzvah for the boys [F: Yes, I know] and at 13 years for the girls.
- F: Was it a group ceremony?
- Z: Yuh, group ceremony.
- F: When the children were growing up, did you keep an Orthodox home?
- Z: We kept a fairly Orthodox home for about five or six years until all our dishes [laughs] got mixed up with meat and milk. We always had help in the house, you know. In those days it wasn't too difficult to get some housekeepers, and they mixed up things so much that finally my wife in desperation said, "This is the end!"
- F: So you don't keep a kosher kitchen or anything like that?
- Z: No, no.

- F: Do you have any eating rules for yourself that you follow?
- Z: No, not particularly. I'm not that strict or observant as far as eating. It's an interesting thing. My older daughter is extremely kosher.
- F: Oh, really?
- Z: And she has two children who in New York go to day schools and basically it is like the Community Hebrew Day School here.
- F: You go to Temple on the High Holidays, but you don't go on Friday night, do you?
- Z: I go to Temple every Friday morning.
- F: You mean Saturday morning?
- Z: No, I'll tell you about it . . .
- F: Oh, you form a minyan?
- Z: Every Friday we have these morning minyans at 7:15.
- F: You formed one of those minyans?
- Z: Right. I've been part of that minyan for 25 years. I've been doing that. Every Friday morning.
- F: Why?
- Z: Well, I like it.
- F: Why?
- Z: I enjoy it. I happen to be one of those people who puts on the phylacteries every single day.
- F: You do?
- Z: Every day. Every day of my life.
- F: You don't go on Friday night?
- Z: No. I do sometimes on Friday nights if there is something exceptional going on. I go every Saturday morning.
- F: You do?
- Z: Every Saturday morning.

- F: Are you one of the 25 people who goes on Saturday morning to Temple Beth El?
- Z: Right, every Saturday morning, yuh. Every Saturday morning at 9 a.m.
- F: So you are one of the steady ones who Harry Sky tells me about.
- Z: Yuh, every Saturday morning.
- F: But do you ride?
- Z: I ride, I ride. I have no qualms about riding or eating anywhere.
- F: But you tend to your formal religious life with vigor [Z: Right] and consistency, [Z: Right] and that's inconsistent!
- Z: It is inconsistent [F: Laughs]. I enjoy participating in the services and maybe I'm an historical bug, for I enjoy the Bible. I've gone to Israel once or twice a year for the last 20 years.
- F: You have?
- Z: I've been over to Israel 19 times. I'm going over there again in six weeks. I was over there in April.
- F: What does your wife think of all this?
- Z: She travels all around.
- F: No, I don't mean the travel [Z: Laughs], I mean, what does she do?
- Z: Well, she has no qualms about this. She sometimes attends some of the services.
- F: Well, up until 1927, you were a member of the Newbury Street Shul.
- Z: Everybody was.
- F: Right.
- Z: Newbury Street Synagogue, even in the Forties.
- F: Now I'm going to bring you back to the Portland community and the Portland Jewish community. In 1937 you come home.
- Z: That's right.
- F: And that's about the time they are opening up the new Community Center.

Z: Well, I didn't participate too actively in the Center. I may have given it a little bit of service, but not nearly the service I may have given to the Jewish Home, you know, because of my professional work.

F: Did you work with that?

Z: Oh, yuh. I doctored at the Jewish Home for the Aged for as long as I can remember.

F: Donating your services.

Z: All my services, yes. Free over the years, until recently. I mean I was on their staff for many, many years as an assistant physician up there. I was in charge of the place during the war years.

F: All right. I have it noted here, and this is probably wrong, that in 1936 you helped to form the new B'Nai B'Rith Lodge.

Z: Yes. I didn't help form it. It was already there. Cumberland Lodge, but I became a member for the first time in 1937 or 1938.

F: Now is that the one that was re-formed and became vigorous?

Z: Right, right.

F: And when it really got vigorous was about when?

Z: Well, I think that just prior to the war, it probably had one of its largest memberships.

F: What did you do? What are some of the things they did before the war?

Z: Well, when I came back here there was a Dr. Caplan who had an office about four doors away from here. He and I became very friendly. He was a great orator and a marvelous historian and one of the most educated people whom I can ever recall. Vociferous reader. He read everything under the sun, and he was very much interested in the Anti-Defamation work. And, of course, we became very close and he wanted me to join everything under the sun with him. But the only thing I did join was the B'Nai B'Rith. Anti-defamation work was his baby, and so he used to get all kinds of communications - things that might or might not be done. I recall, for instance, when they were deeply disturbed about teaching Shakespeare in the schools, Shylock, you know, and a pound of flesh. Those were big items at that time. The first big item that came across this desk was in 1939 or 1940 with the shipyard starting here in Portland. The Minister of the Zion Church up here on Sheridan Street came to see me and he said that they wouldn't

accept any of his parishioners in the shipyard. I couldn't believe it. Why they came from all over the country and all over Maine. He says, "They won't take any black people. They give them all kinds of stories." I said, "Look, you are a pretty husky fellow. Let me examine you and you go over and apply for a job and if you can't make it you let me know." At first, he was rather reluctant to do that, but I said, "You do that and then we'll see if you have any problems over there." So he went over and he did just that. He applied for a job and they said, "Why do you want a job here? You are a minister, you got nothing to do but take care of your flock." He said that he wanted to prove that it was possible for a black person to get a position. So they told him to wait and come back. He came back to me with that story. I says, "You tell the members of your church who were unable to get a job to go over there, to go back now and see whether or not they can get a job." They had no problems. No problems at all. He was there for about two years, I think, during the war. Terrible things happened during the war with the black people. First of all, socially, they had no place to go. There was a woman who ran a boarding home down on B Street. And so she told me about her problem. She said they wouldn't give her a license to have dances down in her basement for the black soldiers who were in the area. So I said, "You go ahead and never mind the license." I said I knew most of the people in the community and I knew the Chief of Police. That's what she did. The worst thing that I can recall is the director of a black band who came here on a horrible, stormy night in the winter and played for a concert down on Long Island. You know, they had soldiers in all the islands then. He came into Portland about 6 p.m. and he wanted to put them up in a hotel. None of the hotels would take them. NONE OF THEM, and finally about 11 p.m., he and his group got into a bus and went back to Boston in this horrible storm. Those things shock me! Black people had no problems getting a job, but they couldn't get into a hotel.

