Jayne Guberman (JG): My name is Jayne Guberman. Today is Thursday, August 4, 2016, and I'm here with Joe Reimer, at his home in Brookline, Massachusetts. We're going to record an interview for the Jewish Counterculture Oral History Project. Joe, do I have your permission to record this interview?


JG: Great. So, as you know, today we're going to explore your experiences during the late sixties and early seventies, and particularly your involvement in Havurat Shalom, and the impact that the havurah has had on your own life, and life in the American Jewish community and beyond.

I want to start with talking a little bit about your personal background and your family background, so we can flesh out a bit who you were at the time you got involved with this experimental Jewish community started in Boston. Can you very briefly tell me about your family when you were growing up?

JR: Yes. I was born in the Bronx in 1947. We lived — my mother, my father, my sister and I; I'm older than my sister by three years — with my grandparents. There was a shortage of housing in New York at that time. So we lived in very cramped conditions in the Bronx for the first five years of my life. We then moved to Jackson Heights, Queens to our own apartment. My parents had married in 1945. My father came from a rather Orthodox family, my mother from a traditional family. Our family itself was Modern Orthodox. From third through twelfth grade, I went to Orthodox day school.

JG: Tell me about your neighborhood. Tell me about the place where you were growing up.

JR: Yeah. So I can more easily tell you about Queens because I remember that more vividly. These were all red brick, six floor houses. In my early life, the initials F.H.A. were used all the time in conversation — Federal Housing Authority. I had no idea what they were or why my parents were talking about them. [laughs] So I would imagine these were houses built by the F.H.A. Jackson Heights had been a primarily white Catholic neighborhood. Right next door to it was the black neighborhood. In fact, it was later made famous by the fact that Malcolm X lived there with his family, but that was later. Then this new housing brought the Jews into the neighborhood. There had already been, since the early thirties or early twenties, an Orthodox synagogue in Jackson Heights, that we originally attended. (00:03:00) Then sometime along the way, they started a Young Israel, to which we moved a few years later.
JG: What about the kids in the neighborhood? Were they —?  

JR: The kids were — so the first two years I moved, I went to public school, and all the Jewish kids stayed out for the Jewish holidays, that is to say, High Holidays. Very few of them went to synagogue, though I did, of course.

JG: So you're saying there weren't in your neighborhood a lot of Modern Orthodox kids.

JR: There were some, and we all went to day school. Two different day schools, but we all went to day schools. We had a Shabbat community — a "Shabbos" community, as we would have said. That was nice. That was definitely nice. Among those people were also a number of families who were Holocaust survivors, though the term didn't exist in those days.

JG: Was there a term?

JR: No, I think they were primarily called refugees. The neighborhood was definitely not a fancy neighborhood. It's not the Jackson Heights of today, which is very multicultural. It was a white neighborhood. It was a lower middle-class neighborhood. There was definitely a playground across from our house, but it was all concrete. I don't know how else to describe it. There were some tensions between the Jewish and non-Jewish elements in the neighborhood that sometimes came to expression, but not too often. It was basically not a very interesting, but a nice place.

JG: Why did your parents switch you from the public school to the day school?

JR: Well, my parents were not very wealthy. My parents were New York City schoolteachers, and at first my mother didn't work. So I don’t think they had very much money. Then, after they switched me in, and then subsequently my sister, into day school, which was called Yeshiva of Central Queens, my mother went back to work. So I guess that allowed that possibility.

JG: What about the political atmosphere in your home?

JR: My parents were Democrats, FDR Democrats. My father was mad for Adlai Stevenson. Adlai Stevenson He was the first political person who I was aware of. I remember when I was nine, I went to bed certain that Adlai Stevenson would be elected president, because everyone I knew voted for him. I didn't realize it was a large country out there. So that's what we were. When my mother went back to work, she worked in a black school — Negro, we would have said then. That brought in a whole other element
(00:06:00) into our family that would never have been there otherwise, which is, my mother had black friends and talked about black children. [laughs]

JG: Black friends among the teachers?

JR: Yes, they lived in that black neighborhood next door to ours. So my mother imported an awareness of black — we would have said Negro — people into our home in a way that would not have been otherwise there, but it was very influential both on me and my sister.

JG: So were you very aware of the Civil Rights Movement?

JR: Very aware, very aware. That actually plays a role in explaining how I stopped being Orthodox, which was — I mean, this is just one story, but it's symbolic. I remember rather distinctly that around 1962, when the movement was very active —

JG: So you were fifteen.

JR: Yeah. The rabbi who was teaching us one day, I don't know why, said to us in class, "Of what concern is it of mine if someone down South wishes to burn a cross on his lawn?" That was like a marker for me. That was like, really? That's of no concern to you? I just felt like, there is a divider between you and me. I mean, I was feeling it anyway, but I'm not with you, sir, on this one. You know? One didn't say that out loud, of course.

JG: Did you say it to friends?

JR: Yeah. In fact, at some point when we were seniors in high school, the rabbi of Young Israel invited us to give sermons in shul. Not I — my friend gave a sermon on Civil Rights, and he was booed in shul. I remember that quite distinctly. So, yeah. It was something we discussed. We also were avid followers of the emerging folk music.

JG: I want to go back and talk, before we get to that, about your day school education, just in general. So tell me about your day school education.

JR: Well, Gail and I went to the same elementary school, but I'm four years ahead. So, we didn't know each other, of course. I generally have positive feelings about my elementary school, which I was there third through eighth. It went K through eight. I was there third through eighth. It was called the Yeshiva of Central Queens. The principal, Rabbi Charney, who, by the way, is Ted Charney's father, was a Modern Orthodox — you know, I think the word progressive would not be accurate, but definitely a moderate,
(00:09:00) forward-thinking Zionist, Hebrew-oriented — as were the teachers. I generally perceived it as a fairly kid-friendly place. Then came time to decide where to go to high school, and my mother wanted me to go to public high school. You know, in New York City they have these special high schools, so she thought that might be a good place for me. My father wanted me to go to Ramaz, which was a more liberal Orthodox high school, also where Gail and my sister went. But my friends were all going to something called Yeshiva University High School, which is on the Yeshiva University campus, and somehow I was persuaded to do that, which was a big mistake. So that's what I did. It's an all-boys high school — very repressive, a very negative experience.

JG: Tell us what about it. What was negative about it? It sounds like your parents were quite progressive —

JR: Yes, within the limits of the world that they inhabited, I think they were — but observant, definitely observant. I don't want to underplay that. I thought the values of my home were consistent with the values of my elementary school. I didn't think that once I got to high school. I thought, I'm meeting people here — and we didn't have these terms — but who I thought were really quite right-wing. Now nothing as compared to what exists today. This is a high school that would later, meaning in recent years, be caught up in the storm of sexual abuse, male-on-male. I had no such experience whatsoever, I'm not saying that, but I felt like I had emotional abuse. Not I personally, but we as a group of adolescent boys.

JG: Because of the environment.

JR: Yeah. I just felt they were at war with us.

JG: Over what?

JR: Over being adolescent, sexual, heterosexual beings. I'll just give you a small example. They purposefully held school on New Year's Day, just as an example. There wasn't any real reason for it. It was just simply their statement about it. They were just constantly at war. I'll give you another example. In my senior year, I was elected to be the head of something called the Inter-Yeshiva League (00:12:00), which were these Modern Orthodox day schools in New York. As part of that, we planned a Hanukah celebration with Shlomo Carlebach. Just for the record, I booked Shlomo Carlebach for that event. [laughs] He came, and he performed, etcetera etcetera. Many of the rabbis at that school forbade their students to go to that concert because — and I had never heard of this term before — kol isha, the voice of women. You might note that Shlomo was not a woman, and he was the one doing the singing. But there was — and this was news to me — there
was the danger that the girls from the other schools, since we didn't have any girls, might sing along, and of course that would be a terrible thing. So that's when I knew they were just simply at war with us. I thought they were just mindless idiots really, in terms of their treatment of us. I thought it was a terrible school.

JG: You also said in your questionnaire that you filled out before the interview that you thought they were not morally serious.

JR: Well, that's going back to the Civil Rights thing. Even worse, when we were in ninth grade — this is historically interesting — I think they were college students, began the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry. One of the earliest demonstrations was, they invited people to go down and bring matzot to be shipped to the Soviet Union, and I was taken by this. Then of course the edict came down that anyone who does will be suspended.

JG: Why? What was the problem with that?

JR: I can't explain it. It's very hard for me to get into the mindset of the people who ran this school. The experience of it was, you're not a morally serious institution. This is just outrageous. I mean, I really do remember, whatever the words would have been from a young person, I do remember feeling all that.

JG: What was the impact on you growing up in the environment of the general American counterculture?

JR: Huge. Huge. We were — through the music and through the politics, I experienced myself, and not I alone, as full participants in the sixties. Certainly at least politically in what was going on — Civil Rights, anti-war, etcetera. Anti-war, more being in college.

JG: So you went to Queens College.

JR: I went to Queens College, (00:15:00), yes.

JG: How did you decide on that?

JR: [laughs] The choice was between Queens College or City College, and I don't know why I chose Queens. I was tired of commuting into Manhattan.

JG: Uh-huh. So you lived at home?
JR: I lived at home, except for my junior year, which I'll tell you more about, when I went to Hebrew University.

JG: So what was that experience like? It was the first time since third grade that you'd been not in a Modern Orthodox environment.

JR: Oh, I loved Queens College. [laughs] Except for living at home. I thought it was wonderful. It was a very large — it was a city — but today we'd say a state university. It was bureaucratic, and, you know, twenty-six thousand students. It was not Brandeis University by any means. By today's standards, it was not student-friendly, but I thought the professors were wonderful, and I enjoyed myself thoroughly.

JG: What were you studying, or interested in studying, at the time?

JR: I was a philosophy major. I thought I was going to be a psychology major, but in those days psychology was still pretty behavioral, and that was of no interest. So I was instead a philosophy major, which again I really enjoyed. I also on Sundays went to the Jewish Theological Seminary and took courses both in Talmud and in Bible.

JG: Was that at all a radical move for you, to be at JTS?

JR: [laughs] Not for me personally, nor for my parents, because some people in my family had gone to Camp Ramah. So they kind of had that in their background.

JG: Had you attended Jewish camps at all?

JR: Yeah, I did.

JG: When you were growing up?

JR: Yes, yes I did. For three years in elementary school, I went to a camp my father had gone to when he was a child, apparently. It was also an all-boys camp, not a very good camp. I don't have very much to say about it. Then, when I was sixteen, I started to go to Machaneh Massad, a Hebrew-speaking camp that many of my other friends went to. That was a very positive experience for me. Then at my friends' urging, I switched to Ramah when I was nineteen.

JG: So you were already in college.

JR: I was in college, yeah. That was very important. I'll talk more about that.
JG: Yeah, absolutely. Were you already in high school involved in any kind of anti-war activity?

JR: No, it was too early for that. I graduated high school in '64.

JG: '64. So in '65 already there's anti-war stuff —

JR: Yeah. It was from my freshman year in college onward.

JG: So what was the impact (00:18:00) of the anti-war movement?

JR: Huge. Just, totally huge. I mean, it was all-consuming, except for the year in Israel, which I'll talk about. It just simply defined the politics of my college years. I went to rallies — it was a whole thing. I was never a political radical, but I was certainly very politically active.

JG: So tell us about the year in Israel. Your junior year?

JR: That was really — my junior year was very impactful. I didn't even want to go to Israel. I had wanted to transfer — I don't know how I picked these places — I had wanted to transfer to either Tufts or University of Chicago, but my parents wouldn't allow that. So I realized that the one option I had was the Hebrew University in Israel.

JG: Option you had for what?

JR: Getting out of home. Getting away. So I took it.

JG: And this was 1966.

JR: 1966, yes. I left September of 1966. Here's an important piece. I mentioned that I had been taking college courses on Sundays at JTS. So again, I'm reconstructing this, but I think what happened was the Jewish Agency gave JTS a number of scholarships, primarily for the rabbinical students, but in order to get the scholarships they had to have X number of people going to Israel. So I guess they were short on those people. So one day after I'd been accepted to the university, Sylvia Ettenberg, who was the dean of the college there, called me in and said, "Would you like to go to Israel and stay at our dorms free of charge?" And I said, "Well, that's a very nice offer, thank you. But I do have a friend of mine who I have agreed to be his roommate." A friend from Queens College.
JG: So you were already ready to go to Hebrew University.

JR: Yes, yeah. She said, "Well, we could use two college students." I said, "I'll ask him and get back to you." His name was Johnny Landenberger, and he was just as taken by this as I was. So here we were, the only two undergraduate juniors in a dormitory — pretty much brand new dormitory — for rabbinical students. These were all JTS rabbinical students, and they became my friends for the year. They were the people I hung out with, more or less.

JG: They were a little older than you?

JR: Yeah, but that's when I met Eddie Feld (00:21:00), who was only a couple years older than me. The others were more advanced into their twenties. He and I were very close, but I was friendly with all of them to the extent that a younger person could be.

JG: This was your first trip to Israel.

JR: First time out of the country. First time ever on an airplane. First time I ever went on an airplane was flying to Israel. [laughs] Yes.

JG: Tell us what that year was for you?

JR: Oh, that year was such a year. I mean, firstly it was just, it was harder than I had ever imagined just simply to be away. Again, I want to remind everybody that there were no telephones, certainly no emails whatsoever, so the only means of communication back home were aerograms, which took about two weeks to arrive. [laughs]

JG: What's an aerogram?

JR: An aerogram is a single-paged document that the post office created, blue in those days, that you could write sort of on both sides. You could sort of jam into a single aerogram more than you could on a single page of — and of course, it was discounted.

JG: And it folded.

JR: It folded, yes, and that's what people typically wrote on. So it was really a pretty radical break, both from contact with my family and other friends. Then, of course, all the adjustments to a foreign culture. Hebrew — in those days, let me remind people, they actually spoke Hebrew in Jerusalem. [laughs] The expectation was you would speak Hebrew.
JG: How was your Hebrew?

JR: Well, I would say I had basic Hebrew, but I didn't have spoken Hebrew. So I had to develop that. We all did. That was just part of the journey.

JG: What was your impressions of Israel? Do you remember?

JR: I remember it very well. I mean, again, for people familiar with the Israel of today, this is an Israel of a completely different era, especially Jerusalem, because Jerusalem was still a divided city. So almost none of us has the experience of living in a divided city where you actually come to the boundary very clearly, where much of what — including parts of the Old City — that we immediately think of as Jerusalem was out of bounds, completely out of bounds. So it was a small city, and Tel Aviv was much more dynamic, as it still is. But it was a very intellectually dynamic city. The Hebrew University at that time (00:24:00) was a really dominant institution, and through JTS we had access to people — I'll just give two examples — who we otherwise would have much less access to. Let me just take the two Leibowitz's, because they're a good example. Nechama came and taught us each week a class on *Sefer Shemot* (*the Book of Exodus*), right in the JTS building. So you could take it at Hebrew University, but we had a small class, in Hebrew of course, which was amazing. Also, her brother, Yeshayahu Leibowitz — I don't know if it was once or twice — came to speak to us as a sort of guest speaker. This was before he became famous. He would become famous after the Six Day War of course, but he was still quite a radical thinker. I was in Israel when Agnon received the Nobel Prize, which was like winning the World Cup. To the Israelis, that was simply amazing. Everybody knew where Agnon lived. Agnon was still alive, of course. People would walk to his house on Shabbos to congratulate him. I didn't do that, but other people did. We would go to Meah Shearim on Friday nights to services, that sort of thing. It was a pretty amazing, amazing experience, and then at the end of it was, of course, the Six Day War, and the buildup to the Six Day War. None of us left. We all stayed, and it was a very, very deeply moving experience.

JG: What are your memories of the Six Day War?

JR: I'll just share three quick memories. We stayed in the dorm. We just taped the windows. Nobody knew it was going to be six days. [laughs] On the first morning of the war, a beautiful day in Jerusalem — we were certainly not supposed to do this, but it's Israel so a lot of people did things they weren't supposed to do — we were all in the dorm together, and somebody said, Right out there, there is a dogfight between jets going on. Let's go out and look. I'm sure we were not supposed to do that. Sure enough, right in
front of our eyes — you can't tell who's who — what turned out to be Jordanian and Israeli jets were fighting each other, and you could see them falling from the sky. It was really (00:27:00) amazing.

JG: Was it frightening?

JR: No, it was almost like a war game. A little more frightening, but again, not so real. Our dormitory was right next to — there was a valley right next to our dormitory that had Israeli artillery, so the Jordanians on the first morning shelled those positions. Some of the shells landed on our block, but again, I don't think we felt — maybe I was so young that I was in denial — but I don't think we felt there was any imminent danger. Then, you know, the Jordanians kind of fell apart more or less. We also had Israelis living in the dorms, and some of them were paratroopers, and some of them were in the battle for Jerusalem. One of them fell in that battle. So that was really something. Then on Thursday — it started on Monday — I received a telegram saying that my father had had a heart attack back in New York, during the war. So I was to get on the first plane out, which was Thursday night, still dark. So I and Lee Diamond, who was a rabbinical student — I don't know why Lee had to travel —

JG: You could travel? They were letting planes —

JR: Yeah, at least that night. I don't know if they had previously. We flew home via Paris. [laughs] It was such a thing to land in Paris on Friday morning, as if nothing was happening. Then I was home by Shabbat. So it was quite amazing.

JG: Was that your junior year?

JR: Yeah, that was my junior year.

JG: What was the impact of this on you?

JR: Well, the other thing that had happened that year, amazingly enough, is the rabbinical students there — we still had draft deferments in those days. I don't think I ever thought about going to rabbinical school — but the JTS rabbinical students convinced me that were I to think about going to rabbinical school, I should not go to JTS. [laughs] So I was like, okay, helpful information.

JG: Why not?

JR: They just didn't think it was a very good education.
JG: What was the alternative?

JR: Graduate school.

JG: Not being a rabbi.

JR: Yeah, being — I mean, I was already quite sure I wanted to be an academic. So it wasn't like I wanted to be a pulp it rabbi. There was really — I mean, HUC would have been the only — and that next year, RRC [Reconstructionist Rabbinical College] began.

JG: Sixty-eight.

JR: Yeah. So it turned out there was a third alternative, but (00:30:00) the only reason that rabbinical school even entered my mind was because of the draft. So let's talk about that. [laughs]

JG: Yes, please.

JR: So my plan in my senior year —

JG: Your senior year was which year?

JR: Sixty-seven, sixty-eight. When I came back from Israel and back to Queens College, my plan was to apply to graduate school in the history of religion and to go. I applied to Harvard, Columbia, and the University of Chicago, was accepted to Columbia and the University of Chicago and was all set to go to the University of Chicago when President Johnson cancelled graduate school deferments. So suddenly, going to rabbinical school seemed like a better idea. [laughs] The alternative, which most of my friends took in New York, was that you could become a New York City public school teacher. Again, remember my parents were, so I probably might have done that, but I did apply to JTS and was accepted. But I had been warned, so I was reluctant. That's when Art Green came to talk with me about Havurat Shalom.