F: Well, what about Jewish people in the war years?

Z: There was not much of a problem in this area.

F: Well now, you got speeded up after the war, didn't you?

Z: Well, during the war another incident took place. I did a few foolish things. A woman came into me and said, "You know, Dr. Zolov, I was on this streetcar, number so-and-so, this is the motorman's number. I heard him say that if a Jewish person wanted to get out of the service, all he had to do was to go to a certain precinct in Boston and they would declare him incompetent to join the service." I said, "You heard that?" She says, "Yes, he said it - the motorman." She gave me the number of the motorman. I

called the Portland Motor Company or the streetcar company in those days, had a devil of a time, but finally got in touch with this fellow. I said I had something very important for him and I wanted him to come into my office. So sure enough he came into my office and I told him about the accusations. He flushed for a minute and he took a look at my ring. I happened to have a B'Nai B'Rith ring on, and a masons's ring apparently looks something like it. He thought I was a mason. He quickly looked at it and he started to make some sort of a sign. I said, "If you are interested in masonry, I'm not." [All: Laughs]. He says, "I heard this story from one of the men who is a manager down at the A & P and this is his name and this is his address. He's the one who is making this accusation." I said, "You'll stand behind this?" "Yes." "Fine". I thanked him very much. I called this gentleman who he had told me about and told him I was interested in talking with him and couldn't talk over the telephone. So I foolishly made this appointment with this fellow. Well, when I left my home I said to my wife, "If I'm not back at 9 you call the police, because I'm only going to spend at the most ten minutes in the man's house and then I'm going to leave." So I went into this man's home at 8:30 and didn't make any bones about coming right to the point and told him that a gentleman accused him of making statements. I wanted to know whether he had anything either against or for and so forth. So while I'm talking to him, he yells out, "Nanny" and I didn't know if it was some signal for somebody to come after me [Laughs] or if it was his mother! And he says, "I want you to come in here and hear this direct accusation." So I repeated it and I said I wasn't going to make any big issue of it, but I was deeply concerned about anybody saying that there is a precinct where you can be examined for the Army and just because you are Jewish you don't have to go into the service. So he says, "I'm going to get my attorney tomorrow and you're going to hear from me." I can still hear him yelling and I was heading for the exit as fast as I possibly could and got into the house. My wife said she was just on the verge of calling the police, so that was the last time I took anything like that in my own hands. It was turned over to the FBI. I didn't hear anything more about that. But during the war, I was medical examiner for inductees here in Portland. I used to spend a whole morning with the inductees. We used to have about 120 to 125 inductees with about ten other physicians. And once during that entire period, one of the physicians in the x-ray department made the same accusation, and he didn't know it at the time that the director of the whole inductee station happened to be a Jewish physician in Bangor. I didn't even know he was Jewish. Anyway he called this physician aside and in plain terms he made it pretty hard for him. Those were the big items of deep concern that I was personally involved in.

F: And then after the war . . .

Z: After the war was discrimination in the resort area.

F: Now what do you mean by resort areas?

Z: First of all, there was discrimination in the hotels toward the colored people. I was always deeply concerned about that. There were two hotels that let them in - the Falmouth Hotel down on Middle Street, which is long gone, and this Plaza Hotel. Those two places, if they had any room, would let them in, but the Columbia Hotel, the Lafayette Hotel, the Eastland Hotel - no black people.

F: Right after the war, too, you couldn't get into the Portland Yacht Club, the Portland Country Club . . .

Z: You couldn't join anything. In 1936 when I came to Portland to practice, a buddy of mine at the Boston City Hospital, Julius Israel, practiced up in Berlin, New Hampshire. He was a year ahead of me at Boston City Hospital. He called me and said, "Ben, why don't you come up here and join the Masons with me?" I asked why go up there? He said, "I'm gonna be taken in here but you can't get in there.

F: Why wouldn't they take Jews in the Portland area?

Z: The first Jew who was taken into the Masons in Portland was an Optometrist, David Diamond, who became a first lieutenant in the Army. One of his buddies in the Army at the time, he was stationed here at Portland, was able to get him into the Masons in 1943. He was the first one to my knowledge.

F: But not the Portland Yacht Club, not the Portland Country Club, not the Cumberland Club - what else was closed to Jews?

Z: Well, the Woodfords Club. I had an interesting experience. I lived in the back of my office at 296 Congress Street for one year. In 1937 I moved out to Woodfords on Lincoln Street. The realtor said, "You know, Dr. Zolov, we'd like to have you out here. I'd like to have you become a member of the Woodfords Club." Well, I said, "I am only interested in getting a home, I'm not interested in joining any organizations." He said, "I've heard some nice things about you, and I'd like to make you a member of the Woodfords Club." I said, "Do whatever you want to, but let me see the home." And he showed me, and he had a lovely home and I rented it from him. About two weeks later he came in and there

were tears in his eyes and he said, "Dr. Zolov, I got a terrible story to tell you. They don't take any Jews in the Woodfords Club. I feel terrible." I said, "Well, you have to control your feelings, but don't let it bother you." So there were no Jews in the Woodfords Club, and there were no Jews in any organizations to my knowledge, except the Oddfellows. I think they took Jewish people [F: Laughs]. Two of my patients on several occasions wanted to put my name in, and I said, "Look, I don't want to embarrass you." They said, "What do you mean? We've taken all kinds of men in." So I said, "You just find out on your own." They were nice enough to come back. They are not supposed to carry any tales about the fraternal order. They came back and told me no Jews were being taken into the fraternal organizations. And it was interesting that as I became interested in B'Nai B'Rith I met outstanding Masons in Boston who were members of the Masons - Jewish men. They couldn't understand.

F: What was the hang-up in Portland in the Masons? What was the hang-up there?

Z: I don't know. I knew the head of the Masons in Boston, who was quite high up in Masonry and a member of the Anti-Defamation League in Boston. I said, "If you don't believe what I'm telling you, you communicate with Portland and let me know." And he did about three weeks later. He said, "It's true, no Jews are going to be taken into the Masons in Portland."

F: And no one even has a hunch as to why? Why was it so different?

Z: I don't know, but finally after the war, they began to take in a few more people. About 10 years ago, they formed a lodge that is quite liberal. They even asked me to come in [Laughs].

F: In the resort areas, you were mostly concerned about what?

Z: I was concerned about areas. First of all, I would begin to get complaints. I became the President of B'Nai B'Rith and then became interested in the Anti-Defamation League. Naturally, many communications came across my desk. In the summertime I would get all kinds of letters from people who had written to these resort areas and would get a polite letter back saying they were very sorry. Or if they went to these areas, they were told a mistake had been made, that their place was filled.

F: And they were Jewish?

Z: They were Jewish, yes. This was multiplied. This began to multiply all over the state, and it finally came to a head in 1954. In 1954, the Maine Medical Association, which has about 1,000 members, decided

to hold their convention at the Colony Hotel in Kennebunkport. The Colony Hotel absolutely refused to take any Jewish person. I had many letters that people were refused accommodations there.

F: This is what year?

Z: This is 1954. So Dr. Ross, who is a pediatrician and a great friend of the Anti-Defamation League, wrote and told me that he heard that the Maine Medical Association was going to have their fall meeting in the Colony Hotel. He said that he happened to be the pediatrician for the people who owned the Colony Hotel. They would allow him to come there and eat, but they wouldn't allow any Jewish person to seek accommodations there. So I immediately communicated with the hotel and got sort of an evasive type of an answer for accommodations for the summer. So I communicated with the head of the Maine Medical Association and told him that if they didn't change their place of meeting, that I was going to communicate with and send letters to everybody in the state. Dr. Gene O'Donnell was a surgeon in Portland and was a great friend of Dr. Mahaney who at that time was President of the Maine Medical Association. First of all, I wrote letters to about 26 doctors in Portland and told them my problem. So the very next day they wrote letters back to me which I turned over to the Association which said that they absolutely would refuse to go to any meeting that was held in a place with any discrimination. So with that little support I communicated with Dr. O'Donnell and I can recall that he gave Dr. Mahaney until Saturday which was about five days to make up his mind or everybody was going to change their place. I didn't hear from him on Saturday and finally I sent him a telegram at 11 on a Saturday morning and told him that I was going to send 1,000 letters to every physician in the State. So he called back and said that if I would take over the entire meeting, I could do whatever I wanted. And so I did. I went up to the Eastland Hotel, made arrangements immediately, and we changed the meeting place. I had about three weeks to do it, and the program was all outlined anyway. So they came to the Eastland Hotel and never got to the Colony Hotel.

F: Did you battle, too, so that somehow or another there is no more, you and your group . . .

Z: Well, in 1959 there was the resort discrimination bill which was passed by the representatives here in the State of Maine. First one in the whole country.

F: And you lobbied for that and testified?

Z: Right, right. Clinton Clauson, the chiropractor, was Governor at the time. He was a great friend of most of us. And there was a marvelous representative by the name of William Earles. William

Earles is the one who led the legislature in this bill. We had been trying for about six years to get a resort discrimination bill passed in the State of Maine. Every year it was knocked down. In 1959 it was passed, so that there was a legal clinker in there that if you did discriminate and somebody could prove it, you could be fined. There were no teeth in public accommodation laws in the State of Maine before. But when they fined you \$500 and the questioning of licensing and so forth came up, that was a different story. But even today there may be places that you probably couldn't get into.

F: Jews?

Z: Jews.

F: In Maine?

Z: In Maine. There might be some places that Jews couldn't get into. They'd have a few excuses.

F: What would be the reason?

Z: There may be . . . well . . .

F: Why is it like that? What is it about Maine?

Z: Well, all I can say is this. I had this experience. During my college years I worked every single summer waiting on tables in a place called Birch Villa Inn out in Bryants' Pond. The people who ran this place were gentile people. The man and his wife retired and opened up this beautiful Inn up there. It accommodated about 100 people. This place had about 100 people and there were people who came from New York - gentiles - and stayed there practically the whole summer or half the summer. So that this woman had any number of people who would come there. In 1927, 1928, the place was filled all the time and I had a wonderful job there. I would leave college and have a couple of extra weeks and went up there and helped them open up the place. A Reformed Rabbi came there for lunch and loved the place. It was a beautiful spot on Lake Christopher and he told this woman who owned the place that he was interested in staying there for a few days and he had his wife and two children. So she was very busy getting things done and I was very excited thinking that they were going to come, and made arrangements for them. I was going to carry their baggage in and everything after they had lunch. Well, right after lunch, before I got a chance to do anything, the lady called me aside and said, "Look Ben, I know you are Jewish and I have nothing against you. I have nothing against Jewish people, but I can't have any Jewish people coming here. My own clientele

might resent it and we haven't had this in the past. I just don't want to get started." But I said, "There isn't anybody here, practically." You know, the place was empty. It was two weeks before the place opened up. She wouldn't budge. So with my head hanging low, I had to go out and tell this Rabbi and he said he understood. The tragedy of it all was in 1929 the crash came. In 1930 the bottom fell out of all of these areas. These lovely hotels and motels would have taken anybody then! The funny part of it was I sort of sulked there for a good part of that summer. I was so mad. I couldn't understand why she wouldn't take anybody in, but she said that was her policy and there was nothing I could do about it.