JG: Okay, so let's now turn to —

JR: Okay, I had heard about Art from Eddie while I was in Israel.

JG: And he knew him from —
JR: From JTS, yes. They were friends.

JG: Are they about the same age?

JR: No, Art is older, a few years older. Then I went back to Ramah in the Berkshires in the summer of ’67.

JG: Wait! Back to —?

JR: I had gone in ’66 and really loved it.

JG: Gone as a camper or a counselor?

JR: As a counselor. I really loved it. Then I went back in ’67. And David Sperling, who was either still in rabbinical school or had just graduated, was my division head. I think he invited Art Green to come one Shabbat to camp, so that's when he and I met, even before Havurat Shalom was thought of yet. We just met. You know, David said, "You two people should meet." I think he had heard about me from Eddie or whatever, and we just had a really wonderful and pleasant time together talking. And again, I'm not the right person to tell exactly the story of how Art and Al got the idea of Havurat Shalom, but —

JG: Al —

JR: Axelrad.

JG: Axelrad, right — who was the Hillel director at Brandeis.

JR: Right. But in the spring of ’68, when I knew that I didn’t have a deferment — I needed (00:33:00) a deferment — that graduate school would not be my deferment — Art, I think by letter, he contacted me, telling me about their plans to start this alternative rabbinical school. At first it really was thought of, at least in my mind, as an alternative — or we preferred "underground" — rabbinical school. He said he was coming. He already was a doctoral student at Brandeis, but he was coming to Queens to be a scholar-in-residence at a local synagogue, and could we meet after Shabbat at a diner in Queens?

JG: He was recruiting people, essentially.

JR: Yes, he was. We met at this diner in Queens and talked, and I was really taken, of course, by this idea.
JG: What was the idea that he was presenting to you?

JR: It wasn't called Havurat Shalom. I think at the time it was called — you can ask Art — Kehilah Kedosha. But the notion was that he and Al Axelrad would start this rabbinical school. Now the maleness is partly just the times, but also partly the draft thing, because only males were drafted at that point. It's all of a piece. [laughs] People like myself wouldn't have to go to either JTS or RRC. We could go there, and we could start this whole new community seminary.

JG: What do you mean by "people like myself?"

JR: Well, I suppose people who were graduating college who needed a deferment, who were Jewishly interested. More than interested, who were Jewishly intense. Again, I know that Art has all the documents and details of this. I don't remember the exact details of it. I do remember very well meeting him.

JG: Did he give you anything, like a prospectus, at that point?

JR: [laughs] Oh, a prospectus. No, he had written a letter in which he sort of outlined his fantasy of what this might be.

JG: It was very inchoate at this point.

JR: Very, very. But he had done some work with the draft board. You needed some documents, and he had it. I think my major concern at that point was, would this fly?

JG: In terms of a draft deferment.

JR: Yes, yes. He said, "Well, we think so. It's a risk, but you have to try it." So I was willing to take that risk.

JG: What did you understand as what the program would be, or what the commitment —?

JR: I'm not sure I understood very much at that point. I don't think I understood very much of what it was. It meant moving to Cambridge, but I'm not sure (00:36:00) I knew exactly what was entailed at all. But I had to convince my parents. I love this memory. On chol hamoed Pesach of that year, Art and Kathy Green invited me and my parents up to visit them in their Cambridge apartment, in East Cambridge, and we went. They put on
— knowing that my parents were Orthodox — they put on such a wonderful display of *frumkeit* for my parents. They were so charming that they just totally won them over. It was really something. I don't think my parents had any idea what this was going to be like, but if these were the people running it, it was fine with them.

JG: That's great.

JR: That's how I went.

JG: So you agreed after that, in the spring.

JR: Yeah. As soon as I got my parents' okay, which tells you a little bit about my background, [*laughs*] I was onboard. I was absolutely onboard.

JG: Did he have others who were onboard at that point, too? And did you know who they were?

JR: Yes. I don't think I knew anyone, no. I mean, I knew that Eddie Feld was going.

JG: As a teacher.

JR: As a teacher. I felt like I knew Art. I can't think of anyone else I knew, who I had ever met. But let me back up and talk about *Response Magazine*, because I think that is helpful —

JG: You were already involved in *Response*.

JR: Yes.

JG: It was founded in '67, is that right?

JR: I think it was in my junior year when I was away, and then when I came back, Alan Mintz, who was the editor, invited me.

JG: How did you know Alan?

JR: I'm not sure how I knew Alan. Maybe through my Ramah connections? I was thinking about that before this interview. I'm not sure exactly how Alan and I knew each other. I mean, we barely knew each other, but it was a real pleasure to be on this editorial
board of the magazine. In the first issue that I was involved in, the main article, though it was written as a pseudonym, was allegedly by Art Green, about LSD and the use of LSD.

JG: What was the pseudonym? Itzik —

JR: Lodzer.

JG: This is the Itzik Lodzer article.

JR: Yeah. So (00:39:00) that was like another connection to Art.

JG: Meaning that he had the article.

JR: Yeah, that he had the article, and we talked. We spent — it seemed to me at the time — endless time reviewing this article, trying to understand it. It was like for us a banner. It was like A Brave New World. [laughs]

JG: And what was the gist of the article?

JR: It was essentially about Art's interest in mysticism and about the possibility that LSD provides contemporary — not that I ever took LSD; [laughs] I'm not much of a druggie — provides a sort of highway to mystical experience and that could be combined with interest in Jewish mysticism.

JG: As part of a spiritual quest.

JR: Right. In that context, in the Response context, Havurat Shalom was like a natural next step somehow. It felt — and again, Alan would be instrumental in starting the New York Havurah. Bill Novak, who took over Response from Alan, would come to Havurat Shalom. So somehow — it's a little vague in my mind — there's a Response-Havurat Shalom connection. Being on Response sort of prepared me for this as a next step. You also asked about politics, and again, this was a place where you could be avowedly anti-war openly in a way that was not encouraged, as far as I knew, at JTS. Just for the record, I spent one afternoon speaking to Ira Eisenstein about RRC, just to check it out, [laughs] before I decided to go to Havurat Shalom. That was for me — he was like, the most bizarre. That was stylistically so not up my alley. His politics probably were fine. It was just, I don't know.

JG: A vision that didn't speak to you.
JR: Right. Yeah, it didn't speak to me at all.

JG: So your involvement with *Response* actually started the year before.

JR: My senior year.

JG: Your senior year. So you were already involved in it.

JR: Yes, I was on the editorial board.

JG: Did you write at all that first year?

JR: I did write an article about the death of God, [*nods*] which is something that I was very interested in.

JG: This is total liberation for you —

JR: It was —

JG: — from the world that you had —

JR: Well, I think total liberation doesn't state it correctly. I think — and this is important for me — I think what Havurat Shalom was, in Peter Berger's terms, was a re-socialization experience. That is to say, when what I had grown up with no longer seemed plausible to me (00:42:00). I mean, this had already started at Ramah in '66 and '67, in the *Response* community that senior year, and then going on. It was like it was a re-configuration of something that already was familiar to me, which was an intense Jewish community, but on a political and intellectual level that seemed very attractive, and seemed timely, in terms of —

JG: Let's talk a little bit more about Ramah, and what that had meant to you.

JR: Oh, Ramah meant the world to me. I mean, as important as Israel was, so was Ramah. I had been at Massad, and my colleagues at Ramah were really wonderful — excuse me, at Massad — were really wonderful. But the structure of the camp and the director of the camp were quite authoritarian, and of course their main passion was spoken Hebrew, which was not my main passion even though I actually had become pretty fluent my year in Israel. So I liked Massad, but it didn't —

JG: Was Massad Zionist in orientation?
JR: Oh yes, very, but it didn't speak to the times. When I got to Ramah, it really spoke to the times. I really could already begin — I had teenage campers. I could really begin to put on programs about the Civil Rights Movement, about the Anti-War Movement. Alan has written about this, and I think accurately. Ramah at that time really was a place where you could already combine your deep Jewish commitments with your political commitments, and that was very important to me, very important. I also, in doing so, felt much more central to — much more honored as a staff member and much more central to the camp than I ever had at Massad.

JG: What about Ramah as a spiritual community? How was that for you and how did —?

JR: I think I liked it. I mean, it wasn't nearly as intense as Havurat Shalom would be, but I think it was certainly a step in the right direction.

JG: Many commentators have talked about what a large percentage of people who were involved in the early havurot were sort of coming out of —

JR: Yeah, but not so much Havurat Shalom.

JG: Really?

JR: Yes. I mean, Barry Holtz, yes, and me, yes. I'm not sure anyone else. (00:45:00) Maybe Arnie Kover. No, not a lot, no. Again, this needs to be checked. I'm not exactly sure, but I don't think. Let me just mentioned Eddie Feld again because he's such a good friend. He went to Ramah for one or two summers and hated it, so it was not an important experience to him at all.

JG: Why did he hate it?

JR: You have to ask him. I don't know.

JG: I will, okay.

JR: Yeah.

JG: Okay, so what are your earliest memories of Havurat Shalom?

JR: Yes, I have some notes here. May I?
JG: Please, you may. Absolutely.

JR: Okay, so — [laughs]

JG: Joe was a professor. He always — [laughs]

JR: Okay, first it was simply moving to Cambridge. I had never had an apartment in my life, and here I was renting an apartment at 33 Line Street on the border of Cambridge and Somerville, with someone who I had never met named Danny Pekarsky, who to this day is a good friend.

JG: How did you connect with him?

JR: Art put us together. We were both interested. Danny was going to the Harvard Graduate School of Education. I was not yet going to the Harvard Graduate School of Education, but he thought we would be good. We'd never met. As it turned out, Danny decided to live with his girlfriend at the time, and I never actually lived with him. [laughs] But still, having my own apartment was such a kick. And then we all lived in Cambridge in walking distance of one another. The havurah the first year was on Franklin Street in Cambridge, sort of between Harvard and Central Squares. Now I should mention, I also was a graduate student, not a very serious one, at Brandeis. Joe Lukinsky had started that year a Jewish education program at Brandeis and I was a graduate student there, so I also had that, but I didn't pay very much heed to it, except for the Joe himself. Joe was also on the faculty of Havurat Shalom, but not very actively involved. My life really centered on Cambridge. I still, for other reasons, go to Cambridge and walk the streets and remember who lived where and how I got from Line Street to Havurat Shalom. That year is so vivid in my mind, of going back and forth to the havurah building. We spent a lot of time there.

JG: Tell me about who were the members in that first year.

JR: Yes, yes. I don't remember the exact number. I think it was in the teens. It was of course all male, and again, that was our blindness. We were like — (00:48:00) we just thought of rabbinical students as being male.

JG: Yeah, there were hardly any people who were —

JR: There was just one, in Cincinnati, and we didn't know her. [laughs]

JG: Exactly.
JR: We didn't know of her existence. Yeah, so as I said, with the exception of Art and Eddie Feld, I had never met anyone before, but it was such an intensely friendly place. It was divided between faculty and students, though there was a big deal about trying to keep that boundary fluid. Of course, the faculty were themselves very impressive, and we'll talk more about this. There was Art, there was Zalman Schachter.

JG: Who was in Cambridge that year.

JR: Yes. He was there just — he was on some sort of fellowship at Brandeis. So I'll talk more about Zalman.

JG: Yes.

JR: There was Eddie Feld, who was with Merle, his fiancee. There was Burt Jacobson, who was a Jewish educator. Joe Lukinsky had a very peripheral role.

JG: Was Al involved at that point?

JR: No. Al never was actually. Al was involved in the founding, but by the time it actually started in September, I think he realized it was too much, and he was not involved.

JG: And he had a family.

JR: Yeah, he had a family. Yes, he did.

JG: Not coincidentally.

JR: Yeah, same with Joe. Joe had a family too, so — and they lived, Joe lived in Brookline. I think maybe Al, too. Anyway, Art and Kathy lived in one half of this building, and the havurah was in the other half. Steve Zweibaum and Arnie Kover lived up on the top floor, so they paid rent to this. We had no furniture and that leads, of course, to the famous story about Zalman and the cushions that I want to tell if others haven't.

JG: No.

JR: So we knew we were going to come there for classes and for tefilot, but we had no furniture. This was a rented building. So Zalman came up with the idea that every, let's
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say, Thursday — whatever it was — was garbage day in Cambridge, and it was September. It was moving time, and lots of people put out old furniture, and we could just get free furniture. That was for me such a radical idea, such an out-of-the-box way of thinking. He then came up with the idea of, well, we didn't need that many couches, but there were tons of couches out there, and (00:51:00) we could just take the cushions and use the cushions to sit on for the tefilot, which then became sacred practice at the havurah. Years later when I [laughs] started meditating at meditation centers and we sat on cushions, I kind of realized that maybe Zalman wasn't making this up out of thin air, but that he, who brought this knowledge of other religions to Havurat Shalom, had gotten this idea from seeing, I don't know, meditations —

JG: Ashrams.

JR: Ashrams, yeah. But that sort of interesting coincidence of necessity and practice really was fascinating to me. Of course, we had to invent our tefilah. What was it going to be? It was not, at first, egalitarian. It would slowly become egalitarian, but again, the natural move was men would lead. But you know, how we would pray, which siddur we would use, what we would include and not include, how much English, how much Hebrew? — because the group was quite varied in terms of their backgrounds.

JG: What were their backgrounds, if you can just —

JR: Yeah, again, I think you should ask other people. I mean, I think I — except for Eddie — I think I was the only one from an Orthodox day school background. Art had his own strange background, which you can ask him about. Barry Holtz and Arnie Kover had grown up right here in Brookline, and they'd gone to K.I. [Kehillath Israel] and had that sort of Conservative background. People like — Michael Brooks was from Oregon, Zweibaum was from Connecticut. There was a guy named Noam Kornblum, who was, I think, from Chicago. I just think they had like, regular, I'm guessing, more or less Conservative Jewish backgrounds. This is an interest that they discovered while in college, and they didn't necessarily bring much background. The most striking example was Jim Kugel, today one of the renowned scholars in the world. Again, whatever his background was, he came to Havurat Shalom without very much Hebrew in his background.

JG: He got some tutoring, it sounds like.

JR: Yeah, he got some tutoring. Yeah, he was obviously among the brightest among us. So the background was really quite varied.
JG: Yeah. Before we get too much into tefilah, I wanted to just talk a little bit more about the ideal of community.

JR: Yeah. Yes, that was very, very important.

JG: Yes.

JR: Yeah. So we thought of ourselves as an intentional community, and again, there would be a lot of discussion and debate about what intentional community meant, but at the very least, it meant that we all lived in proximity to each other.

JG: Was there actually a rule about living close to the havurah — in walking distance, or not?

JR: I think for the members/students there was. I don't know if there was a rule or just that's what we did. For example, Buzzy Fishbane and Mona Dekovin, who would become Fishbane — she was still a student as Wellesley so, you know, she was visiting so she didn't live there — I don't think Buzzy lived in Cambridge yet, but when they married, they did move to Cambridge. It was certainly the spirit of the place that you lived nearby, that you came on a regular basis, defined at least as on Shabbat and for the weekly meal/community meeting, but also for the classes, which we'll talk about.

JG: How important was the house?

JR: Very, very important. The initial house didn't become the historic house, but —

JG: You moved in the following year.

JR: The following year we bought a house, for thirty-two thousand dollars in Somerville, [laughs] with help from the Danforth Foundation. But, yeah, the house was very important. It was our place.

JG: The gathering place.

JR: It was the gathering place, yeah.

JG: So you were starting to talk about the regular occasions when the community did come together.
JR: Yeah, so there was an awful lot of emphasis, rhetorical and actual, placed on community — that we were involved in each other’s lives, that we were an intentional community. At times there were fantasies that we would be an eternal community, that this was it for life. Again, you have to remember that we were very young. The members had just graduated college, the faculty were still in their late twenties. We didn't have a lot of life experience. But, again, it was part of the larger culture that communes are starting, etcetera, etcetera, so this notion of dedicating yourself to the community was a pretty central plank of what we were — and, you know, Art added the sort of historical element of the Hasidic community and how people were — in that case, how central the rebbe and the community of followers were to the whole conception of the religious life.

JG: Did a kibbutz as an ideal ever —? (00:57:00)

JR: No not so much, not so much. I ended up being very interested in kibbutz, but I don't think anyone else did. Well, I shouldn't say that. Excuse me. Excuse me, this just popped into my mind. Again, others should talk about this. I think in the second year of the havurah, someone — I don't remember whom — could be Arthur Hertzberg? He came to us with an offer from —the Jewish Agency? The Israeli Government? From the Israeli side, they were ready to start a new kibbutz, and that we were all welcome to join! In Israel! I know Zweibaum did. That other Steve whose name I'm not remembering did.

JG: Is this the group that ended up forming Kibbutz Gezer?

JR: Yes, yes. I know Steve Fraade, now from Yale, who was part of that.

JG: So that idea was floating around in the havurah —

JR: I guess —

JG: — relatively early on.

JR: Well, I don't remember it being floating around until that offer came to us.

JG: When was that, though?

JR: If my memory is correct, it was Arthur Hertzberg who brought the offer in the second year of the havurah, and those people left after the second year to go be members of Kibbutz Gezer. My memory there is, I did visit them in Kibbutz Gezer later, when Gail and I were in Israel, but I hadn't even remembered that until you mentioned it. My interest in kibbutz was more academic.
JG: So we were talking about the regular times that the community would come together.

JR: Yes. So most important was Shabbat morning. We all came together for tefilah. Not just us, but we also had people from the community who came.

JG: Is that the main — and again, I want to explore tefilah more in depth shortly — but was that the main opportunity that other members from the larger community —?

JR: Yeah. As far as I know, in the first two years, it was the only opportunity. I mean, obviously not just Shabbat. Chagim, too. Then Roskies reminded me, based on Joel's journal, that in the third year or fourth year —

JG: Joel Rosenberg's journal.

JR: Yeah, that we started an adult education institute at the havurah?

JG: The Lehrhaus.

JR: Yeah, that apparently I taught in, though I don't remember any of this. So we had other opportunities, but the davening is the one I remember.

JG: Well, certainly, we'll come back to that.

JR: Yeah, very, very (01:00:00) more openly, yes.

JG: So, communal meals. It sounds like they were very important.

JR: Very, very important, yes. Again, now that I have recent experience with communal meals at meditation centers, I have some better sense of what it is we were trying to do. We were somehow trying to introduce some notion of holy eating into our vocabulary and into our practice.

JG: Was that notion of holy eating articulated?

JR: I think it was. Again, I'm not sure it was called “holy eating.” That may just be my summary of what it was.