F: Well, you won this battle in 1959 [Z: Yuh]. Now, did you help then with opening up the Cumberland Club, the Country Club and the Yacht Club?

Z: Indirectly. There was a law passed by the City Council. They refused to give a license to any club selling liquor if it discriminated. So one night Rabbi Sky and I went up to the meeting.

F: You're the one who went with him?

Z: Yuh, yuh. Both of us went up. I presented it as best I could. And I remember that one of the nine councilmen at that time was very, very warm to us. That night they were going to pass the law that would allow the Cumberland and the Eagle Club to have licenses. And then after I made my pitch and the Rabbi made a pitch, they decided to wait and see what would happen. So during the next three or four weeks, they debated this at every single one of the meetings. Finally, through Mr. Allen, they put teeth into this and they refused to allow any of these places to have a license unless they opened it up and at that time I think they began to take one or two Jewish people.

F: This was about 1971?

Z: Yes.

F: That late?

Z: Yes. Look, I was on the fund raising for the Maine Medical Center way back in the Fifties. I can recall going to the Cumberland Club to a meeting, not knowing that the place was so discriminatory. I had never been in there before and never bothered much about any clubs. My main forte outside of my work was working with B'Nai B'Rith. The waitress who was a patient of mine came over to me and she said, "Dr. Zolov, I am surprised to see you in here. Do you know there are no Jews allowed in here?" And I said, "What?" "There are no Jewish members," she said. I said, "Will you do me a favor? Would you please

get at the roster. Look the roster up and get back to me in a few days." So she called me two days later. She says, "Dr. Zolov, I've looked that list over. There are no Jews in the Cumberland Club." So I called up the President of the Cumberland Club, a fellow by the name of Blake. And I said, "Mr. Blake, I understand that there are no Jews in the Cumberland Club. Can you tell me why?" He says, "What?" I told him who I was and I said, "I just heard of this and I am very surprised that a club of your stature has no Jews there." So he hemmed and he hawed and I never got anything from him. I just wanted to find out from him directly. He wouldn't tell me directly, but it was implied that there were no Jews in the club.

- F: Now there are Jews in the Yacht Club, the Country Club . . .
- Z: Now there are Jews in every one of the clubs including the Portland Club.
- F: Well, in the old days it was important to be in the Cumberland Club. Who would want to be in there I can't imagine now, but it was important in the old days because there were no restaurants where business was conducted, right?
- Z: Right. Not only that, it was a great political club, and there were a lot of business deals carried out. Of course, it wouldn't be much of a business deal as far as a physician was concerned, but it would be with businessmen, or if you had somebody coming from out of town or if you wanted somebody to meet somebody or so forth.
- F: So if you wanted to conduct business or entertain . . .
- Z: You were on your own. You couldn't do any entertaining in any of those places.
- F: Did you belong to Rotary in those days? You couldn't, could you?
- Z: No.
- F: Here were places where people were actually conducting business or getting to know the people that they were going to do business with and you were excluded.
- Z: Right. Couldn't do it.
- F: But now it's all right?
- Z: Now you can if you get into it.
- F: Now would you like to know who can't get anything like that if there is business? A woman!

Z: Well, I don't know. They may limit their membership.

F: Would you like to know who is excluded? The woman! A woman cannot.

Z: A woman cannot get in there?

F: No. Don't you think that is wrong?

Z: Yuh!

F: They can't get into Rotary either. That's where all the business is conducted. Now all that is left over are the women. The business women can't be in these things. Who in the world would want to be beside the point [Z: Laughs] but you can't do it [Z: Yuh, yuh]. So you won the battle for everybody in terms of religion and color but you stopped short, sir, on the sex [Laughs]!

Z: That will be my next project!

F: I hope so! Since you have won all these battles, are you still working for B'Nai B'Rith?

Z: Yes, I happen to be Vice-President of the Anti-Defamation League in New England.

F: In New England?

Z: Yes.

F: Are there still problems that keep being brought to your desk?

Z: I have problems! [Laughs] Last week in the newspaper you probably read about a young girl up in Freeport who went over to Israel on an archaeological dig.

F: I don't remember it.

Z: And she said that it was cruel how the Israelis treated the Arabs over in Israel.

F: Oh, yes.

Z: Remember she went on this dig?

F: Oh, yes, yes.

Z: All this information was sent down to Boston and the Israeli Consul is going to communicate with her. I can understand the sympathy for anybody going to a country. I've been in some of the poorest countries in the world and it is easy to understand downtrodden people or people who don't have too much and you get sympathetic with them. But, of

course, that's not the whole answer. No, every week, something comes up. I was deeply interested in this Mid-East problem, the University of Maine meeting that they had. But Sumner Bernstein was probably in the thick of all of this. But all of us were deeply interested in this and trying to find out who was going to be there, who was participating there. It's interesting that some of this came about because one of our members of B'Nai B'Rith happened to be looking through a Chamber of Commerce piece that he had last spring and found out that the University of Maine was going to sponsor this group. And I met him over at the Temple one morning and he told me this. So we dug into all of this and, of course, plenty came of it as you probably read in the paper.

F: No, I was gone.

Z: I beg your pardon?

F: I was in Poland, Czechoslovakia [Z: Oh], East Germany, so I wasn't here. What happened in the end?

Z: Well, in the end the State Department itself pulled out officially. The University of Maine did not sponsor it. What they were hoping to do was to get enough people there to tell them that they would bypass and boycott Israel. That was the whole idea, the basic idea, as far as I was concerned.

F: Well, were you involved in a situation a year ago? Some of my students brought it to my attention, but I didn't need to have it brought that close because it was in the paper and I thought it was horrible. Were you involved? I know Sumner was. When that Catholic Bishop got up and . . .

Z: Here in Portland?

F: Yuh, a year ago, and Sumner challenged him.

Z: Oh, at one of the breakfasts?

F: No, dinner.

Z: I faintly recall that.

F: But you weren't involved in that one?

Z: No, no. Sumner was right there.

F: So you are telling me that not a week goes by that something doesn't come up [Z: That's right] that would lead you to believe that something anti-Jewish is going on in one place or another.

- Z: Right. Yes. I've got a file here - this file - this is this year, this file. Communications. [Shows thick file]
- F: Let's say you have people between 35 and 45, leaders in the Jewish community, professionals. I'm not talking about Jewish businessmen who have been on Fore Street or someplace else and never, never gotten outside of the community and within that community really contributed a great deal but wouldn't care two hoots about any of this stuff here or what clubs they didn't get into. But these are people who have gone away, have become lawyers or doctors or professionals, [Z: Uhhuh] bright leaders in the Jewish community - young. I asked them if they felt any discrimination in this area and they say, absolutely none. I am wondering about that phenomenon.
- Z: I think some of the people really have blinders on. They may have been touched by something but not enough to disturb them financially or their own family. For instance, when I went to buy a home on Parsons Road in 1941, there was a clause in the deed saying that this home was not to be sold to a Jew. So I had an attorney buy this home for me. I went to the party who had written up this whole clause and said to him, "How in this day and age can anybody put in such a clause?" Well, they wanted to restrict the area and they were afraid, so I said, "That's a lot of bunk and baloney." The pay-off was within about a year they wanted to sell me the rest of Parsons Road. [F: Laughs] I've got the deed back home. They had that clause in there that they absolutely couldn't sell directly.
- F: From what I've seen historically, things in Portland are seventh heaven now compared to 1910 and 1920. There has been a steady growth of, I don't know what you're going to call it, a lessening of Antisemitism in the city, wouldn't you say? Expressed Antisemitism.
- Z: Expressed Antisemitism - yes.
- F: Overt action.
- Z: Overt, yes.
- F: Overt acts of Antisemitism. In fact, there has also been a lessening in overt acts of any kind of discrimination [Z: Everything].
- Z: Right, right.
- F: And things in many other ways are better, but that is not to say that the problem is not there, is it?
- Z: I think the problem is there.
- F: This Israeli business in the last couple or three years has raised it again, hasn't it?

- Z: I think it has. It tends to keep it in the forefront all the time. I attended the annual meeting of the American Cyanamid Company three months ago. American Cyanamid is a billion dollar corporation. It makes all the plastics. One of their areas I think is out in Sanford. They make all kinds of medicines. The Lederlee Company is one aspect of it, and they were asked if they would assure some of their stockholders that they were not discriminating as far as Israel was concerned, that they would send a letter to that effect. So I went to the meeting. There were about 18 people at the meeting. I had never been to a stock meeting in my life [F: Laughs]. I don't own any stock in Lederlee. The President was there and his secretary. He said they were abiding by the law, but they had no discriminatory policy. And one of the reasons that they didn't want to write up or tell them what they did was that it would reveal trade secrets. This is what the President of the company is saying - that they would reveal trade secrets if they were to say with whom or how they did business in other countries. But the law of the United States today allows people to still boycott Israel and do business with whomever they want to. They are trying to change that law down in Washington at the present time. But it seemed to me, as I was talking with this man, the head of a billion dollar corporation, that the excuse he gave was rather a weak excuse as far as I was concerned. It was all right for him to say that they paid anywhere between 1/2 million and a million dollars under the table to get some business. That was all right. That was kosher [Laughs] but not to say directly and tell the type of business that you are doing with Israel or with other countries, that was something that would give away a trade secret. So you see, in the higher echelons, that is going on all the time. There was a time when telephone companies wouldn't hire anybody Jewish.
- F: Uhhuh, in this town.
- Z: Yes. In Massachusetts, for instance, it is almost impossible for a Jewish person to get anywhere in the banking industry and Boston has about a quarter of a million Jews! They can't get anywhere in the banking industry. So you see, anybody who thinks that discrimination has gone by the boards, is wearing blinders, or else he's got his ears stuffed. He doesn't hear well. There are problems.
- F: When did you first become a Zionist?
- Z: Well, I've always had a great feeling for Israel. I'm not an ardent Zionist.
- F: Did you work on the campaigns for the Israeli bonds?
- Z: Yuh. I've always done that. In 1969, they gave me an award.

- F: Now, how come you have been to Israel so many times?
- Z: Well, I went to Israel in 1960. I've been back there every year since, sometimes twice a year, because first of all, I love the country. I love the Bible. Everywhere you go there's the Bible. And there are many medical friends over there. I got to know quite a few people, so it's almost a second home when I go back there.
- F: You mean you go and visit.
- Z: Oh, sure.
- F: You feel good there, don't you?
- Z: Sure.
- F: Well, you obviously feel that the survival of Israel is important.
- Z: Oh, by all means.
- F: But why?
- Z: Why? I don't know of any other place in the world where the Jews can get together. When they are downtrodden and get kicked out of different areas, where can they go?
- F: Do you remember when you first believed the stories you were hearing about the Holocaust?
- Z: Well, we got some of that through the B'Nai B'Rith during the war. It was sort of a helpless feeling, because there was nobody you could turn to. The State Department wasn't too warm.
- F: Are you still one of those who still believes Roosevelt helped the Jewish people?
- Z: Not about some of the things that I've read about. I think he did a great deal for this country, but I think there was a lot more he could have done.
- F: Roosevelt may have been one of the major reasons that America didn't give significant help to Jews, but that was kept a secret during the war.
- Z: No, I know a lot about some of the inside items about Roosevelt and the deals he made with the Arabs during the war.
- F: All right. I know that we are pressing here, but I've got to talk to you about Jewish education. Can I shift from Anti-Defamation?