JG: I'm also curious how kashrut fits into that.
JR: Well, the house was kosher. I don't mean mashgiach and Orthodox, but as far as I can remember, everything was vegetarian. People definitely brought food. I mean, it wasn't like somebody cooked, or one person cooked. People brought food. I was not among those who were very good at bringing — you know, I probably brought bread and stuff like that, because I was not a good cook. But people definitely cooked and brought food. My memory was most of it was vegetarian, mostly salads. Art and Kathy were prodigious suppliers of food, but definitely other people as well.

JG: So, Moosewood?

JR: Well, this was long before Moosewood.

JG: Before the Moosewood Cookbook?

JR: Oh yeah. Long before, yeah. As a historian you can check that, but I'd never heard of Moosewood in those years. Again, I'm not the best person to talk about this, because I'm not very good at making the food. As a single adult male, I was introduced to a lot of salads that I had never seen before in my life, for sure, at Havurat Shalom. But also a mood, a certain mood. Art and Zalman were extremely good at setting these moods. Community meals is different from Seudah Shlishit, which I'll talk about separately.

JG: So community meals were in the middle of the week.

JR: Yes, always in the middle of the week.

JG: And was it set as a regular —

JR: Yes, and then it was followed by a meeting.

JG: Weekly.

JR: As far as I remember, yes.

JG: In that first year or two.

JR: Yeah.

JG: Okay.

JR: In the house. [laughs]
JG: In the house. So you were talking about sort of Art and Zalman's roles in sort of setting the mood, even in these non-ritual —

JR: Well, again, let's sort of move over to this because this — I mean, Art and Zalman were like the bookends of that first year. I should say that people like Eddie Feld and Buzzy Fishbane were very important to me personally, (01:03:00) but they didn't set the tone or the mood of Havurat Shalom that first year. Art and Zalman did. Again, Art can talk about this more than I. It was a delicate dance between these two giants as to how they shared. Art, of course, had no voice — no singing voice. Zalman had a fabulous singing voice. So Zalman set the music. The sort of song agenda was set by Zalman, for sure. Zalman was unbelievably prolific, creative. Again, Roskies talks about this at length. I bow to him. In his recent talk, he talked about this. I'm not also very musical, so that wouldn't be in my memory. But, Art set the verbal, spiritual, religious tone, and Zalman deferred to him.

JG: And what was that tone?

JR: Yeah, so this is the really interesting, delicate thing. I mean, for Art, of course — and he'll talk about this in his own words — the model for what we were doing was two-fold. On the one hand, it was the hasidic community of which he was already a historical student. Secondly, it was the Lehrhaus in Germany. I don't know that we knew so much about the Lehrhaus in Germany, or at that point we knew so much about the hasidic community — more through Buber than anything else. But the tension was obviously in the Hasidic community, the rebbe stands at the center. Now Zalman, who that year, I think, sort of held this in check, had been a Lubavitcher Hasid, was close not to the famous rebbe of the time, but the preceding rebbe. So he had kind of the rebbe stuff in his blood, or if not in his blood, in his biological, his biographical repertoire. Art, less so. So Art, it seemed to me — but let him talk about this himself — is ideologically an egalitarian, democratic, spread-the-wealth kind of guy, but in his bearing, in his intellect, and in his dominant personality, has some of the traits of a rebbe. So how he and Zalman and the rest of us negotiated this delicate dance of what we were doing, what the leadership was — speaking for myself, I was not that influenced by Zalman, but enormously influenced by Art. I could talk more about that. (01:06:00) And I was sort of a refugee from the Orthodox world, [laughs] so I needed that leadership, and I also needed the kind of family atmosphere that Kathy and Art created in their home, as did Michael and Ruthie Brooks, Eddie and Merle Feld. I needed all that stuff, emotionally needed all that stuff. So this, I think in retrospect, this was sort of a very delicate dance, because we were ideologically committed, like on a kibbutz, to equal relationships — again, not egalitarian in terms of women, but among ourselves. Certainly I felt free to
speak my mind, etcetera, etcetera. There was no censorship, that I would remember. But we were also new at this, and we needed their leadership. So that was delicate.

JG: From your perspective were there sort of central areas of tension?

JR: I'll tell you later at the end of the first year where that tension, to my mind, flared into the open. I don't want to get there yet.

JG: Yeah, okay. So I just wanted to go back for one sec, because you were starting to describe sort of the atmosphere of these communal meals.

JR: Yeah, and also I should talk about Shabbat morning.

JG: Yeah, for sure.

JR: So I don't have that clear memory of the communal meals. It gets clearer to me in the second year than in the first, because with the addition of Roskies, Rosenberg, Savrans, Siegel, and the third year with the Strassfelds, more singing power came into the havurah. [laughs] You know, in the first year, definitely, people like Barry Holtz, Burt Jacobson, Eddie Feld could and did lead *tefilot*, and could sing, and could also lead singing at both *Seudah Shlishit* and communal meals.

JG: So there was singing as part of these communal meals as well?

JR: Yeah, but not as much as at *Seudah Shlishit*.

JG: Right, of course.

JR: I remember more — because I had never experienced this, and again, I don't know how prevalent this was — periods of silence during community meals. Again, now I'm familiar with it from the Buddhist context, but —

JG: Do you think it was influenced by the Buddhist context, or —

JR: I'd have to ask Art that question. I just don't —

JG: Quaker —

JR: Maybe, yeah. Both Art and Zalman — Zalman I think even more than Art — had a lot of interfaith experience. (01:09:00) I had zero. So it was all new to me. [laughs]
JG: Yeah, yeah. And they were familiar with each other’s thinking.

JR: Oh, yeah.

JG: Hadn't they been talking about Zalman's ideas about —?

JR: Yeah. And Zalman and Kathy were particularly close. They knew each other from Chicago somehow.

JG: I see. And he introduced them, is that right — now that I'm thinking of it?

JR: I think he did, I think he did. I think he did. Yeah.

JG: So what else besides food? The singing, was there anything else that contributed to —

JR: Yeah. I don't remember, in terms of the community meals. The community meetings which followed, you know, they went on forever. This is like a kibbutz meeting, exactly because we didn't have — we were sort of egalitarian and anti-authoritarian, blah blah blah. No Robert’s Rules of Order, no set procedures.

JG: No given structure to the — how were they structured?

JR: Kind of informally.

JG: Anybody could bring up a topic, or were there —?

JR: You know, I really don't remember exactly, but what I do remember is they went on forever, and they were not very good at resolving anything. They were very good at people sharing their thoughts and sometimes feelings, but not very good at resolving things.

JG: Were there, in your memory, recurrent tropes or themes that kept coming up over and over again?

JR: Well, when we get to Stef Krieger that will come up, and when we get to what the second year will be like, that will come up. Certainly this notion of what it means to be part of an intentional community came up a lot.
JG: A lot.

JR: A lot. I should also mention that the classes — some of the classes — were very influential. We were all required to take — all members were required to take four courses. In that first year, I remember most clearly, except for the one with Joe Lukinsky which I actually took at Brandeis, Art and Buzzy's courses. Let's just to say a few words about that, because I think they were very influential. Again, Art's course was about the early hasidic community, so it just dovetailed so well with what we were trying to do. It was sort of like learning the history but learning the history to inform our own efforts. Buzzy's class, which in the first semester was about Shir HaShirim, was monumental because at that point Buzzy was still a doctoral student. He was still really bathed in the disciplines of Ancient Near East and Bible, but he taught Shir HaShirim because he wanted to teach a text that had personal (01:12:00) echoes. He was also a young man getting married that year. Again, I had studied Bible quite a bit, both in Israel and at JTS, so I was familiar with modern Biblical scholarship, but no Bible teacher had ever been as personally involved with the text as Buzzy was. So that was really very — those two classes were really very influential. And Lukinsky was very influential — this is a whole other topic — on forming my basic understanding of what the discipline of education is all about. But that's a whole other matter.

JG: We'll come back to that a little bit later. So I wanted to ask you a little bit more about this ideal of openness, at least how you experienced it in this first year as the havurah was sort of forming. As you said, this was largely a male community.

JR: Yes, and there was a lot of male bonding, again to a degree that I had never experienced. Just something that now is so common — and I think Michael Brooks started this, I'm not sure — that you hugged your haverim when you met them. Brooks would give a real bear hug. But just the notion that males would embrace was so startling to me, and yet it became routine practice. Zalman was also a big hugger. Zweibaum. These were the big huggers, [laughs] as I recall it. You did not shake hands. You hugged. Or, at the very least you — well, it's just today, it's like, males do rather frequently.

JG: Young men?

JR: Yeah.

JG: Men at that age?

JR: Oh, I don't know. Do young men? That's maybe not so much. But for me, this was totally new. The fact that peers invited you over for Shabbat dinner was new to me.
JG: Right. So the *havurah* has often been described, or maybe it was self-described, as a Shabbat-inviting community.

JR: Yeah, it was. It really was. That was new to me. I had not experienced it. Remember, I lived at home, and in Israel it was mostly adults who invited us over, or else we ate in the dorm.

JG: And what about growing up?

JR: No.

JG: You didn't have company much for Shabbat dinner.

JR: No.

JG: So this was new to you.

JR: Oh, it was totally new to me. It was totally new to me.

JG: So how did that work?

JR: Somebody would — again, I was a single male living alone, so I was not — I don't remember inviting anyone to my house for Shabbat. Maybe I did, but I don't remember it. I also wasn't a very good cook. But I don't know. People, you'd meet them during the week, and they'd say, What are you doing Friday night? Would you like to come over? I always said yes. [laughs] (01:15:00)

JG: Did it tend to be couples who did more of the inviting?

JR: Yes, yes.

JG: Married or not?

JR: Well, the ones I best remember, Art and Kathy, and Michael and Ruthie, they were married. But Eddie and Merle were engaged. Yeah, I don't remember going to Zalman's house on Friday night, but he was newly married to a second wife. That's a whole other story.

JG: And Shabbat afternoon meals also?
JR: No, that was back at the havurah.

JG: That was at the havurah, I see.

JR: Oh, you mean Shabbat lunch.

JG: Yeah, Shabbat lunch.

JR: Hm. I don't remember Shabbat lunches very much.

JG: Huh, so more Friday night.

JR: Yeah, definitely.

JG: Because there weren't services, in the beginning.

JR: No. My memory is Friday night services started the second year.

JG: Right, I think that's what I heard too.

JR: Yeah.

JG: So you'd go to people’s houses.

JR: Yeah.

JG: And what were those like?

JR: All right, so [laughs] the one I love to tell about is the night that I went to Art and Kathy's. That had a ritual to it. You would come in — again, this was totally new to me — and they would be playing Gregorian chants on a record player — you know, they were LPs on a record player. So even though Art and Kathy couldn't sing to save their lives, they always had spiritual music on. Occasionally before Shabbat began, there might be a joint passed around. Again, I'm not much of a smoker, but I sort of have that memory. And you sat around for a while. This was the other thing that was so new to me. You would sit in silence. It wouldn't be chatty. It would be in silence, and you would kind of look at each other and smile, or — the practice developed of looking into each other’s eyes. That was the other practice of that time.
JG: You mean, very deliberately.

JR: Yeah, for a little while. It's still uncomfortable even to think about, but that's what we did.

JG: It was uncomfortable at the time.

JR: I mean I was just new to — all of this is new to me. I think I socialized pretty quickly.

JG: Was it not new to most people?

JR: I believe it must have been. [laughs] As far as I know. I don't know. I don't know. But it was new to me. Time would elapse before dinner would begin, especially, of course, in the winter. So one time — okay, and (01:18:00) I need to add to make sense of this, this is Cambridge in '68, '69, and it is looneyville. People are walking in the street and it's just looneyville, especially around Harvard Square. Not Central Square looneyville. This is the white, middle class looneyville. So you know, there are Hari Krishna, there are street people all over the place, hippies, the whole thing. You could never get from my house to Harvard Square without being approached ten times for money, that kind of thing. So, anyway, one time there's a knock on the door —

JG: At Kathy and Art's?

JR: At Kathy and Art's. We've already been sitting. We'd already, as far as I remember, had heard our Gregorian chants. [laughs] And there's a knock on the door, and a white, long-haired youth appears, and he comes in. He's high, and he starts to talk to us about being Jesus Christ.

JG: This was not an invited guest.

JR: No. And to my total and utter amazement, Art engages him in conversation. "What's it like to be Jesus Christ?" or, you know. I knew nothing about mental health and I didn't know about schizophrenic breaks, or that schizophrenics often, in the middle of a break, might imagine themselves to be Jesus Christ. So I had none of that in my head. That would come years later. But it was strange behavior. [laughs] I think we'd just all attributed it to the fact that this guy was probably on an acid trip. But Art really — again, I don't know for how long, this guy didn't stay for dinner or anything — but for a while Art really engaged this guy in conversation, about his being Jesus Christ.
JG: He also let him into his house.

JR: Yes, he let him into his house, [laughs] and engaged him in conversation. We didn't lock doors in those days.

JG: Even in Cambridge.

JR: [shakes head] Mm-mm.

JG: Wow.

JR: So like, that was one memory. That was not at all typical. Going to Michael Brooks and Ruthie's house — Ruthie recently died — that was very, very different. They lived closer to Central Square, had a beautifully designed apartment, but also there was the bear hug. You would sit around, you would stare at each other. There wouldn't be a lot of — you know, small talk was forbidden. Everyone very carefully developed this sort of spiritual environs, especially on Shabbat.

JG: Anything else contribute (01:21:00) to the atmosphere there?

JR: Singing.

JG: Singing.

JR: Yeah.

JG: What kinds of singing? Singing what? This was after the meal, before the meal?

JR: Yeah, I can't remember the details of this.

JG: Was it zemirot, or —

JR: Not traditional zemirot, no. We were developing a repertoire of songs. We didn't have the Roskies song yet. Again, I think the repertoire developed more in the second year than in the first, but we definitely had people like Zalman, people like Burt, people like Michael. We had our favorite songs that we sang.

JG: Can you remember what some of them were?
JR: Well, yes. Surely. Something like "Mi Ha'ish Hachafetz Chaim," that sort of thing. There was some Carlebach, some other stuff. Probably mostly Carlebach-based, I'm guessing, but we had our repertoire of songs that we would sing over and over again.

JG: Did you know those songs before?

JR: I did. I didn't know the Zalman songs. I didn't know the Roskies songs. But those songs I knew, yeah. But we sang with kavanah. That was the whole point.

JG: And Yiddish songs?

JR: Not until Roskies.

JG: So was he the one who sort of brought in the Yiddish songs?

JR: Yeah. All right, I want to talk about Stef Krieger, and I want to talk about the crisis at the end of the first year. Is that okay?

JG: Absolutely. I just want to ask you one other thing before we get to that. You sort of mentioned it from before, Art's article for Response on drugs. I've heard the havurah described as, one term was "post-drugs." Art called it "post-drugs." I'm just curious what role —

JR: Again, I'm not the best person to talk about that, because I'm not —

JG: Right in the center of that.

JR: Yeah, I wasn't in the center of that. I don't really know exactly. What I can remember is that joints would sometimes be passed around, and it was not at all unusual for there to be joints around. But that's all I actually remember. I don't remember anyone — except for this kid who walked in — I don't remember anyone on acid trips. I don't remember any extensive use of drugs, but it might have been done in private and I just don't know about it. I'm not sure.

JG: Okay. So let's get to the crisis that happened.

JR: Yeah. So first Stef, and then the crisis.

JG: Okay.
JR: So Stef Krieger came in the middle of the first year. He came from the University of Chicago, and he was more politically radical than the rest of us. He came with the intention of being a draft refuser. So he was going to go to the draft board — he was going to present himself to the draft board in Cambridge, and he was going to say, "I am a draft refuser."

JG: As opposed to a conscientious objector.

JR: Exactly. Now there were a number of people — Jim Kugel, Michael Brooks — who were conscientious objectors.

JG: Joel Rosenberg.

JR: Joel Rosenberg. I was not, because of the Six Day War. I felt differently about it. But he was this other thing, and he wanted to go to jail. He planned to go to jail as a draft refuser, and he wanted us as a community to support him. So this is very dramatically in my memory. It was winter time, maybe February, and we spent the whole night sort of studying with him, preparing for the morning when he had his date to go to the draft board in Central Square in Cambridge. So we spent the entire night in the house, studying and talking and singing, etcetera, etcetera. Then, in the morning, we accompanied him. We walked over to Central Square, and maybe we sang or we demonstrated, whatever. Then he went into the draft board. I remember being a little teary, like, really feeling for this guy. A few hours later, Stef is back. [laughs] Of course, what the draft board did is they failed him on the physical. Yeah. This is Cambridge. I would imagine they had lots of guys coming up and being draft resisters, and they were like, "We don't need this shit. Here's your 4-F. You're done."

JG: Did he feel foiled?

JR: You'll have to ask him. I don't know what he felt. I just know what I felt, which was, like — even then, of course, now even more so — I felt like, You know, Joe, sometimes you take things a little more seriously than is warranted. I have to say, Zalman was always the guy who would say things like, "You know, things are serious in the world, but you have to know how to laugh." We weren't very good at that.

JG: This was a very serious matter, I'm sure.

JR: Oh, for us. He was going to go to jail we were sure — I was sure, etcetera, etcetera. I was just taught a life lesson, I think, that day — [laughs] — that, you know, the world doesn't operate according to the imaginations in your head. We had a crisis at
the end of the first year, in planning the second year, around this question of intentional community. My memory of this is that it was very painful. It consumed many community meetings, and it illustrated — this is what we were talking about — the sort of delicate dance of Art's place in the community. So the actual decision point was how many new community members to admit. Again, I don't remember the exact numbers, but really the essential question was, did we wish to admit fewer members — and we already had admitted people, the ones who would become my lifelong friends, like Rosenberg, like Savran, like Siegel, like Roskies — did we want to limit it to those people, whatever that smaller number was —?

JG: In terms of numbers or in terms of those kinds of people?

JR: Well, both. Both. Because then there were a whole group of people from much further afield, like people applying from California, things like this.

JG: People applied. People approached the havurah —

JR: Yes.

JG: — saying they were interested.

JR: Yes. I mean, there were a whole group of people who would, in our minds, would become lumped together, who were kind of like latter-day hippies who were turned on to Judaism and wanted to be a part of this, who were unlike the rest of us. They didn't have that background. We didn't know them. As I said, they were from places that were less familiar to us. I felt very strongly that I did not want us to admit them. In my memory, Art was the one who advocated most firmly for admitting this larger number. The argument that he used is, as I remember it, that these very people really knew what serious community was all about, and they would bring to Havurat Shalom a whole next level of seriousness about community that those of us who were already in it lacked. I think (01:30:00) what that meant was, the people who were in it were for the most part people who were in it but imagined pursuing careers, professional careers, and these people, who were sort of like latter-day hippies were at least contemplating the possibility of something closer to a commune or an ongoing community, where people would not have professions outside the havurah. At that point, Art was attracted to that latter vision.

JG: Had those people applied because of the ways in which the havurah had been presenting itself?
JR: Well, that's it. I mean, they're two very different ways of presenting. One is essentially, you are a rabbinical, an alternative rabbinical school, and one is that you are an alternative community. From the beginning, those two ideas had been brought together, but which did you put your emphasis on — the academic or the community part? Those meetings went on, it seemed to me, endlessly. From my point of view, and I may be completely wrong about this, I felt Art was kind of pushing his agenda and forcing this upon those of us who were reluctant, and sort of calling us out and saying we were not enough in terms of our commitment to this. And I felt, I'm more committed to this than anything I've ever been in my whole life, so I don't know what you mean by that. But he could rightly have said, "Joe, you're going to be starting the Harvard Graduate School of Education next year. How committed to this are you?" Anyway, for me, that was really a big crisis. And these people did come, and they did not last. [laughs]

JG: So the decision was for them to come.

JR: Yes.

JG: I understand that there was a process that maybe was part of the same process that you're talking about, where Art sent a letter to members of the community sort of outlining the positions as he saw it, and asking people to write out their vision?

JR: Yeah, often —well, not often. On occasion he would do that. He was very good at putting in words, whether it be orally or in writing, his vision of the community and inviting others to do the same.

JG: So how did it get resolved?

JR: These people came —

JG: No, but I mean how did that decision happen?

JR: God knows. I mean, community meetings. (01:33:00)

JG: Were there votes, or a consensus somehow?

JR: I think what was a crisis about it was, it didn't feel right to — you know, in our notion of what is right, it didn't feel right to have a sixteen in favor and fourteen against kind of thing, like we were parliament. Maybe we voted. I don't know how we resolved it, because we didn't really have a mechanism, other than voting for resolution. My memory
is not detailed enough to really say how exactly we resolved it, but my memory of being upset about it is very poignant.

JG: And what's your sense of how other people in the community felt?

JR: Again, I think I may have been a little bit more overly serious than other people. I remember being quite distraught about this, as I was teary about Stef's going to the board. I'm not sure that it meant that much to other people. It's a little half-comfort to me that those people didn't stay more than a year anyway.

JG: So a number of people came.

JR: They came.

JG: And did it enlarge the group?

JR: Yeah, the group was quite a bit larger. Again, whether I was just mentally set against them and therefore don't remember their contribution, but I don't remember their making very much of a contribution. [laughs] I don't remember their staying.

JG: Do you remember them making a negative contribution?

JR: No.

JG: No.

JR: Just, they kind of represented the people who — they used to call them Dorton, “over there — who lived together wherever; this was in Somerville. They were very ambitious in terms of what they wanted from the havurah, and I guess they never got it, so they left. I'm not sure exactly.

JG: So that's how it happened, that they sort of removed themselves. They weren't removed by a decision of the group. They removed themselves, and created an alternate group, in essence.

JR: [nods head] Mm-hm.

JG: And was there a relationship between the members of Dorton and the havurah?
JR: Well, funny you should ask that. [laughs] At a gathering at Hebrew College, this might be like two years ago, one of those people showed up. [laughs] Charles Cohen was his name. I hadn't seen him in that many years. Yeah, you know, it was just funny because he just showed up, and people were curious about him, etcetera, etcetera. He didn't strike me as a very appealing person now or then. (01:36:00) No, I don't think people stayed in touch with them. The core group was the core group.

JG: Okay, well, let's move on. I want to focus a little bit more closely on the issue of —

JR: Tefilah.

JG: The issue of services, of tefilah, and also learning, as components of the experience at Havurat Shalom.

JR: Yeah, good.

JG: So obviously the creation of a spiritual community was paramount, and Shabbat was this very critical component of that. Can you just describe, how was Shabbat celebrated at Havurat Shalom?

JR: Yeah, well, as I mentioned earlier, the first year, Friday night was primarily dinners at people’s houses. During the second year, actually a tefilah was added on Friday night, and then dinner.

JG: Dinner in the house, or at other people's —

JR: No. I don't ever remember eating Friday night at the house, actually.

JG: But Kabbalat Shabbat in the house.

JR: Yeah, especially when Shabbat got early. My clearest memory of what tefilah at Havurat Shalom was like was from the second year. As I mentioned to you, at that point we had more voices, and more definition emerged of what the tefilah would be like. So let me try and describe it to you. Again, one of the things that was new to me, which you know a little bit from Worship & Study, was that it was the longest Pesukei Dezimra that I'd ever experienced in my life, until later in Israel. I was accustomed to Pesukei Dezimra being, as I think they're designed to be, sort of introductory and therefore brief. Not here. We used it as a way of sort of developing the singing. Again, I'm not sure how true this was in the first year, but by the second year this was completely true. A good tefilah meant that we really worked up our singing, first and foremost, so that we could really do
a *niggun* and really dig into it, and we were not worried about the time, and we could really let it simmer and let it heighten our sensibilities. We could really sing as a group. I think part of that was there the first year, but I think it really came to expression more in the second and third year. So that was really a very powerful — for me — innovation.

(01:39:00) When a person was invited to lead *tefilot* — again, the first year this was always males, but the second year occasionally — it would take, I think, until Sharon Strassfeld got there in the third year — occasionally a woman would lead *tefilah*, most likely Janet or Mona.

JG: So it was always a woman affiliated — a wife or girlfriend, not a —?

JR: Oh, yeah. Outsiders did not lead *tefilah*, male or female. [*laughs*] Again, lead *tefilah*, let's be clear — Whoever was leading *tefilah* didn't stand up. He or she sat among the cushions.

JG: In a circle?

JR: In a circle. It's different. If it was your turn to lead, it was up to you to design the *tefilah*, but there also was a *musach of tefilah*. That is to say, so Art introduced — I think it was Art, I know Burt would sometimes do this as well — chanting in English. So we might chant one of the paragraphs before the *Shema*, we might chant in English. Or maybe it was Zalman who introduced that. Just the notion that you didn't have to chant just in Hebrew. You could also chant in English. So if you were inclined to that as leading the service, that's how you would lead the service. Or you could introduce meditations in the middle of a service, so you would have a reading that you'd introduce. You might xerox copies for others, or you might just have it yourself. You might say, "This *tefilah* has a theme, and the theme is X, and we're going to do *tefilot* that touch on that theme."

JG: What kinds of themes?

JR: I really don't remember. [*laughs*]

JG: Were they contemporary themes, or sort of —?

JR: Oh, I don't mean a theme like, today we're going to talk about our opposition to the war. No, no. I mean, someone might say, Let's really focus today on inwardness, or, Let's focus now on *teshuvah*, or, Let's focus on praise. So they were within the vocabulary of the *tefilah*, not an external thing. Again, the length of (01:42:00) *Pesukei Dezimra* and
Shacharit was really up to the person leading and to the degree the group was responsive to that person.

JG: Length in what sense? Was there any —?

JR: It could go on for a while.

JG: But was that because they were adding things?

JR: Not so much. It really was a question of how much — sometimes people added things, like meditations, but it really was a question of how much we would sing I think, that would determine the length.

JG: I see.

JR: And people would try on all kinds of different tunes. That was one of the things that Zalman introduced, that you could bring a tune from anywhere. Contemporary. Roskies reminded us that Zalman introduced Shir Ha-Partisanim, the Partisan's Song, into the tefilah. Already it was Zalman who introduced this notion of, you don't have to be so limited to Carlebach in what you're going to sing. You could bring tunes from all over.

JG: And beyond the Jewish world as well?

JR: Oh yeah. Oh, sure. Or, you know, you could have meditation. We didn't know too much about meditation, but, you know, with Zalman, you could close your eyes and sit silently for a while. Or, you could get up and have a circle dance in the middle. That's what I mean. He set the tone in the first year of innovative things you could do during tefilah, and people picked that up after he left and continued with it.

JG: Did any sense of what worked or didn't work emerge out of these?

JR: For sure, yes. Again, I didn't — as you know, I don't lead services, so I wasn't so much part of the conversation. But people were definitely learning from each other and talking to each other about it. It was almost like a workshop in the tefilah meeting.

JG: Was there sort of a group of people who regularly did this?

JR: Yeah. Not everyone did this. And you might say, "I would like to learn how to do it." So people like — when Richie and George, two of my roommates, came in, they didn't know how to do this, but they wanted to learn. Again, Roskies has no idea how to do any
of this, and he wanted to learn. Joel, the same. When the Strassfelds came, they were very knowledgeable, and they brought a whole new set of music and things to the tefilah that we didn't know. (01:45:00) When Polen came, when —

JG: Nehemia.

JR: Nehemia — again, he brought new stuff.

JG: What kind of stuff did he bring?

JR: More for Seudah Shlishit, in my memory, than for tefilah.

JG: What kinds of liturgical ambitions were there? Was there any sensitivity to the gendered language at all?

JR: [shakes head] No, we wouldn't have even know what the word gendered — what the idea meant. We would have no idea.

JG: What about Torah?

JR: Yeah, So again, this initial tefilah took a long time. Everything else was shorter except for the Torah discussion. We did read Torah, but not with — I don't think we read the whole parashah. I don't remember Torah reading being a highlight of the tefilah. I know that when I read Torah, I didn't even read it with trope. I just read it.

JG: Did you know trope?

JR: I did, but in my priorities, I didn't spend the time actually studying the trope. I just read it. So I don't remember the Torah reading being a very important part, but the Torah discussion, I often led Torah discussion, as did Joel and other people. That was extremely serious. [laughs]

JG: Had you done that much before this period?

JR: No. I don't think — maybe at Ramah on occasion? But, no. This was it. And there, that's where the contemporary came in.

JG: So talk about that.
JR: I mean, I'll give my own example. You would look at the parashah from the contemporary perspective. So I remember — and I'm surprised that it was on my mind already — I remember giving talks about Bereshit and talking about the sibling rivalries, and already thinking of them in terms of — in the Israeli context, the Jewish-Arab — thinking of Jews and Arabs as siblings in conflict with one another. I'm sure there were tons of talks about Jewish nonviolence. (01:48:00) How can we explain the violence of the text? I'm sure there were talks about the nature of God and God's — the persona of God. That sort of thing. Those would be the occasions. Now, again, you spoke to Joel. Joel had his own very creative way of giving a dvar torah that I can't even try to describe. [laughs] He would sometimes read from his notes, which was something else entirely. Or he might read a poem that he wrote, or something like that. It was very different. Then we didn't do Musaf. We just put the Torah away.

JG: Wait, so there was —

JR: Discussions, yeah. There was discussion, yeah. Not as extensive as Worship & Study, but there was definitely discussion. Again, as I mentioned to you, especially by the second year, it wasn't just us there on Saturday morning. There would generally be an added twenty, thirty, I don't know how many people. It was just a house — it wasn't millions of people, but the place was pretty packed.

JG: And people would actively participate?

JR: Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Shabbos morning was open. Everybody was welcome, not to lead services but to participate.

JG: So you were starting to say — where were you just going? Maybe you were about to talk about Seudah Shlishit.

JR: I would like to talk about Seudah Shlishit. [laughs]

JG: Yes, I would like you to. I just want to ask you one other thing about basically the issue of decorum — just a description of that. So often, the havurah ideal is described as a response to the synagogue.

JR: Yeah. We were the anti-synagogue. Again, like I'll say about the havurah in general, I think what we were very good at — not intentionally — was anticipating trends that would then emerge more broadly in the Jewish community. So the idea of wearing a tie and jacket was ludicrous, or a dress. Sitting on a chair — even though when we sometimes had visitors who were older, we did provide chairs — if that were not the
case, that would be ludicrous. Wearing obviously a wool tallis — this is before innovations in tallitot; Zalman was one of the first people who introduced innovations in tallitot — but we wore a wool tallis. They would be over your head, that two people might come under the same tallis. (01:51:00) That when you called people up to an aliyah, you said something about them, not just, you know, "Now calling Jayne up." You might say, "This is Jayne's birthday" or special occasion — all that sort of stuff. Again, today, we take it all totally for granted, but these were "departures" from decorum that we introduced, and that would become standard. So that you would sing your heart out — again, I'm not saying every synagogue does that, but, you know, that kind of singing anticipates Debbie Friedman, or something like that. The service was not about going through page this to page that. It was about a kind of creating a joined communal, spiritual experience, and that would be complimented by Torah discussion. That's sort of what we were trying to do. Now, it's different than Worship & Study, because Worship & Study took the discussion more centrally than we did.

JG: Say first for one second what Worship & Study was.

JR: Jayne and I were part of a minyan that Ben Gold started at Harvard Hillel in the seventies, I think maybe somewhat influenced by Havurat Shalom. Ben was a little bit part of our community the next year. He was definitely aware of this and part of this. Again, I don't know the historical influence. But he took the Torah discussion very seriously, in a way that — we took it seriously, but it wasn't as important to us as the first part of the service was. So that would be what a tehillah was, that you would sing your heart out. You might sing not one, but ten niggunim.

JG: Many people talk about the service as really finding an experience of spiritual transcendence, and niggunim as being critical to this. Was that true for you?

JR: Oh, yeah. Definitely. Totally. I mean, again, you asked me about Ramah. We certainly sang at Ramah, but this was completely different. When you sang at Ramah, you went through. You sang a song and then you went on to the next song. [laughs] This was like, the person in charge kept that song alive for as long as the group could sustain it. It was a very different experience.

JG: Did it have an impact on your sense of what [01:54:00] tehillah —?

JR: [nods head emphatically]

JG: Can you describe that a little?
JR: It totally shaped my sense of what tefilah is. To this day, I would say the most meaningful part of tefilah is when the congregation really sings — really sings — which Washington Square [Minyan] does on occasion. Then I feel that transcendence that you were talking about. The first time I encountered that — again, I think others can talk about this more than I — we imagined ourselves doing something like what hasidim did. I don't think we knew what hasidim did, but that's what we imagined we were doing.

JG: Many people describe the service at Havurat Shalom as neo-hasidic.

JR: Yeah, yeah. I mean, I don't think we — later, people like Strassfeld — Michael would study more about hasidic music. I may be wrong, but I don't think anyone, maybe with the exception of Zalman, really knew anything about hasidic music at that time.

JG: Even Art?

JR: Well, Art is so a-musical, or a-tonal, that it's so hard to know. So it wasn't that we had studied hasidic music and we were consciously re-creating it. We were imagining what it might have been like and we were doing what we did.

JG: I want to ask you about Seudah Shlishit.

JR: Seudah Shlishit, again, I don't remember it that much in the first year at all. I don't even know if we had it in the first year.

JG: You did.

JR: We did?

JG: Joel describes going to a Seudah Shlishit —

JR: When he visited.

JG: When is that?

JR: Yeah, okay. So I don't — again, my memories of it are from the second and third year, where it really again evolved into something very special, very special. What was special about it was the quality of the singing.

JG: Was Seudah Shlishit something that had been part of most people's practice before coming to the havurah?
JR: I doubt it. I mean, when I was a kid, I went to that event — we had a different term for it — at the synagogue, but it was nothing. It was time to be with my friends.

JG: So what was this? Also a time to be with your friends, but —

JR: Yeah, but in a different sense. This was now just havurah people because, remember, the morning had been everybody. It was shorter, of course. It's different to sing — we always sat around a table. We didn't eat much, but we sat around a table. It's different to sing around a table than it is to sing in a living room seated on cushions. It's hard to put into words how that is different, but it was different. Also the range of songs were different. Again, you need to ask Roskies or more detail about this, but it felt (01:57:00) —

JG: How did it go? I don't mean what were the songs. I mean, would you sit quietly first? Where was the food? Where was the singing?

JR: I don't remember. I don't remember the details of it. What I remember best is the singing and the intensity of it, and the feeling of, this is heavenly. I can't remember anything about the food. I know we sat around the table, but the memory that stays with me is that singing, the intensity of that singing.

JG: When would this take place in the day? Was the light fading?

JR: Yeah, the whole thing. It was — again, it depended on the season — but yeah, toward the end of Shabbat. In the winter, it could go well past the end of Shabbat.

JG: Would it end with Havdalah, or not?

JR: Yes, I think so. I'm pretty sure. I don't have a clear memory of that again, but I think so.

JG: I wanted to ask you one other thing about gender issues. As we've been saying, the first cohorts at Havurat Shalom were male.

JR: Yes.

JG: And the women who were involved in the community were there as basically wives or girlfriends —
JR: Exactly.

JG: — of the members. At what point did Gail sort of come into this picture?

JR: Yeah. Well, things changed in the second year. Gail came in in the second year, but remember, she was in college, so she was not —

JG: She was in college at Sarah Lawrence.

JR: At Sarah Lawrence.

JG: So she wasn't living in Cambridge.

JR: That's correct. The two women who were living in Cambridge, who were not there the first year, were Mona Fishbane and Janet Holtz — Janet, who was married to Barry. They were both very — I mean, Kathy was very involved in the first year, but they were younger and more intent on being part of the community. And more vocal, especially Mona. I credit Mona and Janet with changing the gender dynamic, because people like Gail, or Bella Savran, they came to visit on a Shabbat, and they would come to the havurah, but it wasn't theirs, and I don't know that they had so much stake in it. Mona and Janet had a lot of stake in it, and they really wanted to participate, and did participate.

JG: How did they participate? How were they allowed to participate?

JR: Again, you should ask Mona. The famous memory I have is, we are on a Sukkot retreat in the second year, and Seymour Epstein, called Epi, has (02:00:00) to say Kaddish for one of his parents who died, and he asked for a minyan when we got back and who could come, and Mona raises her hand, and says, "Would you count me?" Now, we're all like, [shrugging motion] We don't know. We've never thought about this before. The answer ended up being yes, but that was like a wake-up moment. But a wake-up moment only very gradually, like, "yes." I think what gradually happened was, as those two stepped forward and then Sharon moreso in the next year, they wanted to be part and parcel of what we did, and they had the time and certainly the background to do it.

JG: Do you remember women in those very early years wearing kippot?

JR: The women? Oh, no.

JG: No.
JR: No. I'm not even sure they wore tallit yet, but definitely not kippot.

JG: Tefillin, no?

JR: Oh, no. [laughs]. Not yet.

JG: Not yet. So being counted. Once that barrier was broken, being counted in this minyan for a Kaddish —

JR: Yeah, well they had already started to go to classes. So except for Kathy, they were the first women to go to classes. I know my memory of it is, they kind of eased us into the realization that we were excluding women, and that that was not a good thing to do. I mean, we didn't have any language to talk about it, but at least how I felt was that Mona and Janet and Kathy were just as much a part of this as anyone else. And then again, I don't know the exact timing. I think they began to lead services, but I don't know exactly when.

JG: They were there after you left?

JR: No, they were not there after I left. They came the second year.

JG: No, I mean, did they continue to be there after you and Gail left?

JR: Oh, no, no. Well, first of all, the third year — well, so the second year —

JG: You mean since —

JR: Mona was there, and then she went to graduate school, I think, or something like that. Then she decided to become a clinical psychologist. Maybe she did an internship, went to grad school. I don't remember the exact order. Her graduate school was out in Amherst.