[Z: Yes, sure] Now, for some reason, you got involved in Jewish education starting back in 1943 when you became President of the Portland Council of Jewish Education and started the Adult Jewish Studies here. That is you, isn't it? Not your brother, not your father, it's you?

Z: Yes.

F: What started your concern here? It wasn't that you didn't have anything else to do, right?

Z: Well, there was a need for that particular aspect of Jewish life.

F: The Synagogue wasn't taking care of it?

Z: Well, the Synagogue wasn't taking care of enough of it. It wasn't reaching people, at least the type of people that I would like to have seen have more education in this particular field. It wasn't doing it because in those days, first of all, the Rabbis' main attention was to take care of the home and hospital and sick people. They weren't too concerned about education, as such, of the younger people, particularly young married couples who were coming into the city. But we had some very fine young Rabbis. Some of them didn't stay too long, but you couldn't get anybody to attend the functions.

F: What were some of the things that you did in the three years?

Z: Well, we tried to bring different outstanding Jewish leaders, particularly in the Jewish literary field.

F: Now a quick name that you can remember who I might know?

Z: I can't recall offhand.

F: They seemed important?

Z: Yes. It seemed to me that it was a very disappointing venture. In the winter months very few people wanted to leave their homes. You couldn't get people out to go to a meeting. And I used to think how silly. They go out for so many different things. They go to the movies. But when it came to education it was a very, very difficult thing. Maybe because there wasn't enough of it. They didn't have time enough. Maybe I was too anxious and too eager.

F: Well then, in 1950, after the national survey group came in and did its report on Jewish education in this community, and all the hubbub - there was hubbub, I am right on that? [Z: Oh, sure] Even though people won't admit it, there was hubbub. They set up a Board of

Jewish Education under the Jewish Federation. There were 15 members. You were one of the five appointed as a representative of the Temple Beth El Hebrew School on that 15-member agency. Now, what did that group accomplish?

Z: Well, they argued a lot.

F: What was the major problem?

Z: Well, the whole idea was to try to bring Jewish education to the younger people and particularly to unify the schools and have uniform teaching - good teachers, good instructors.

F: Things were not in that good a shape at that time in Hebrew School?

Z: Well, there have always been Hebrew schools in the city of Portland.

F: Sure.

Z: But most young people were in a hurry to get out of the school rather than looking forward to attending it and there were some good reasons. You know, after you attend regular school and then have to attend another school, it made it very difficult for some of the youngsters.

F: Well, was it partly because of the problems between Orthodoxy and the fact that the Hebrew School was up there, away from the people.

Z: Well, that might have been a problem. Of course, Temple Beth El had just formed in 1950, and they were trying to strive for success in their own field. They weren't in a hurry to join hands with anybody and that remained for a long, long time. There was always friction. You will always find friction between the Orthodox and the Conservative. It may not show on the surface, but it does exist. It is interesting that the people themselves have very little controversy, but the professionals have plenty of controversy.

F: Do you think there is a serious split in this community among the people?

Z: Among the people? I wouldn't say so.

F: Well, so many people belong to both Synagogues.

Z: Oh, yes - yes. My family was a member of the Orthodox for many years.

F: Did you greet the formation of the Conservative Temple with pleasure?

Z: Oh, yes.

F: Why?

Z: Oh, I just felt that there wasn't enough understanding for me in the Orthodox group.

F: And you didn't mind sitting next to your wife in the service?

Z: No, no, no. Many, many items I enjoyed and it wasn't so much the method of the service. There was meaning for me, at least, in the services.

F: There wasn't just one survey taken?

Z: Many.

F: They even brought in national groups and a board for Jewish education but nothing much happened.

Z: Except that out of this now has come a uniform Hebrew School, a day school, and maybe it may take another 10 or 15 years for those institutions to be strengthened. There is a lot of controversy now. Of course, a lot of it is financial support to these areas. Education is very expensive. The question comes up whether or not people who don't have children should support institutions.

F: It's like why should I pay . . .

Z: Why should I pay for Portland's taxes?

F: Yuh, why, I don't have a kid [Laughs].

Z: I don't have any children. Why should I bother? I don't have any children going to school.

F: Well, I do wonder. I want to shift now quickly to the Social Service Coordinating Committee and down the street romps Rebecca Bernstein who wants to pull together the whole community behind Jewish social welfare. I take it that it took some effort.

Z: A great deal.

F: I take it that this was not an easy thing to do. Am I right on that? To get from where she started to the Social Service Coordinating Committee to the Jewish Family Services in 1951 was not an easy street?

Z: No. Some people don't remember. Of course, now the government agencies give a lot of help in that respect. But the Jewish family Services were never allowed to let anybody go hungry or destitute.

I can recall when I was a little fellow and there was a family about half-way between the Jewish area and our area. We lived way out in the tail end of the city. They had not enough food and people went into their home and saw that the home was cold. So they took care of it. The agents of the Jewish people themselves took care of these areas. We had no formal agency. It was sort of an informal agency. The Family Service was a marvelous thing when it was formed and still can be a great help, although today there are other agencies that try to supplement some of its work.