JG: Oh, so she was —

JR: They moved, yeah. Janet and Barry broke up while Gail and I were in Israel, so in the middle of the third year.

JG: I see. Okay. I want to sort of turn to the issue of learning, (02:03:00) and the role of learning in the community, clearly another central pillar.

JR: Yes.
JG: How did the havurah envision, would you say, the role of study and learning, and also the role of teachers in the community?

JR: Right. So again, in the first two years where we were still, to my mind, seriously involved in "being a rabbinical school," which seemed to dissipate I think, after the first two years, everyone who was a member had to take four classes. Not, God forbid, there should be any tests or formal homework. This is the late sixties. We weren't regressive in anything like that. No one was held accountable for the learning.

JG: [laughs]

JR: But you were held accountable for coming to class. Not in a "You missed my class" kind of thing, but the normative expectation was that if you signed up for a class, you went to it, and you prepared.

JG: How many times in a week would a class meet?

JR: Class, it was like an academic class — generally it met once a week for a few hours. You were expected to come to class prepared and to participate based on that.

JG: Classes were small.

JR: Oh, very. Five, six people. Certain classes really stood out for being groundbreaking. So for example, generally Art's classes were groundbreaking. He introduced to the havurah his research on Nachman of Bratslav through those classes. They were text classes. When Everett Gendler came the second year, he taught a course on Jesus and the Gospels, which I took. Again, this was like, what? We're studying Jesus and the Gospels at a Jewish seminary?! This is fascinating. I remember it like yesterday. He took us to meet Krister Stendahl, who was then the Dean of the Divinity School. I can't believe that Krister did this. He was dean. We spent a couple of hours talking with Krister about Jesus, and Jesus and the Jews, and it was breathtaking. Everett, again, who had lots of contacts in the Christian community, would invite Christians in to help us understand better. In the case of Krister, it was more about the scholarship of the historical period, but in other cases, to better understand how Christians related to Jesus, how they thought about the historical Jesus.

JG: Why do you think Everett thought this was a class to be teaching in this context? (02:06:00)
JR: You're going to have to ask him that question.

JG: I will.

JR: I don't know. But he was living at Packard Manse, which was primarily a Christian peace retreat center. So I don't think it was so out of the —

JG: Out of the blue.

JR: Yeah.

JG: What other teachers were important to you in those first couple of years?

JR: Well, I mentioned to you that the classes I remember are Buzzy Fishbane's, Art's, and Everett's. Joe Lukinsky's at Brandeis. I didn't take Burt Jacobson's classes, but he was there those first two years and he always taught about tefilah. Again, he certainly helped — not that I took his class — but he helped to open my mind to the idea that there is something to study in the siddur, that these tefilot are works of literature. You know, we were doing all this experimentation, but we weren't exploring the text of the siddur. But Burt was. Again, I didn't study with him, but that was fascinating to me. Then there was Zalman's class. Do you want to hear about Zalman's class?

JG: Of course.

JR: Oh, my God. So Zalman's class, Friday morning in his house, second semester of the first year, was called the Spiritual Lab.

JG: Lab?

JR: Lab. The idea was that each Friday morning we would try out a different spiritual modality. This was so out of my range. It was just really — again, I'm sure this was the first time I ever really meditated. There were other things, but the one I remember — again, as I look at it now, it just doesn't seem so weird, but at the time I just thought this was like, beyond the pale. He brought in from Hindu practice the notion of having a little altar in your house and burning incense on this altar. He encouraged us all to go out and get incense and to burn this incense and to kind of groove on this incense in our house, and to have, in our house, a little altar, which to my yeshiva mind was populated by [laughs] forbidden objects — images of gods! [laughs] But that's what Zalman was like, you know? He was willing to try anything and everything. As long as it raised (02:09:00) your consciousness, it was great.
JG: So that was Hindu. Were there other traditions that he was drawing on?

JR: Buddhist and Hindu for sure, and of course Catholic monastic traditions.

JG: So how would he bring that in?

JR: Again, I don't remember the detail, but the silence. Sort of like, would you — could you have not just a meal, but could you have — things I've since done many times, [laughs] but at the time — could you go through a whole day without sleeping? Could we all come together, not just at a meal, but have a service in silence? That sort of thing.

JG: A service in silence.

JR: I don't remember that we ever did it, but those were the kind of ideas that he would generate. Maybe he got it from the Quakers. Maybe he got it from the monastic traditions. It's so funny, because when I go to meditation retreat centers, it's all in silence now, but at the time it just struck me as bizarre.

JG: Did it touch you, reach you?

JR: No.

JG: No, not at the time.

JR: No.

JG: Did it reach others, do you think?

JR: I think it did, yes. Not me, though.

JG: Not you.

JR: No.

JG: I find myself sitting here wondering to what extent you would tell your parents about any of these things.

JR: No, come on.
JG: [laughs]

JR: Tell my parents? I didn't tell my parents about anything. [laughs]

JG: [laughs] Okay. What about the relationship between teachers and students? This was still an egalitarian ideal.

JR: And it was, and it was multidimensional. Obviously we prayed together, and we might go to their houses for dinner, and we might go to places together or whatever. So the relationships were multilateral in that regard. But in the class, the teacher was the teacher.

JG: So that question of the teacher's authority within a classroom —

JR: I don't think anyone ever challenged a teacher's authority. I can't remember any instance. It wasn't like that. It wasn't like — since we're talking about '69, '70 — it wasn't like at the university, where radicals would come in and question the whole basis of, why are we listening to this professor?

JG: The whole enterprise.

JR: Yeah. What's relevant about this? I mean, we were so certain that everything we did was relevant and important, and that we were in this together, and that this was the new model of emerging education. I believed that with all my heart at the time.

JG: Was there any sense of an established curriculum, or (02:12:00) a body of material?

JR: No. You taught what you were interested in.

JG: I see. And you took what you were interested in.

JR: Yeah. Coverage was a dirty word.

JG: Coverage. So even in those first two years when this was conceived of as a seminary, there was no sense of —

JR: [shakes head]

JG: What about basic skills for people who came in without basic skills?
JR: Well, it really depended on the person. Obviously people like Kugel, or George Savran, or Richard Siegel, or Joel Rosenberg, took those basic skill things, as far as I could tell, with enormous seriousness. But they wanted those skills. Did the two Steves spend a lot of time studying Hebrew? I'm not sure.

JG: Yeah. I read in one review that at the end of the first year, Art wrote a letter to the community, saying that the curriculum — the academic program — was the havurah's "most serious failure."

JR: Did he? Well, this is part of the crisis. Again, you'd have to ask him about it, but at the end of that first year, he got into this mode of, we are not succeeding, which was very painful. I don't remember that letter in particular.

JG: Yeah.

JR: Yeah.

JG: What about — I want to turn for a moment to the issue of social activism and the relationship to the general and Jewish counterculture. Obviously this was a period of tremendous activism on the part of American youths generally, and you mention political involvements as one of the attractive features of the whole gestalt.

JR: Right.

JG: Where was your sense of how compatible you found other members' ideas and levels of engagement in terms of where you were and what you would have wanted from this community?

JR: Right. So we all went to a rally a week, dutifully. [laughs] In the second year, all of us, the whole community, including Gail, went to Washington to protest the war.

JG: This was the big march.

JR: The big march in '69. Yeah, we all drove down to Washington. There we met with the New York Havurah and Fabrangen. That's the first time I met Waskow. But, you know, there were multiple — we were in Cambridge. Often it was on the Boston Commons. There were just multiple, multiple demonstrations against the war, so really it did feel like every week, or maybe it was every month, I was at a demonstration. There were takeovers of Brandeis and Harvard.
JG: In '68, right?

JR: Yeah. This was all part of our daily lives. (02:15:00) Stef was the one who pushed us to be more politically active than we were. After the incident I described to you at the draft board, Stef still did alternative service, rather than nothing. He opened a youth center here on Harvard Street —

JG: In Brookline.

JR: Where The Studio is now? [laughs]

JG: [laughs] The Studio is a clothing store.

JR: Yes, in that building. Called Light and Power. The notion was that this was like a hangout for disaffected youth in Brookline. This was like his job. Well, not his job, his alternative service. We signed up, like once or week or something, to come be there as part of our "activism." I don't think it lasted much past that single year. I can't remember exactly how long it lasted. But again, I really don't think that we were cut out to be political activists. Jim Kugel was doing alternative service that year, so he was off involved in draft counseling, whatever that entailed. But I don't think any of us were really — whatever political activism takes, I don't think any of us had it.

JG: In terms of just your individual personalities.

JR: Yeah. It wasn't really what we were good at or cut out to do. I think we felt impelled to do all of the symbolic things. I don't think any of us actually were in any way involved in political change. I remember, for example, going to speak at a church in Somerville, who asked me to come — one of the million anti-war things — and bring a Jewish perspective. So I happily did that, but you know, like, to actually go out and sign a million petitions, or distribute? None of us were really given to that sort of activism.

JG: Do you have a sense of how Havruat Shalom's relationship to this question of political activism and engagement in these issues compared with what was going on as the New York Havurah was forming, and Fabrangen in DC?

JR: I don't actually know. I mean, the mythology was that we were the least politically active of the three, and that we were the more inward spiritual group, and that those two were more politically active than we were. (02:18:00) I don't really know —

JG: There were some members who complained about the lack of political —
JR: Well, Stef in particular.

JG: What about Bill Novak?

JR: Oh, I don't know.

JG: I wanted to ask you about the role of Zionism in your life at this point —

JR: That's a good one.

JG: — and how that compared to at least your impressions of other people's relationships within the community.

JR: Right, and that's a good question to ask Gail as well. See, Gail grew up in a Zionist home. I did not. My parents were Orthodox but they were not Zionist. I mean, they weren't anti-Zionist. It just wasn't a big issue for us. I didn't belong to any Zionist groups like she did or anything like that. I did go to Massad, but I didn't take that very seriously. So obviously the year in Israel was very important to me. I think the war turned me into a Zionist in the sense of we all thought that there was a strong possibility that Israel could lose that war and that it could disappear, and given that we were in Jerusalem, we took that rather seriously. That's why I was not a C.O. [conscientious objector]. The notion that this could all go away really seared itself on my soul. Still things searing themselves onto your soul doesn't turn you into an ideologue. I was not a Zionist ideologue. I didn't know any of that language or think about aliyah. Gail was thinking about all that stuff. The havurah did not take any positions on Israel or have any — Israel was not in our focus at all, nor was Israel in the focus of Ramah by the way, or, I think, JTS very much. So we were not that different.

JG: Even in the aftermath of the Six Day War?

JR: Yeah. I mean, Richard Siegel, George Savran, David Roskies and I all had spent our junior years at Hebrew University. Maybe others had, but those are the people who come to mind. So it's not like we didn't have any connections to Israel. Hillel Levine was a teacher in the second year, and he at that point was very actively involved with Israel. We didn't even talk about the G.A. [General Assembly] in 1969 and Hillel. That's a whole other matter. But Hillel was definitely influenced in that direction. Michael Swirsky, who came on the faculty in the second year, would eventually make aliyah and start Pardes. Those crazy guys who went off to start Gezer. [laughs] You know? So if you look at it
objectively, we all had connections. Not all — many of us had connections to Israel, (02:21:00) and many of us spent extended in time in Israel. It wasn't on our agenda.

JG: Interesting. I also want to — before we get to the other things that you wanted to talk about, I just wanted to talk for a minute about the issue of self-reflection during the early years because even while you were living it, many members, including yourself, were reflecting on this experience —

JR: And writing about it.

JG: And writing about it, and publishing.

JR: I among others, yeah.

JG: So you were on the board of Response during that period, which was often called the “voice of the Jewish counterculture,” the “bible of the havurah movement.” I wanted to just ask you about what was going on within Response, and did your involvement on the board continue while you were at the havurah?

JR: No.

JG: But nonetheless, its involvement with the havurah and periodic symposia, in addition to individual articles, were very much a part of what was going on, and I'm wondering what you think.

JR: All right, here's my take, and I get this from Erik Erickson. I think each of us was working out something in our own personal identities that was important to us. Yes, we were definitely reflecting on that. We were reflecting both on our personal identities and on our community. I don't think, left to our own devices — and again, people like Alan Mintz and Bill Novak would be exceptions to this — we spent a lot of time thinking about what is the place of havurah in the larger Jewish world. Some time during either the end of the first year or beginning of the second year, the American Jewish Committee invited a few of us — I know Art and I went — to spend a Shabbat in Manhattan at the Waldorf Astoria, which to me was like royalty — talk about the things I never thought I would do. We were talking to I guess their lay board or something like that — I would not have known what a lay board was at that time — about the significance of Havurat Shalom for the larger Jewish world. So that was their agenda, and that was something they asked us about. They were not alone. I can remember various times being invited to address rabbis or others and sort of asked to talk about the significance of Havurat Shalom for the larger community. But honestly, Jayne, if those people didn't invite me, I
don't think I would have been thinking about that. I was too young. I mean, I would have been thinking about, (02:24:00) what does this mean for me, and what does this mean for us, our immediate community? But I take from Erickson the fact that that's what young people are supposed to do. They're supposed to work it out for themselves and in that way create a formula that could work for others, which I think, perhaps, we were doing.

JG: Yeah. So I think given the time, I want to just sort of conclude where we're at now, and then we'll take our break. We've been focusing mainly on this period of '68 to '73, but I want to just sort of talk a little bit about how this did affect other aspects of your life, including —

JR: I want to say how much Havurat Shalom, along with Camp Ramah, was crucial to my own conception both as a Jew and as a Jewish educator.

JG: Even at this point.

JR: Oh, yeah. Yeah, because when I came into Havurat Shalom, I wasn't at all sure what I was going to do professionally. I knew I was going to be an academic, but I didn't know — I mentioned to you that I had originally thought I'd go to the University of Chicago and study history of religions. So Joe Lukinsky and Michael Brooks, and to a certain extent Burt Jacobson, were very involved in education and in the study of education. Michael was already at the Harvard Grad School of Education that first year. He and Lukinsky both urged me to consider that, and I did, for my grad school education.

JG: Were you already expressing interest in education, that they would make that suggestion?

JR: Well, through Ramah, yes. Gail and I were talking about this the other day. It's funny to mention, but in the summer of 1969 in Ramah New England, Alan Mintz, I, and Larry Fine were the threesome — roshei aidot — for a huge group, like 180 of the oldest campers at that camp. People like Gail, like Richie, like George, like Zweibaum, like Brooks, were people we brought with us to Camp Ramah, and we started this huge experiment of sort of late sixties radical education at Camp Ramah — which itself was a disaster in the end, but it was important to me to have that context to fail in, to really begin to take myself (02:27:00) seriously as an educator, and begin to ask much more serious questions. Okay, this didn't work. What didn't work? What could work? How could we? Now Lukinsky had written his dissertation on an experiment, an equally radical experiment that he had conducted in 1966 in a different Ramah camp in New York, that Barry and Arnie had been part of, in Nyack, New York. So he, in a way, was the pace setter of this sort of thing, of the bringing together of radical themes, political
themes, havurah themes, with Jewish education. For me, that was life-changing, that whole thing. Again, what happened in '69 was a disaster. It didn't work.

JG: What did you try to do, just briefly?

JR: We tried to inject havurah Judaism, including our anti-authoritarian notions, into Camp Ramah, which was just totally inappropriate for a camp setting working with teenagers. In retrospect, we endangered them. It was really bad. But, you know, entrepreneurs need to fail. [laughs] So for me, that was the startup that failed. I'm sure I had other failures, but that was a spectacular failure. But it's important to fail and learn from your failures, and I think I did. Then I started going to the Harvard Grad School of Education and really —

JG: And what were you thinking you wanted to do at that point?

JR: Well, you know, oddly enough, at some point Gail and I thought we were going to go to Haifa and start an experimental high school.

JG: When did you and Gail meet?

JR: We met that summer in '69, in Palmer.

JG: She was there?

JR: Yes. Alan Mintz had brought her, and we became a couple that summer at Palmer.

JG: So you were just saying you were thinking that you might go to Haifa at some point and —

JR: Yeah. I wasn't sure at first whether I would be an academic or whether I'd be an experimental educator. I had other offers in my life to start schools that I never actually took, so in fact I became an academic. But the spirit of injecting — not injecting, but integrating — a political vision, an educational vision, and a Jewish vision into a sort of single set of educational concerns and principles is something — and as I mentioned to you, as a result of all this, I actually ended up studying kibbutz education for my dissertation. So it wasn't that I just didn't go off and start that experimental school in Haifa. I did devote a number of years of my life to studying kibbutz education as (02:30:00) a form of this kind of integrated education. Obviously it didn't have the Jewish havurah piece, but it had the political, the moral, the educational, the communal, all fused together. My current interest in camp education is in some ways a continuation of that.
JG: So it seems like from the beginning, your experiences at Havurat Shalom and your evolving career interests and intellectual interests were very much informed —

JR: I thought so, and I thought I had tremendous support from both Art and the other haverim to pursue those interests. I wasn't alone. They weren't necessarily going to do that professionally, but they were —

JG; Supportive.

JR: Supportive and involved, yeah — and helpful.

TRANSITION TO GAIL REIMER

(02:31:00)

JG: My name is Jayne Guberman. Today is Thursday, August 4, 2016, and I'm here with Gail Twersky-Reimer at her home in Brookline, Massachusetts, and we're going to record an interview for the Jewish Counterculture Oral History Project. Gail, do I have your permission to record this interview?

GTR: Yes, you do.

JG: So, as you know, today we're going to explore some of your experiences during the late sixties and early seventies with Havurat Shalom. I want to start with talking a little bit about your personal and family background to try and paint a picture of who you were at that point. So if you could begin with your family when you were growing up — tell me where and when you were born and a little bit about your family.

GTR: I was born in 1950, in Queens, New York, and probably the most salient fact about my family is that both of my parents were survivors of the Shoah, in some ways fortunate survivors because they also survived along with — my mother, with several sisters and brothers, so we had a large and very close-knit family. I had several cousins my age. We spent holidays together. We often spent Friday nights together. It felt like a very big family, but it also was a family that had very difficult memories. My older brother was — my brother is ten years older than me, and he himself was a hidden child during the war and was considered a miracle child, certainly during my childhood, but was out of the house by the time I was eight. So while I remember a very loving brother, in my own home I grew up as an only child. On the other hand, because my mother was the matriarch of the family, everybody always congregated at my house, so somehow,
Sometimes I felt like (02:33:00) not only was I not an only child, but that my parents belonged to the rest of my family as much as they did to me.

JG: What was the neighborhood like, where you were growing up?

GTR: I think it was a fairly typical, early fifties, new, not totally suburban, but kind of suburban family. Small —

JG: In Queens.

GTR: In Queens. I was born in Forest Hills, and then they moved to Kew Garden Hills. In Forest Hills, we lived in an apartment. In Kew Garden Hills, where I think we moved when I was three, we were living in a private house and the whole block was private homes. There was a lot of street life, interestingly enough. That's what I remember, that every afternoon we would play ball on the street — girls, boys. In other words, very few cars would go down that street. Other than that, I didn't really — my life wasn't centered in the neighborhood, both because of the family, the closeness of our family — those were really my playmates as much as anything else. And I went to Jewish day schools, so I traveled to school and did not go to the neighborhood public school.

JG: And most of the kids in the neighborhood went to the public school.

GTR: All the kids in the neighborhood went to the public school.

JG: Except for you.

GTR: Except for me, yeah.

JG: So, tell us about your Jewish education when you were young.

GTR: I went to an elementary school, and I went to Yeshiva of Central Queens, which was run by — the principal was Rabbi Charney, who was a Hebraist, and I think the school had very strong Hebraist tendencies. I don't know — I really don't have a sense of what the socio-economic mix of kids was, or even — I always felt like I was different because my parents were immigrants. But I'm not sure that there weren't many other kids whose parents were immigrants.

JG: Were there other children of survivors there?
GTR: I didn't know any at school, but I don't want to say that that means there weren't. I just, I didn't know. I think part of it was you didn't talk about it, you know? It wasn't that I was — I wasn't in any way embarrassed by my parents. In fact, I actually thought that we were very sophisticated because my parents were European. But you certainly didn't talk about their war experience or that they were survivors, even though it was pretty clear. I mean, my mother wore sleeves like this [gestures to short sleeve shirt] and she had a number on her arm, as did all my aunts. In fifth grade, I think, yeah — we had Jewish studies and then secular studies. The Jewish studies teachers, it seems that they were more Orthodox than they were in younger years. Anyway, they were more insistent that we be observant, so I entered what I would call my observant phase and started attending the Young Israel.

JG: At what point is this?

GTR: When I was in fifth grade. So my father — my parents were very active in the Conservative synagogue, and I started going to this other synagogue, which my brother also went to, so we'd walk there together. Then my neighborhood life became very active, because I met all these other kids who went to day schools. Most of them were older. I'm not sure why they were all a year older than me, but they were. On Shabbat, we would go to shul, then we'd go to somebody's house for lunch, then we'd go to something called “group,” then we'd play for the rest of the afternoon. That really became my neighborhood center in a way. By the time I was in seventh grade, I think I also was active in the Conservative shul. I was still going to Young Israel, but I became active in USY, so I had all these different sets of neighborhood friends. I think I was a pluralist from a very young age. [laughs] Now that I think about it, I don't know how I was balancing these balls. Then for high school, I started commuting into New York City, to Manhattan, and I went to Ramaz.

JG: How did the decision get made for you to go to Ramaz?

GTR: Well, there were — as far as I recall, there were no high schools in Queens, Jewish high schools at that time, but the decision must have been made earlier. Now my mother, as I said, was the matriarch of the family, and she was very instrumental in making sure all my cousins went to day school, which they all did. I had two girl cousins who were a year older than me, and both of them went to Ramaz. So my sense is the discussion about Ramaz happened before I even got to that place. I do recall wanting to go to Hunter, but it didn't seem to be an option.

JG: So what was your experience like at Ramaz? How did you find that?
GTR: Ramaz was a bit of a challenge. It was a Manhattan school and kind of adjusting. If I thought I was sophisticated or had sophisticated parents before, I got to Ramaz and it just felt like playing in a totally different league in a lot of ways. I mean, there was a lot of wealth — conspicuous wealth. There was not that much interest in anything much Jewish. I'm not talking about the faculty, I'm talking about many of the students. There was a big divide between the students who were commuting from Queens and the ones who lived in Manhattan. Then there were the ones who lived in the Bronx, who were more like the students from Queens.

JG: Was that a substantial number of students, commuting into Manhattan?

GTR: I think there were, as I remember — there were about eight or nine of us commuting from Queens. There were two classes in my age, so about sixteen out of sixty? And there were probably another three or four from the Bronx and the Lower East Side, something like that. The rest were from the West Side, the East Side. I did — I had some wonderful teachers at Ramaz. I think my love of text and textual learning really came from my Tanach teacher at Ramaz, though when I look back on it, what's fascinating is one of the courses that was really central to teaching me how to read was called Avot u'Banim, "Fathers and Sons." It never occurred to me to question why we were reading Tanach as a book about fathers and sons. I mean, it really is, in many ways, a book about fathers and sons, but I didn't even question that idea — which maybe was a good thing, because it allowed me to gain the skills and the ways of reading that I'm not sure I would have otherwise, if I was busy with the politics of the thing.

JG: Yeah. Your parents were also Zionists, right?

GTR: My parents were Zionists. My father was quite active with the Revisionists. I think when he came to this country, he was helping run guns to Israel. I don't know. He had a relationship with Begin. Actually, in the time — (02:42:00) it was when I got to Ramaz I think that was; the two were probably connected. I think I had scaled down from my Jewish observance and was looking for something to fill that space. I actually got involved with Israel dancing at the Ninety-second Street Y in Manhattan.

JG: How old were you at the time?

GTR: I was fourteen. It was a different time in Manhattan. It's hard to explain. But we traveled on trains without question, early in the morning, late at night. It just was a different time. So after school I would go to the Y, to their dance stuff.

JG: Were you smitten early on?
GTR: Yes, with Israeli dance. I mean I had been smitten by Israeli dance in summer camps. That's the other thing. My parents started sending me to summer camp at age five, to sleep-away camp.

JG: By yourself?

GTR: Well, my brother was there, so that was nice. My brother was a teenager. He was fifteen. All the girls who were interested in him had to be interested in me, so I had six girls to braid my hair at any given time, and I actually loved it. That was Massad Aleph. Then the next year, I went to Massad Bet with both my cousins. I didn't like that. That was a little too close with my cousins for me. Then I went — one of the fellow survivors, someone my parents knew who actually had worked at Massad, opened his own camp, Camp Columbia, so we all went there for a number of years.

JG: Was Massad Zionist in orientation?

GTR: Massad was definitely Zionist in orientation — Hebraist and Zionist. Then when I went to Camp Columbia, it was not. I went to High Life for one year to get away from all my hamulah, and then I actually went to Ramah when I was in seventh grade. That was also difficult. That was a challenge because there it was that I was a yeshiva kid, and there were all these public-school kids. I think I was one of the only yeshiva kids in camp. So I mean there was an issue of level of knowledge, but it was more that — and in seventh grade, this mattered — the public school kids were just so much socially mature or fast or whatever word one wants to use that it was — well, it was definitely an awakening, and it was a challenge. (02:45:00)

JG: Yeah, I could imagine.

GTR: Plus, I didn't fully understand Ramah Judaism. I have to say that. When you come out of a yeshiva background, it doesn't pull together. What did happen at Ramah, what I did understand, was the social justice part of it. Civil Rights was going on at the time.

JG: So you were how old?

GTR: I think I was thirteen?

JG: This was sort of the early-ish sixties.
GTR: It's the early-ish sixties. It's the summer that they did *Porgy and Bess* in Hebrew. It was an amazing, amazing play, but they also built all this Civil Rights kind of education around it.

JG: Which was a Ramah approach to doing these kinds of things?

GTR: I don't know.

JG: You didn't know.

GTR: But that's what they did that summer. I'd say that was, again, one of the things that made a mark on my way of thinking about my life.

JG: Was it resonant of things that you were hearing at home? Were your parents attuned to the gathering Civil Rights movement?

GTR: You know, attuned for sure. My father was a big news junkie. He read two Yiddish newspapers, and the *Times* and then the *Post* was always in our house also. I even remember times when we had the *Mirror*. I don't know why they read all these newspapers, but they did, and watched TV. We had a TV from a very early — I mean, as soon as TV came out, we had a TV.

JG: So, the nightly news.

GTR: Yeah. So, he watched the nightly news. We were seeing photos of that. I still never fully understood. I think there are two — survivors seem to fall into two camps: one camp that feels like you come out of that experience and you have a responsibility to anybody else who goes through anything similar, or to make sure that they don't, and others who come out of it thinking, we need to care about ourselves because nobody cares about us. I don't think my parents were at the extreme of that second group, but I think my father for sure fell more into that second group. So when I got to college and met kids whose parents went on Civil Rights marches with them, I was shocked. Like, really? Now my parents went with me on Soviet Jewry stuff, but not on Civil Rights stuff. I'm sitting here and I'm saying, did I ever ask them to come with me? (02:48:00) Maybe not.

JG: But they didn't ask you either. You were young.

GTR: Yeah, that's right. That's true.
JG: So this Camp Ramah Judaism felt like a different thing.

GTR: Yeah, it definitely was not something that I was used to. I guess the next year I went on USY on Wheels, which was again yet another experience but with two wonderful, wonderful people who led it, whose names, of course, I won't remember — Ben and Lee, but I don't remember their last names. I think they were sort of a bridge to understanding the Ramah and Conservative Jewish experience a little bit better. It's funny because my parents belonged to a Conservative shul, but there was nothing — they weren't Conservative in their own practice. They were traditional in their practice. It's just that I'm not sure why they belonged to the Conservative shul.

JG: As opposed to a Modern Orthodox shul?

GTR: Yeah, which existed in those days, Modern Orthodox.

JG: Were they what we would think of as sort of Modern Orthodox in their practice? How did they keep Shabbat, for instance?

GTR: Well, they kept Shabbat. They kept Shabbat in the sense that they — you know, my mother lit candles. Did it matter what time? Not always. We had a sit-down, in the dining room, fancy Shabbat dinner every Friday night. Then we would often — especially after when my uncle died — we would then drive over to my cousins' Friday night for dessert. My mother answered the phone, she smoked on Shabbos, you know. There was definitely a Shabbos in our house, but it was their kind of Shabbos. I think they became a little bit more observant after my brother became observant, but that didn't have so much to do with the house on Shabbat.

JG: At what point did your brother become more observant — or start to become more observant?

GTR: Good question, because it was when I was fourteen, which also probably has to do — you know, I said that I think that my pulling away and the Zionist — moving away from Jewish observance as religious observance into Zionist, putting my energies into Zionism, was in part a reaction to my brother's (02:51:00) becoming quite observant at age fourteen. So I think all of those things mixed together.

JG: He was out of your house, I assume, by that point.

GTR: Yeah, yeah, yeah, he was in medical school.
JG: You had started to talk about your father's attitudes toward Zionism, but what about your mother?

GTR: You know, my mother — well, I wouldn't say "you know" — why would you know? — but my mother belonged to Hadassah. She belonged to ORT. I know that she would go to Revisionist meetings with my dad, but he was a pretty farbrenta Betar-nik. She wasn't. I mean that wasn't her. She loved Israel. The story is that's where they wanted to emigrate to from Poland, but the visa came from America first. They thought they were just coming here for a short while. A lot of stories like that.

JG: Indeed, indeed. So your high school and college years coincided with a period of tremendous social ferment here, especially among young people. Coming from your background, to what extent were you really exposed to and really influenced by the general American youth counterculture?

GTR: I tried to resist it somewhat. I loved folk music, so I would say that the — I'm sorry, I'm trying to really think back to that time. I'd say that my main tie to the counterculture was through music, and folk music in particular. I would go to concerts and records were on all the time. I think, as I recall, the Zionist youth groups tried to insulate us from that culture and wanted you to be fully engrossed in the movement and not in the counterculture.

JG: This is during your high school years?

GTR: This is during my high school years. On the other hand, I was also at school in Manhattan, and not only in Manhattan, but (02:54:00) right next to Central Park. So after school we'd often go to Central Park, and Central Park was like the big tent for hippiedom. So you were encountering that all the time, all kinds of happenings. I think I'm getting the years right here, because I do remember this from high school. I think that one of the critical moments for me though was — and this is already, I think this is in my first year of college —

JG: So, '68? Was that your first year of college??

GTR: Sixty-eight, yeah — going to a concert, and I don't now remember who it was, but it was in the Village, and the place just reeked, just reeked from drugs, and people were sort of like falling off their chairs. I just thought, what am I doing in this country? I think, again, that clash between what was going on in America and what my vision of Israel was. Now you have to understand that — I mean, by the time of this concert, I had been to Israel finally, the summer right before college, but I had this very idealized vision of
everyone in the fields dancing all the time and maybe planting some trees in between, but not much more.

JG: In what context had you been to Israel? In the summer of '68, you're saying.

GTR: I went on a — I think it was called — Summer in Kibbutz program?

JG: Affiliated with the movement, or with a movement of any kind?

GTR: I don't think it was affiliated with a movement actually. I mean, it was a Habonim kibbutz, but that's where they sent me. I spent part of the time on that kibbutz and part of the time travelling and part of the time on a moshav.

JG: So then you started college in '68.

GTR: Right.

JG: That must have been a whole new world for you. [laughs]

GTR: [laughs]

JG: So you went to Sarah Lawrence as an undergrad.

GTR: I went to Sarah Lawrence College. As I've already mentioned, I had been dancing for four years at that point. I —

JG: All through the Ninety-second Street Y still, or —?

GTR: No, I also spent a summer at Connecticut College School of Dance. Through Israeli folk dance, I started getting involved in modern dance, and started getting very interested in modern dance. I would come into the city to take classes at the Graham Studio. That Connecticut College summer was incredible because I got (02:57:00) to take classes with Ailey dancers and with Paul Taylor dancers. Merce Cunningham was there that summer. It was just — I mean it was a remarkable, remarkable experience, though on the Jewish front — I don't know how much of this was Jewish and how much of it was something else, but I couldn't eat anything. It was my first experience being at a place that didn't have kosher food. So I spent the entire summer, I think, having cottage cheese for every meal. Now I don't eat cottage cheese anymore, but anyway. So I really got interested in modern dance and thought that's what I wanted to do, and Sarah Lawrence had a wonderful dance department, so that's where I went. Of course, then at Sarah Lawrence
— which I should have known because I met them at Connecticut College also — there were really, really good dancers, and it didn't take me long to realize that I loved dance but that's not what I was going to do with my life.

JG: Because you didn't have the background or because it wasn't really what you wanted to do as a full-time sort of direction for life?

GTR: I didn't think I was good enough. I mean, I just didn't think I was good enough. I definitely also did not have the background, but I didn't think I was good enough, and I guess maybe I also was getting sort of — I was enjoying the classes where I was using my head rather than my body a lot more. But it was a tough time. It was a tough time for a lot of reasons, again because of the turbulence of those years. I think that year was the year — you probably remember — I think all the strikes happened at the end of that year, so we didn't even finish out that year.

JG: Columbia, Harvard.

GTR: Right. I was teaching dance at Ramaz that year, so I would commute into the city —

JG: In the summer?

GTR: No, my first year of college. So I would go into the city. I also was taking classes at the Jewish Theological Seminary, and I was hanging out with people at Columbia, which actually led me to also be hanging out with some of the people that were involved in thinking about the New York Havurah — but involved very tangentially.

JG: And people — men? Women? Both?

GTR: Men. (03:00:00) I also was invited to be part of — to be in a semi-professional folk dance group.

JG: What does that mean, semi-professional?

GTR: What did it mean? We got paid, so I don't know what semi-professional means. I guess it means that I didn't think that they — I didn't think that I was that good, so I don't know. [laughs]

JG: Someone was paying you however. [laughs]
GTR: Well, we got paid for performances. So I was in the city regularly dancing in that group as well.

JG: Did the group have a name?

GTR: It did. It might have been named after the guy who ran it, who was Ezekiel. Moshe Ezekiel. I actually have somewhere a record album with my picture albums that he — the group's picture was on that record album. Why am I telling you this story? Because what happens is that we were supposed to travel. We would perform in different places, mostly in New York. We were supposed to go perform around Japan that summer, and everything was organized for us to go to Japan. Before going to Japan, somebody that I was going out with said to me, "I'm going to be at Camp Ramah for the summer. Why don't you just come up and spend the week before you go, and we could be together that week?" And I thought, okay. It was "Counselors Week." Camp had not started yet. So I said, "Sure." Then during that week I got a call that the Japan tour had been cancelled, and I had nothing to do for the summer, so somehow Camp Ramah said they would put together this — something for me to be able to stay, to teach dance. They already had somebody teaching dance, but I was going to help out. I was going to help here. I don't know what they cobbled together for me.

JG: This was the summer of what?

GTR: This is the summer of '69, at Camp Ramah in Palmer. Therein begins my havurah story. So the summer in '69 in Palmer, a whole bunch of guys who had either been involved in the havurah the year before or the year leading up to it, or were about to enter the havurah —

JG: The havurah was just starting that fall, '68. (03:03:00)

GTR: This is '69, so the havurah had been around for one year.

JG: Ah, yeah. Exactly.

GTR: So a lot of them were there, and a lot of them were working in this — I guess it was the oldest — it wasn't the Mador, but it was the oldest aidah, and they were going to do all these experimental things. It was a pretty experimental summer. It kind of closed the camp down for a while afterward. I met Joe, who I am now married to, that summer. Through him, but also through what was going on that summer, I became intrigued by a kind of spirituality that I had never experienced before. Sometimes I found it hokey and uncomfortable, or uncomfortable and maybe I just used the word hokey because I was
uncomfortable. Like, what I remember one Shabbat — I think it was a Shabbat service, a Kabbalat Shabbat service — where all we did was pass around a stone and hold it for a while. And I don't know, that didn't move me, but it might today. I don't know. But I did sense, I felt like what I had missed in the drug counterculture, I was able to connect to here. Which is not to say there weren't plenty of drugs, even in camp at the time —

JG: Among counselors, basically, you mean. Kids, too?

GTR: I assume it was among counselors. Maybe plenty is exaggerating, but it was available. It was not — I think it was part of the problem that summer. But it felt like there was something just more intense and more — that had elements I could connect to more easily because they were Jewish.

JG: Spiritually.

GTR: Spiritual elements, right. Again, a lot of singing, and song was always captivating to me. Now one of the things I haven't said — can I sort of digress for a minute?

JG: Please.

GTR: So when I talked about my background, I didn't talk about — (03:06:00) which I should because I'm looking at that photo on my wall — I didn't talk about the fact that my grandfather was a hasidic rebbe. I did not grow up in a hasidic family by any means. The war wiped out that part. My father had already, I think, pretty much left hasidic life right before the war —

JG: This is your father's father you're talking about.

GTR: [nods] — but there was a consciousness that that was my background. The Twerskys were a known hasidic dynasty, and I think in some ways — and my father would always sing niggunim on Friday night. So, I think I also felt like I was connecting to something in my past. There was something very contemporary or of the moment, and yet it was — it had a relationship to something from the past that made it so potent for me.

JG: Did it feel like it was also sort of authentically yours in that sense, because of your family's background?

GTR: It took a long time for it to feel like it was —
JG: Yours.

GTR: Mine, yeah.

JG: But it was speaking to you.

GTR: It was definitely speaking to me, and I know that I wanted part of it. I mean I know I wanted to be a part of it.