F: Well, you served on the first Board of Directors of the Jewish Family Services.

Z: Well, I gave them a lot of help from the physician's point of view.

F: And you and Dr. Davidson served on the medical committee? [Z: Yes] You were the medical committee for the Jewish Family Services, weren't you?

Z: Yes, yes.

F: The two of you were the medical committee. Am I right on guessing that?

Z: Right, right.

F: Well, what did you do? What was your job?

Z: Well, for instance, those who came over right after the war. They had no money, number one, so they set them up and gave them a home, tried to get them a job but they'd get sick. And when they got sick, they had no money. There was no such thing. It wasn't until 1965 that Medicare or whatever it is came along. These people had nothing. They couldn't afford a physician and so we took care of them to the best of our ability.

F: For free?

Z: For free.

F: Just like you've been taking care of the old people [Z: Right]. Is there any other group that you have taken care of for free in these years?

Z: At the present time?

F: Well, in the past. The old, and the refugees.

Z: The Jewish Home for the Aged. I used to take care of patients up there and well, if you want to say out at the City Hospital. You never got paid except the minimal salary that they gave.

F: Oh, this wasn't a big monetary position?

Z: Oh, no, no. You'd get about \$35 a week or so [laughs] when you got it! [All: Laughs]

F: Still? It's not that bad now?

Z: No.

F: But at least in the old days it was, right?

Z: Yes. It paid for your gasoline.

F: Well, there has been a decline in the impact then, of the Jewish . . .

Z: The government today takes care of it.

F: So is it that it's going to sort of peter out one of these days?

Z: I think it eventually will. Really, when you come right down to it, there may be families who are not aged, or don't have, or may have a husband who is not well enough, but yet can work part-time, but still can't take care of his family. They may need some supplemental help. But today, government agencies take care of that. Almost 90% of ill or destitute people the agencies usually take care of. Now they may need supplemental help in certain things that they may want to buy or purchase or need, but medical help they get. I have ADC people who come all day long into my office. It doesn't cost them anything. You know, the government pays for it.

F: I want to shift you again to 1949 when you became the first school committee head, and opened this three-day-a-week congregational school with 60 kids. What was that about?

Z: We didn't have any money, so Lewie Bernstein, the automobile man, gave us that home next to his automobile place. We used that for a Synagogue for the first year. He gave us that home and he fixed over the second floor for us, and part of the first floor.

F: That's where the Merit Gas Station is now, right?

Z: Right. And gave us that home for the children. We enrolled, I don't know, 50 or 60 for the first year.

- F: Well, was this your Hebrew School?
- Z: This was our first Hebrew School.
- F: How come you were involved? Why were you at the head of that?
- Z: I was very much interested in starting the Temple and, you know, once you get your foot into the door, they give you all kinds of other problems.
- F: Now, you were one of the original members of the Board of Directors of Temple Beth El.
- Z: Yes.
- F: All right. What was behind the change for you?
- Z: Well, first I was interested in seeing that the Temple was maintaining a solid ground. And we knew that in order to maintain and get young people in there, you had to get their families and their children in. The easiest way to get the parents is to get the children in, so we decided to have a school. The only thing was the city of Portland refused, at least refused me, a license to license the area for teaching, because it wasn't fireproof as such. So we had to tell them a white lie that we were only using the first floor for the first year until we got the new Temple.
- F: Why was it important to you to have Temple Beth El?
- Z: Well, I became more and more interested in Conservative Judaism and we had to have a home and so forth.
- F: What, in a serious way, attracted you to it?
- Z: Well, I was not attracted too much to Orthodoxy.
- F: Is it theological for you? Or was it the informal practice?
- Z: No, I think theologically I was more interested.
- F: Well, what does it hang on for you, Dr. Zolov? Is it the difference between seeing things as historical custom or what is it?
- Z: For instance, interpretations. There is no firm interpretation in Conservative Judaism. It can change like the seasons, and so our interpretation of the Bible is entirely different. There is nothing fixed. There is nothing fixed at all, you know. Our ideas are changing all the time and I like that. I don't like to get stuck

on one area and feel that by rote I've got to do the same thing and think the same thing year in and year out. Orthodoxy has certain attractions and certain customs that are very fine and beautiful and that are even maintained in the Conservative Judaism. But there is not enough in Orthodoxy for me. Maybe I'm a free thinker.

F: Has the Temple taken away from Orthodoxy?

Z: No, no. That hasn't been the result. It hasn't taken anything away, but it hasn't brought the people into the Temple yet, either.

F: And they are still out on the golf course?

Z: They are still out on the golf course.

F: I'm not trying to pick on Judaism, but this is what we are talking about. Is participation low?

Z: I think it's in every religion. I think there are certain things that can attract you. I wouldn't call people lazy as such, but I think that there are a good number of people who like to be led. It may be in their work. And they figure when they have left their job they are going to do things to their liking that are not going to be too difficult for them. And they are not going to go out of their way. They are not going to go out of their way to work at some of these new projects. They want to relax. The minute they leave their work, they want to relax, and maybe they feel that religion is a little bit too much for them. Back to the Temple. They want their children to do it, but they don't want to do it themselves.

F: Well, here you are - liberal and Conservative. Practicing and not practicing. Committed to those things that interest you which is a long range of Jewish community activities. From education to all sorts of medical care. Do you look at things like intermarriage and assimilation and worry?

Z: I do.

F: Do you?

Z: I do. As far as intermarriage is concerned, I've seen all these intermarried couples in the Temple for the last 25 or 30 years. My feeling is that that's not the complete answer. I have nothing against intermarriage. I would encourage it, if there was no other possible way. Look at it that way.

F: You wouldn't throw your kid out?