JG: Do you remember the guys who were at Ramah that summer as counselors, Joe and others who were part of the havurah, talking about it? I mean was that a topic of conversation, what their experiences were in the havurah?

GTR: I don't know because they would have been talking amongst themselves. Oh, you mean were they talking to campers about it?

JG: Or, to anybody, including you.

GTR: I'd say they were enacting it more than talking about it. You didn't just walk up to somebody, you didn't even just give them a hug or a kiss, you gave them a BIG HUG [mimics bear hug] and you held onto them, and it was like, we're really connecting. I don't mean to make fun of it, but that's, you know. So they didn't have to talk about it. They were doing it all the time. They were closing their eyes a lot in prayer. They were — (03:09:00) I mean there actually were a lot of sessions about — like educational sessions. I remember Zalman coming to camp, for example. About how a niggun has to go on and on, and how you build, and how you make it a part of yourself. So I think there was some talk, but I actually think it was more the whole ambiance and a way of relating to each other.

JG: To each other, but it also sounds like to various Jewish rituals and traditional behavior. How, for instance, did you find Shabbat meals? Uplifting in any kind of a way that was sort of new for you that summer also?

GTR: Yeah. I mean, now it's going to be hard for me to separate that out from actual havurah meals, but, absolutely. It wasn't, you know [bangs on chair] banging, banging, banging.

JG: The way kids often do at camp.
GTR: Right. It had a more— it would often get up into a frenzy, but it would start out — there was a rhythm to things that I'd never experienced before, that felt very right for me. I mean, obviously for them, but for me. I have no idea — and I think if I have a critique of the summer — I have no idea what the campers were thinking or feeling. I don't know if any of the counselors — the counselors were so bonded that summer. I don't know if everybody was part of that, but a lot of them.

JG: What was the nature of sort of kinds of experimentation they were doing at the camp that summer, and was it connected to their havurah experience, do you think, at that point?

GTR: I think absolutely, and I think much of the experimentation had to do with prayer and how you pray. At Camp Ramah, things — at least, I think they used to be fairly rigid. You went through the service. You went through this. There was some experimentation, but here anything went. Like taking a walk could be a service if you did it mindfully. They didn't use the word mindfulness in those days, but if you did it that way.

JG: Did they have a vocabulary for it that you were aware of?

GTR: That's a very good question, but I don't know. (03:12:00) The sort of other countercultural stuff was also going on. That was the summer that, again, the aidah that we were in put on Hair — in Hebrew, but in the nude.

JG: Wow, that sounds pretty radical.

GTR: Yeah, it was pretty radical. I think it was a choice of who wanted to be in the nude or who didn't, but I think that's probably what closed down the camp. That's where I think maybe there were drugs going on with the kids also. I'm not sure.

JG: That's the summer where you and Joe first —

GTR: That summer we met, and, yeah, by the end of the summer we were pretty much a couple. So I spent the next year commuting.

JG: This is '69-'70.

GTR: Sixty-nine, seventy. I'd say I was in Boston at least two weekends a month. It was a wonderful time also because I think it cost like, thirty dollars, twenty-nine dollars, to take a plane from New York to Boston.
JG: Makes sense. I used to fly somewhere like that.

GTR: Joe was head of the Hebrew high school here at K.I.

JG: Kehilath Israel.

GTR: So even on weekends where I wasn't here, if Saturday night he got a call from somebody who couldn't make it, he would say, "Why don't you get on a plane?" So I'd come and teach a class, and we'd get to see each other. But it was the weekends that really brought me into some connection with the havurah, and again there was something about the rhythm of the services, most of the time. I mean, there was a lot of experimentation at the havurah too, and there were some services that — and don't ask me what they were — just know that they were out of my realm. One of the nice things about Havurat Shalom was I think if somebody wanted to try something, they were given the opportunity to try something. Maybe it would have been good if they had some ritual committee that had said, "Well, this is really out of the ballpark," but they didn't. Anything went, at least for one time, and people voted on their feet, I guess, if they wanted it to happen again. But when the services were good, they were really good. (03:15:00)

JG: What made them good for you?

GTR: What made them good for me is, first of all, when somebody who had a really good voice was davening. But the thing was that everybody davened. It was not a spectator service, which you could say was more or less also true when I was growing up in the Young Israel as opposed to in the Conservative synagogue, but what was missing in the Young Israel was — what's the English word for hitlahavut? The ruach. The engagement and passion. I think also, the really good daveners — the people who come to mind are Barry, and Michael Strassfeld, and Sharon, when Sharon started davening. They had a sense of how to build up and come down again, and build up, and come down. By the end of a service, you felt like you'd really been through an amazing spiritual experience.

JG: The leaders had a great deal of discretion it sounds like, in what they would do.

GTR: They did.

JG: Can you recall any first impressions or experiences from that year of services — what worked for you or something that didn't work for you?
GTR: I'm very good at blocking out things that didn't work for me. So I really can't — I know there were. I mean, I know there were times when I just even left.

JG: Would you tend to get there in time for Erev Shabbat meals in people’s homes?

GTR: Mostly, but we actually, I recall — I'd have to ask Joe — I recall that that first year we ate — he was living with George Savran and Richie Siegel at the time. I often traveled up together with Bella, who's now married to George. I recall that that year, because we got there pretty close to Shabbat, or sometimes probably after Shabbat, Friday night we mostly ate in the apartment. I mean, every once in awhile we went to somebody's house. In later years, I think there was hardly a Shabbat where we ate alone. So we either had people at our house (03:18:00) or went to other people. Even the Shabbats I'm talking about we didn't eat alone, because George and Bella were there, and Richie was often there, and Richie was often there with somebody also.

JG: Who would cook when you would eat in?

GTR: Who would cook? The guys.

JG: The guys.

GTR: Yeah. It wasn't gourmet cooking.

JG: Joe said he wasn't much of a cook.

GTR: No, he wasn't. But that's why I became vegetarian. [laughs]

JG: Do you have any other sort of memories and first impressions of being in the havurah in that first year when you were coming, of other things that stand out for you?

GTR: Other things that stand out for me. There was a lot of — they had a word for it. Here they did have the vocabulary for it. I don't remember what it was, but significant silences. I had a hard time with that. Like, just everybody sitting silently for long periods of time.

JG: What's a long period of time? I don't know if you're talking about five minutes or —

GTR: That's the thing. I have no idea. It felt very long to me. No, I actually remember one Shabbat service that was all silent. I don't know what we did, but I think it was all silent. Maybe we looked at each other? I don't know. I mean they were definitely into
these significant silences. There was a different term, but — what else? There was a couch but most people sat on pillows on the floor. A lot of long, flowing skirts, peasant blouses. There was a kind of hippie uniform, I think, that —

JG: For the women.

GTR: For the women.

JG: What did the men wear?

GTR: I don't remember. I doubt they — my guess is shirts, sweaters?

JG: A lot of beards, or no? Beards, long hair I was asking about.

GTR: Sure, I mean, it was the sixties. You know, Jayne, what I really remember — or not remember, but just looking back at it now — we were really very, very young. We thought we were very mature. We thought we were amazingly mature, but we were very young, and not that different than other young people in our culture. There was (03:21:00) — no, go ahead.

JG: Looking back on it, how would you describe your own sense of Jewish identity at that time, during the period when you were first coming to the havurah?

GTR: Confused. I was still a very ardent Zionist, and I didn't feel that people at the havurah were, so that for me always felt like a point of — I felt distant from the full experience because Israel didn't seem to matter to them as much as it mattered to me, and it didn't matter to some people at all. When I say confused, the best example to illustrate that I think is that when I went to college, I had stopped keeping kosher, probably stopped keeping kosher the summer before in Israel just because I assumed everything in Israel was kosher and then discovered that most of the places that I ate were not. But then, by the time I got to college, I would say it didn't really matter to me, and then probably through the havurah experience, I started feeling again that there was a sense to having some kind of — what would one call it? Food — what's the word I'm looking for?

JG: Sort of spiritual or ideological —

GTR: I mean, to have a practice related to food, whether it's Kashrut or something else. It just felt that just eating food didn't feel like the best thing. So I became vegetarian that year, and have been vegetarian since. It was actually partially through the influence of Everett Gendler that that became an interesting choice for me. But it was a way — I see it
as part of that confusion, that I wanted to be Jewish but I didn't want to be Jewish, or I wanted to express my Judaism but I didn't like the available ways of doing it. Maybe that's also what the attraction to the havurah was. It was new ways of doing it that I hadn't seen before.

JG: So I want to ask you and start talking a little bit explicitly about the place of women in the havurah, because clearly this first year that you were coming to the havurah was still basically a men's fellowship and community, and the women who were there were there because they were attached one way or another —

GTR: That's right.

JG: As girlfriends or wives. How did you feel about that when you were first going?

GTR: I think when I was first going that first year, I probably — I loved being Joe's girlfriend, or us being together, so I didn't really pay attention to it that much. It was when I came back as a wife —

JG: Which is when?

GTR: So that was in 1971, September of 1971.

JG: So '69-'70 you were there.

GTR: I was there '69-'70. Then '70-'71 I was in Israel for the year.

JG: He was still here.

GTR: Joe was here the first part of the year, and then he came to Israel for the second half of the year. We got married that summer, and then I moved up here. So it was when —

JG: Were you still in college at that point?

GTR: I was. [laughs]

JG: So you were commuting.

GTR: I mean that I was so young. No, I had a strange college experience. I went to Sarah Lawrence for two years. Then I was in Israel and I went to Hebrew University for a year. Then I went to Harvard for a year, as a special student. I mean, it was strange, but all of it
was good. I think it was being there as a wife that I realized the really differential status. Somehow as a girlfriend it didn't make as much of a difference to me.

JG: Maybe you didn't have the same expectations, besides the fact that you were younger, about the world and your status as a girlfriend.

GTR: Right. It wasn't — I probably did feel like I wasn't a member, but I wasn't a member. I wasn't even — it was his thing, and I was glad to have access to it. That's what it felt like. I think that, as I said, when I came back, when we came back and he was re-embraced right away, and I felt like — I didn't feel comfortable. Then I started looking around and being much more attuned to what the status of women at the havurah was, and it felt that they were — that we were, not they were — adjunct. I know Mona feels different. Mona Fishbane feels differently about this. (03:27:00) I wish I had thought about this some more before this interview, but I think it was also, we all wanted to be — it was an odd time for women. We were young. We all wanted to do it all. We all wanted to be really good wives, really good cooks, really good — you know, put together really nice homes, have everybody over for meals, etcetera, etcetera. But we also wanted to be fully equal members, and it didn't work. It didn't work in part because I don't think most of the men cared about that very much or were sensitive to what that juggling entailed, that in order to do that juggling, they needed to also re-adjust.

JG: Right. Can you describe what was the status of women? For instance, outside of the realm of public worship for the moment, but what roles did women have, and men, and to what extent did traditional gender roles sort of come into play, or were the fall-back that everybody did?

GTR: I think in most of the homes, I think the women were preparing the meals for the most part — I mean, in the homes where there were couples. Some of the men did certain things, like maybe it was bake challah or something that made them special to do that, but it was like doing something special. It was not taking responsibility for that stuff. I don't know. Now that I'm saying that, I'm not altogether sure, because now Art does so much cooking. I don't think he cooked in those years, but I could be wrong. I mean, I really could be wrong about that. The women made the curtains and did the pillow covers, I mean —

JG: How about in the havurah house itself?

GTR: That's what I'm talking about.

JG: In the house.
GTR: Yeah. The decorating, whatever decorating was done was done by the women. I mean, the men gardened. I do remember that. The men took care of whatever garden was in the back there. (03:30:00) There definitely, there were men living in the house, and they cooked meals. They did cook, I know that.

JG: What about serving, cleanup, that kind of thing, at communal meals, or any time that those types of activities happened?

GTR: I think they got sensitized to that pretty early, that everybody needed to participate in the cleaning. That didn't feel like — I didn't feel like any of the men in the havurah felt like they needed to be served by the women. I think there was — there definitely was a communal ethos around that kind of stuff, or when we went on retreats. As I remember, everybody —

JG: Everybody chipped in.

GTR: Yeah.

JG: So, let's talk about public worship services. What do you remember as women's positions or roles or lack of roles?

GTR: I don't remember women *davening* until Sharon. Now it’s quite possible that Janet did. She's the only one that I think could have.

JG: Leading *davening*.

GTR: Leading *davening*, yeah.

JG: And that would have been, you're talking about the '71-'72 year, or earlier?

GTR: Well, the Strassfelds came — I don't remember when the Strassfelds came, and I don't remember when Sharon started *davening*. I don't know that she was *davening* right away. She definitely is the first woman that I remember leading *davening*. I don't remember women leading discussions. My guess is they did, but I don't remember.

JG: What about being counted in a minyan?

GTR: It was never an issue because they always had a minyan. They avoided really thinking about that issue, because —
JG: Sometimes there was a mourner's minyan.

GTR: But I think there was such a — I don't know. I don't think they counted women. I certainly was never there as a tenth person where they said, "Well, we can't count you." I mean, but I wasn't there in that kind of situation is what I'm trying to say. So, I really don't remember. I'm curious. Have you heard from anybody about that?

JG: Joe told a story about a mourner's minyan, where there was a question about —

GTR: And did they count women?

JG: They — the decision was made to count (03:33:00) one woman who asked, yeah.

GTR: Huh, okay.

JG: But it was a decision that hadn't come up previously. It was a decision.

GTR: I think for the most part, women were just not on these guys' radar.

JG: As Jews, religious Jews.

GTR: Yes, they definitely were there as other things, but they did not — it seems to me that in the New York Havurah, that was an issue pretty early on, and women were kind of advocating for their rights. It didn't happen here, and it probably didn't happen because there weren't single women brought into that first group. As I say, I think the married women saw themselves as married women.

JG: Do you have any memories of women wearing a tallit or a kippah?

GTR: Yeah. I mean, I think women definitely — I don't think they were wearing tallisim, but there were a lot of shawls. They would use shawls to wrap themselves in the same ways —

JG: As men would use a tallis.

GTR: Yeah. I don't remember kippot frankly. I think this also may be that those weren't things that would have been of interest to me — which is a terrible thing to say, that I don't notice things. I just said that about the men, that they don't notice women because that wasn't of interest. I guess, because tallit was not something that I was yearning to
wear, or a kippah, I didn't pay attention to whether people did, but I don't remember. I think it might have struck me if they had.

JG: In some other aspects for a minute — in the havurah, did women participate in classes?

GTR: Women were invited, I think, to all classes. I mean, they could go to any class as far as I know.

JG: Did you go to any?

GTR: I did, but what's interesting to me is, I don't remember any class that I went to. It particularly interests me because I did go — now I'm talking in '71-'72 — I do remember taking a class with David Jacobson at Harvard Hillel on Reb Nachman's stories. It's just curious to me that I would remember that class, which was also not part of my college courses, but not remember any classes, though I know I did take classes at the havurah. (03:36:00) I don't know. I don't want to speculate. I don't know why. I'm not sure.

JG: So do you have any memories that sort of speak to your experiences of learning in the havurah, or not much, it sounds like?

GTR: No, I'd say that the learning that I did in the havurah had more to do with understanding how to daven, understanding what a service is. I mean, a real service. So it wasn't specific. And I'm sure I did study texts at the havurah. I mean, I must have taken a course with Buzzy, with Michael Fishbane. I'm sure I took a class with Buzzy, and if I did I certainly learned a lot. I just don't remember what it was. I vaguely recall taking a class with Everett, but that might have even been the earlier year, so that might have been like a one-time thing, not a class. What I do remember is, there was a period, and I don't know if anyone has talked about this, but I think it was Richie Siegel who got very interested in co-counseling.

JG: No one has so far.

GTR: So he got a lot of people, or a bunch of people, involved in learning about co-counseling, and then in practicing co-counseling.

JG: With whom?

GTR: With each other. So I did that pretty religiously.
JG: Did that take off, interest and practice of co-counseling?

GTR: You mean did anybody take it further than the havurah?

JG: Or was it a sustained practice within the havurah?

GTR: I think it was sustained for like, six months. Well, I left the havurah, so I don't know. We left to go back to Israel. I don't know if people continued it. I'm pretty sure Richie did it more seriously. I don't know what seriously is. He did it so that when he would travel, he would call someone in that city who was part of the co-counseling network and do it. I never did that. It was also, I think, that the reason that he brought it to the havurah was that there was a sense that we all came together in these various ways, but we didn't really (03:39:00) know a lot about each other. It was an attempt, in fact, to get beyond the gendered stuff at the havurah. If I recall, all of the pairs for co-counseling were —

JG: Mixed gender?

GTR: Right.

JG: Interesting, and not necessarily with your actual partner, so to speak.

GTR: No, definitely not with your partner.

JG: Was there a sense, do you think, in which given all the discussion about what kind of a community, what kind of an intentional community the havurah wanted and intended to be, that this kind of co-counseling practice would be helpful in articulating or bringing some clarity around those kinds of issues?

GTR: Absolutely. Absolutely. I mean, I think that's why Richie brought it to the community. I don't know that it succeeded in doing that, in part because not everybody — I don't know if anything was adopted by everybody in the community. It definitely wasn't adopted by everybody in the community, so it became this small group of people. I don't remember how small it was. It was maybe twelve, maybe sixteen people who were doing it? I do remember the circles, of having to sort of — the "new and good" or something.

JG: What was that?
GTR: You'd stand in a circle and everybody had to say what was new and good in their life, if I'm remembering this correctly. I could be merging memories. It was the one thing we all did together, and then we did stuff in pairs.

JG: For you, did it bring any kind of new insight or clarity about anything — to any of the kinds of issues that were sort of floating around?

GTR: Hm. Yeah. Listening. I think I probably learned how to really listen through co-counseling. That's what you had to do. You just had to sit there and —

JG: Really listen.

GTR: Really listen, and not insert yourself into it. For all of us I think who were doing it, that was pretty new. I think it was important for the havurah. I mean for people at the havurah, to see the value of that kind of listening.

JG: As you remember it, did issues around gender and women's role or status in the havurah emerge at all from these kinds of sessions?

GTR: Not that I recall.

JG: Did women participate actively in the communal meetings that happened? Did you?

GTR: Again, once I was — once we were married, I think I went to the communal meetings if they didn't conflict with something else. I'm trying to think if I — I didn't feel like a real participant in them. I felt more like I went to listen. I don't want to say that nobody cared about what I thought, because I think people did, but not about havurah business, so to speak.

JG: You mentioned earlier that within the group of women who were early members of the New York Havurah, there was a fair amount of feminist consciousness, and consciousness-raising and activity, and they are in fact among the people who were the founders of Ezrat Nashim in '71-'72. Were the women who were involved in Havurat Shalom in this early period aware, do you think, of this sort of early feminist, sort of the nascent Jewish feminism — or involved in any way? Did they have relationships with the women in New York at that point, or were they involved in consciousness-raising that was going on in the general feminist movement?