- Z: By no means, but I think we have a long, long way to go to help these people, at least from a religious point of view. You know, you can't use intermarriage as just an excuse, and I think that is what's happening. I wouldn't say in a large number of cases. There is a certain genuineness in intermarriage and I can see there are certain situations where I think it turned out to be a marvelous thing. But it's not the answer, the complete answer.
- F: Well, a convert would have the worst of all possible worlds, also.
- Z: Yes, but sometimes a convert can be more religious.
- F: That's what I mean, the worst of all possible worlds.
- Z: Yuh.
- F: So you are concerned then, right, about what's happening?
- Z: I am concerned. I am concerned.
- F: Is American Judaism so weak that it can't carry on?
- Z: I don't think it is weak. I think that it is strong. But you hate to wait for horrible Holocaust episodes to take place before one turns to religion or gets concerned about one's group. I think that most Americans are not concerned. They get excited about politics for awhile.
- F: They don't want to sit with a file in a drawer and go to minyans!
- Z: They don't get too excited about their family. They sometimes don't give enough thought to what their children might be doing. I see it in a lot of the young people whom I have as patients, their attitudes. So there is a lot in every religion that can be done. I don't know where we are missing the boat or whether we are trying to give them too much when they are younger or too little when they are older.
- F: Well, when you look back on what you've done so far - and I know that you are by no means about to quit. By the way, I am making the assumption that most of your community work, except for Maine Medical and Portland City Hospital, and the inductees, has been in the Jewish community.
- Z: Here in Portland, yuh. But I was just appointed President of the new Allergy Society of Maine - the Maine Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology. It just started in the State of Maine. I just became President of that.
- F: Well, what is this thing called the Federation Community Relations Committee?

- Z: That has to do with problems. This problem of this young girl from Israel would be one problem that would come up. Or if there was discrimination in a certain area or if we were concerned about the Arabs coming in doing what they did up at the University of Maine.
- F: Well, I know that there are a lot of things that you are going to do in the future, but as you look back, you have seen this community grow and change. You've really seen a change, haven't you?
- Z: A marked change.
- F: Part of the change has been the change from the so-called Jerusalem of the North to a community that really isn't much more Orthodox than others.
- Z: Well, there is Orthodoxy but I think you'd be surprised. In the larger cities of New York, you get a different picture about Orthodoxy. [F: I know] I mean I've gone to the Synagogue with my daughter in New York and I was amazed at the young people, no matter what profession or what work they are in, who come with the whole family. And I say, "My God, we are heathens back here in Maine not to participate as a family." I think that's what's happening here, and I don't say just with the Jewish culture alone. I think the family is getting lost somewhere.
- F: But when you look back, do you feel a sense of pride in what this community has done in the past few years?
- Z: I'm very pleased.
- F: I mean in the past 30 or 40 years.
- Z: Yes, I'm very pleased with what has been done, but I don't think we are there yet [Laughs]! We can't sit back. I haven't done very much.
- F: Okay, that's what you think. But when you look back at what you've done, do you feel that you've gotten some satisfaction from it in all these years?
- Z: I think so.
- F: It's not just a negative thing to you?
- Z: Oh, no, no, no. At least we tried. If you don't try, you know, you never know what you've missed.
- F: When you describe some of the things you've done, it sounds to me like you have been some sort of a tiger, like going over to someone's house to confront him. Are you mellowing?

- Z: I wouldn't do it now. No. It was because of inexperience.
- F: You feel there is a better way to approach it?
- Z: Yes, yes. That was inexperience. For instance, today, I wouldn't think of doing anything like that because there are other methods and other ways of communicating with people. I do find this though, that it's best to get directly to the person. So if I knew somebody who was bringing up a certain thing or they were president of a group and so forth, I wouldn't go through the third grade member of the thing. I would go right to the top person, because I've had my experience with the presidents and the vice-presidents of different organizations and some of the methods that they have used. I've found out just how they operate. At first I was very humble about doing all this, but I find out that you can waste a whole lot of time. And if you want to get the answer directly you try as much as you possibly can. Of course, you have to have time for all of this. There is a certain amount of sacrifice that one has to make in their family when you get interested in different organizations.
- F: When you start doing the things that you've done or keep coming into contact with them, you couldn't have helped at some point feeling angry. [Z: Uhhuh] Challenge me if I'm wrong. Somehow you have found a way to control that anger and to deal with it so you could go on instead of wasting your energy being angry. You somehow managed to do that. When did you learn to do that?
- Z: Well, I think part of it may have been in medical school. I had an unusual experience in my third year of medical school. Everybody was trying to make a little money on the side. I became a member of the yearbook. I was very, very trusting. One of the men said, "You know, if you work in this particular department, after we get the book ready for the seniors and so forth, there will be a certain percentage that will be coming back to you." So I went out and helped them get all kinds of ads and thought I'd get \$50 as my share. I was politely told that I didn't make enough money, this was the story. I didn't make enough money from the ads so nobody was getting paid. Then I found out there was one person who got about \$400 and that was it. I was so mad I thought I would bite nails. I was so trusting, you know, thinking that that could happen. Anyway, at that time I was determined that I was going to be a little bit more humble in some of the things I did, but I was going to also be a little bit more aggressive. I have a tendency to be non-aggressive, let me put it that way. My wife makes up for the non-aggressiveness that I have.
- F: But you are effective, because you and some of these other people have actually made changes in the State of Maine.

Z: You know it is not easy in a lot of things. But I can remember when the Maine Medical Association was going to have that meeting, which we talked about. I closed my office up one afternoon and my wife came in and we sat down to write all these different letters. And I was so determined at that time. And, of course, it came to fruition. There is a little work that goes behind it, true. Things do not always work out as well as you would like to have it, but you try.