GTR: In the years that I was there, certainly the first — in '69-'70 — I don't think anybody was aware of what was going on elsewhere. If they were, they didn't pay much
attention to it. By the time we came back from Israel, I think Bella had already started a — but it wasn't in the havurah. It was outside the havurah.

JG: Had started what, though?

GTR: A women's group, with Elaine Cohen and —

JG: A consciousness-raising group?

GTR: Basically a C.R. group, yeah. But it was mostly not havurah people. It was a feminist group. So that's the thing. To do feminist stuff — and that's what I find really interesting — that to do feminist stuff, any of us who did had to go outside (03:45:00) of the havurah. It couldn't happen in the havurah. That's what's interesting to me about that group.

JG: Which one?

GTR: The C.R. group that Bella had. Then, you may remember this, this was in '71-'72, Mary Daly spoke for the first time at Memorial Church.

JG: Yes.

GTR: Memorial? What's the church?


GTR: Memorial Church, right. To me, this was like a major event of the century. A major religious event of the century, a religious feminist event. I don't think anybody else from the havurah was there. Janet might have gone, but that's interesting too, but if she went it wasn't because we were talking about this at the havurah, and then there was this groundswell of interest in being there and being part of history.

JG: Were you?

GTR: Yes!

JG: But what was drawing you to that? You haven't mentioned any sort of feminist consciousness on your own part yet.

GTR: I haven't? [laughs]
JG: Nope.

GTR: Okay. Because it was a historic event, and maybe it was the fact that there was going to be a woman leading, and I was in a community where, for all of its progressive stuff, you didn't see that. Even though this was not my community, I was very excited about it happening there. I didn't mention feminist stuff — that's interesting. I don't know when I'd say I started really getting interested in feminism. Probably it was during those years, but I didn't have any, I didn't belong to any C.R. group. I think I was still in that girlfriend-to-wife, even though I felt like I was betraying all my friends by getting married. That wasn't something we were supposed to do as feminists.

JG: You were young.

GTR: I was young, and — but in '71-'72, I also was taking — at Harvard I was in Gail Parker's course on women in American history. Actually (03:48:00) Ellen Rothman was in that seminar with me.

JG: Really?

GTR: We didn't know it. Gail Parker went on to become the infamous president of Bennington College the year after that. So I think I started being in feminist kind of spaces in that year.

JG: Did you know about the C.R. group that you said Janet was —

GTR: Oh, Bella?

JG: Oh, that Bella was starting?

GTR: Well, I was in Israel, I think, when she started that. By the time I came back, it was an already established group. I think though, to be honest, I was pretty group-resistant in general. That was probably also true of my relationship to the havurah. I was not a groupie.

JG: But from what I'm understanding from what you're saying, the women who were immediately associated with the havurah in that period in Boston weren't forming their own feminist consciousness group, (03:51:00) however informal, or even talking about it particularly.
GTR: No, right. What's interesting is, somebody like — I mean Janet was certainly forming her own spiritual consciousness, but it wasn't feminist in any sense. Mary Gendler — but she was already, I mean, they were not at the havurah at that point anymore. Mary was probably — I think things would have looked very different if Mary and Everett had been active members at the havurah, because Mary was definitely past that “I’m a wife” stage and into, at that time, a pretty radical sort of Jewish Feminist consciousness. But she wasn't —

JG: She wasn't around.

GTR: Right.

JG: So Art Green, in a current issue of Pakn Treger, there's an article — a cover article, I think — on Havurat Shalom, in which basically — it was by Eitan Kensky — he's juxtaposing conversations with David Roskies and with Art Green, even though they were held separately. One of the things that Art says, obviously in response to a question about these issues of gender and women's status, is that this was — it was a pre-women's movement and a pre-feminist consciousness moment for us.

GTR: For them.

JG: Right. Clearly by "for us," he means the men.

GTR: Right.

JG: But in some sense, it was a very dawning, just for the women, of feminist consciousness it sounds like as well, and not something that they were actively pursuing.

GTR: That's right. I think that’s true.

JG: In the context of the havurah, at any rate.

GTR: Oh, definitely not in the context of the havurah. I think the important distinction is, there was a time where I heard people say that, Well, this is a-historical, because feminism didn't start till after that, and that's just not true. As I said, I think Jewishly and in these kinds of contexts, it was being talked about in New York. I don't know about at Fabrangen, but I do know —

JG: Not only that, Sally Priesand was in rabbinical school —
GTR: And Sally Priesand was —

JG: — and was ordained in '72. There were things happening in the larger —

GTR: But Sally was — again, that was played down in terms of its feminism also. Sally played it down. Now we can all talk about it differently, but at that time it was — she very much did not talk about it as a feminist (03:54:00) moment.

JG: Right.

GTR: The newspapers started talking about it once she was ordained, or at the ordination, as that.

JG: But still, there were things that were starting to happen. There was — I mean, was it 1973 — the issue of *Response* dedicated to Jewish Feminism, I believe?

GTR: Yes, absolutely.

JG: And *Lilith* was founded in that time.

GTR: *Lilith* is later. A little bit later.

JG: A little bit later. Just a few years later though. It was all in the air. Things were starting to happen, and women were starting to be talking about these things.

GTR: Absolutely. So the *Response*, that *Response* issue is an interesting issue, because a lot of the people who wrote for it were New York Havurah people. Mary wrote. I mean, Mary's article is in there. But I can't think of anyone —

JG: — else from Boston.

GTR: Right.

JG: Yeah, I think that's right. So over time, clearly women's status did change at Havurat Shalom — after your time basically. So you and Joe left in '72? June of '72?

GTR: Right.

JG: And to do what? Where were you going at that point?
GTR: We left for Israel. I think [laughs] I mean, we knew we weren't going on aliya at that point, though we had been thinking about aliya. He was, if I'm right about this, yeah, he was finishing his dissertation and doing research about kibbutz, and we lived together with another havurah couple. We shared an apartment in Jerusalem.

JG: Havurah from Boston?

GTR: Yeah, with Larry and Debbie Fine. So we had our little havurah. Then after that we moved to New Jersey, and by the time we came back to Boston —

JG: Which is when?

GTR: Which is in '77, I think, or '78, one of those.

JG: You had been in New Jersey for graduate school?

GTR: For graduate school.

JG: For you.

GTR: For me, right. By the time we came back to Boston, we were living — I mean, we started out living in Newton and probably did not want to commute to the havurah. Also the havurah had changed quite a bit by then and looked somewhat unfamiliar, though it had become much more feminist. Which was also troublesome, because I think that as women became more active, men pulled back. Certainly the men from the — you know, people moved on, so it's hard. I don't (03:57:00) know — I'll leave it to other people to figure out that history. I don't want to claim a causal relationship, but there's certainly — you see this movement where more women are taking over, and the people who founded it are —

JG: Moving on.

GTR: Right.

JG: To other aspects of their lives.

GTR: Right.

TRANSITION TO GAIL AND JOE REIMER TOGETHER
JG: My name is Jayne Guberman. Today is Thursday, August 4, 2016, and I'm here with Joe and Gail Reimer, and we're going to conclude. This is the final session of our interview today.

So, I want to use the last portion of our time together to consider some of the larger implications of your experiences at Havurat Shalom, and also the havurah's larger impact on the Jewish world, as we reach the almost fiftieth anniversary of the founding of Havurat Shalom. So, Joe, I want to start with this. Several years after you left Havurat Shalom in 1976, you wrote a piece for Response entitled "Looking Back at the Havurah," and you reflected on what you thought were some of the main challenges that you had struggled with, both on a personal level but also they were critiques of what had gone on, certainly in your time, at the havurah. You mention three main areas. The first was the relationship of the havurah to the larger community, in which you're rejecting sort of the "We vs. They" paradigm, and arguing that people needed to be involved, that people needed to be involved beyond themselves, and in the larger community as well. The second was the focus on religious search, in which you were saying that in spite of the impact of the havurah on your private spiritual life, your life as a Jew also needed a larger focus, and not just on this inner dimension. Finally, you were reflecting on the sort of limitations on the idea of an intimate and permanent community. So I'm wondering if looking back, this critique still speaks to you. Do you think you got it right? This was written in '76.

JR: Right. No, I see it differently now. [laughs]

GTR: [laughs]

JR: Because there were trends I didn't anticipate in '76 that are evident now. So I think the havurah was prescient in understanding that, at least for some North American Jews, the issues of spirituality were going to emerge much more prominently than they had in previous decades, and that people would be seeking both personal meaning and intense community, and meaningful worship in a way that perhaps had not been so prominent previously. So of course I would say that (04:00:00) inwardness is just — it's great, but it's just inwardness. It needs to find outer expression. I think the fact that the havurah, at least in some small part, allowed for this focus on Jewish spirituality to emerge has proven, these many years later, to be very important. So too, I think I may not have fully appreciated in '76 the degree to which the larger community really would need to find new forms of communal expression and communal cohesion. Again, while as forming havurot hasn't proven to be a huge deal —

JG: You mean independent havurot?
JR: Independent havurot, exactly. I don't think you could count a large number of independent havurot on the scene, now or then. What I think we have seen is — and some people might critique this — is the fact that more and more Jews seek not large congregations or simple membership in a federation or a JCC, but they seek some form of more intimate community in which to celebrate their Judaism, however that takes shape. That remains an important part. One can say it's the creation of boutiques. Perhaps it does have a consumer side to it, but I think it has —

JG: In what sense?

JR: Well, everybody wants it their own way, that sort of thing. Certainly there is that out there. Everyone does want it their own way. [laughs] But you can't deny that large synagogues tend to remain mostly empty. Let's take Temple Israel of Boston as an example, our largest synagogue. Generally what happens is, there are small tribes within the large congregation that come together and do their spiritual lives together. That's just an example of what I'm talking about.

JG: But do you see the development of havurot within — the explicit development of havurot — within the synagogue, within the synagogue life and synagogue structure, as an outgrowth of this early experience with havurot?

JR: Again, the word outgrowth could have different meanings. The way I see it is, the early havurot provided models or paradigms or examples of what were possible if you were to focus on these particular concerns. It's not so much that people then copied them. I don't think they did. Rather it legitimated a way of being Jewish in our culture that other people then adapted to their own needs, and the adaptations are considerable, but I still see them — let me just again give the Temple Israel example. The fact that at Temple Israel, before they have their large service on Shabbat morning, every week they get together in small groups to study Torah, is important. It's an important manifestation of this sort of trend. Just as an example.

JG: You can feel free, by the way, to sort of comment on each other's thoughts. So looking back on the havurah's vision regarding community and social justice and prayer and learning, what do you see as the greatest strengths of the havurah as it existed at the time?

JR: Meaning, today?

JG: Yeah.
JR: Well, again, let me just say, the legitimization of experimentation. Well, experimentation with knowledge, I might add, rather than just trying anything you might want. I think the understanding that religious life is never fixed, that it needs to constantly renew itself, that the way you renew yourself is by trying things out that hadn't been done before. That includes an openness to the outside world. It includes a much greater emphasis on the actual congregation singing, rather than being sung to. That in place of the sermon you have a dvar torah, that anyone can give a dvar torah — certainly with help, but anyone can give. That in a sense the Torah is ours, each of ours to interpret within a canon of tradition, but still, that's what we're trying to do. I think that's a significant move away from the way Judaism was practiced in the fifties and sixties and has persisted.

GTR: So, I mean, I think in terms of the question Jayne asked, you're really saying that the prayer part was the most significant.

JR: I think it's prayer, I think it's Torah study, I think it is musical experimentation.

JG: It's also a notion, if I'm hearing you correctly — it's a notion of intimate community, a more intimate community, even if not an all-encompassing one the way the havurah was structured.

JR: Yes, exactly.

JG: This was also, as we've been discussing, Gail, a pivotal time in the formation of a growing feminist consciousness in the Jewish community. Some twenty-five years or so later, Gail, you founded the Jewish Women's Archive. As you look back on it, do you think your experiences in the havurah informed in any way the direction that you took in your thinking about women's roles, and what led you to found the Jewish Women's Archive?

GTR: Well. That's a very big question. One of the things I've been thinking — I'll try to come back to it — but I have been thinking about the fact that there was an extraordinary amount of talent at the havurah, very talented people who have gone on to do lots of important, interesting things, major contributions to the Jewish community and beyond. In some ways, I think the community never valued that. I mean, there was no place in that community to do those things.

JG: You mean the community itself.
GTR: In the havurah. I mean, the havurah had the things it valued, and other stuff needed to be done elsewhere. That said, in answer to your question I would say that — I mean, this is so hard to know — but I think it was Havurat Shalom that kept me in the Jewish space. I was in a Jewish space with Israel, but not with any kind of other — definitely not in an American Jewish space. It allowed me to see that there was a possibility for finding a place for myself here in the Jewish world, and without that I don't think I ever would have done the Jewish Women's Archive. Yes, I think when I started the archive, part of what I was saying was, why don't we — why doesn't anybody — talk about women? There certainly wasn't any class at the havurah about — having anything to do with women, that I know of. So that awareness I'm sure was (04:09:00) probably rooted much earlier in my education and my life, but the havurah did not say to me, This is a problem that's taken care of. You really don't need to take care of it.

JG: So since this period of the late sixties and early seventies, have you, either individually or as a couple and family, continued your involvement in — did you continue your involvement in the havurah when you came back from Israel, or any of its later manifestations? Havurah Summer Institute, any of those kinds of things — and why or why not?

JR: I think we may have gone to the Havurah Institute once or twice.

GTR: Yeah.

JR: Not much more than that, though. Obviously, friendships continued. I think we each found our own — I was more interested in education. Gail, as you know, went in a different direction. I never felt that what was important here was the havurah movement, the word "havurah," the particulars of what we did in those years. I felt then, and feel now, that made sense then. We did what made sense to us at that age, in that place, and now it's time to move on. I've always felt that. But I would count all the various minyanim that I have been part of, which are quite a few, as a continuation of this. I really do feel that, in many ways, my whole career in Jewish education is something that grew out of my years at Havurat Shalom. Not just Havurat Shalom, but also Havurat Shalom.

JG: Could you say a little bit more about that piece, Joe?

JR: Yeah, I've been extremely active and interested in something that I sometimes call informal, sometimes experiential, Jewish education, and where did that come from? Sure, part of it came from camp, no question about it, but part of it came just from the life of the community of havurah. I felt — and this is what I published — that in those years we,
through our involvement in the community, we were really learning a great deal all the time, sometimes textually but often interpersonally and culturally, through our involvement. That was a kind of alternative model to sometimes the more classroom-based Jewish education, sometimes the more rah-rah-rah forms of Jewish education. (4:12:00) To this day, I'm still involved in this subject, sort of the question of, how is participation in a community in of itself educative? That is really perhaps the question that was the theme in my dissertation research and has remained an important theme throughout my research years. I think that, in part, comes from that experience.

GTR: I think that, first of all, we've maintained real, solid friendships from those years. Not so much these days, but for a long time the Friday nights together with those friends were always efforts to recapture some of what we had at the havurah, and those friendships remain very important. I think it's been — for me, it's certainly been a challenge in terms of any kind of davening since the havurah. Like, just being able to find a place that brings me to that same place. So I think more than you, [to JR] I've yearned for — and maybe because I feel like I was so young then, and I couldn't fully appreciate what we had. So it's only when you get kicked out of Eden that you start seeing that, well, it was pretty good.

JG: And that it wouldn't last forever.

GTR: That's right.

JG: Despite the issues around permanent community.

GTR: But the other thing I wanted to add, Jayne — I don't know if it's really an answer to this question — the learning piece for me. The two books that I co-edited with Judith Kates were definitely, I mean, I really can say those would not have happened without Havurat Shalom — again maybe because it didn't happen at Havurat Shalom, and those questions weren't asked at Havurat Shalom, and nobody cared about those questions at Havurat Shalom.

JG: Can you articulate what —

GTR: By those questions I mean what these texts mean to women, and how women respond differently to them. Now, that's not to say — I think women did give sort of divrei torah at Havurat Shalom.

JR: [nods] Mmm-hm.
GTR: But again, they weren't with a feminist awareness for the most part, that I can remember.

JG: Could you mention the subject of the books you're talking about?

GTR: So, in the eighties I think it was, together with Judith Kates —

JR: It was the nineties.

GTR: Nineties, ninety-five. (04:15:00) Together with Judith Kates, I edited first a book of women's readings of the Book of Ruth, and then a book of women's readings of texts from the High Holidays, the Torah texts and the haftorah texts. I think it was a tikkun to what was not done at Havurat Shalom.

JG: At what point did you start thinking about these issues? Because you were saying that you weren't really very focused during the years that you were involved — maybe because you were too young, maybe because feminist consciousness was just starting to sort of take shape, both in the larger American society and in the Jewish world. At what point did this start to really come together for you in terms of your interest in reclaiming these texts and exploring them from women's perspectives?

GTR: I think by the mid-seventies already, when I was — when did we go out to Brandeis Bardin, and when did I teach there?

JR: Oh, no. That was much later.

GTR: That was later?

JR: That was '86.

GTR: That was '86? Oh my God. Okay, so maybe the mid-eighties. So it was more the mid-eighties, right. I mean I was trying to tie this to graduate school, which was a very important turning point in my own feminist thinking. Or maybe not a turning point, but sparked a lot of feminist readings and consciousness, but maybe I didn't bring them to Jewish texts until later.

JG: So overall, what impact would you say the Havurah Movement has had on American Jewish life, if you look back over the past half-century?
JR: Again, I think the answer resides in the activation of Jewish spiritual awareness and practices in the community as an alternative to either, on the one hand, more formal ritual life as represented in the synagogue of the earlier period, or the strictly political Jewish life either on the right or the left that has emerged, sometimes about Israel, sometimes right here in this country. I think that has persisted and grown. That is to say, for all the enormous changes that have taken place, there still are significant numbers of people for whom turning to Judaism and Jewish life gets its greater satisfaction through the spiritual richness that they find there. That's how I see its contribution primarily, within the larger conversation. Obviously, a lot of people participated in the politics of the sixties and seventies. This wasn't unique to us. Those types of ideal communities that we were imagining don't end up being very durable. Those sorts of things fall away, but this has not fallen away, and I think it's been a real contribution.

GTR: I'm going to look at it from a different perspective, which is I think that it created this very safe, highly experimental space that drew in, as I said a little bit earlier, an extraordinarily talented group of young Jews. Those Jews have had a major impact on the Jewish community. Whether we look at the rebirth of Yiddish that David Roskies played a major role in. Whether we look at — and this happened at the havurah — the Jewish Whole Earth Catalogue, which spawned a whole, much of what you were talking about, a do-it-yourself kind of understanding —

JG: The Jewish Catalog.

GTR: Yeah. I mean, I could go on. There are so many people who have made a significant — Michael Fishbane's work in Bible, which maybe would have happened without the havurah. I mean, that's one that, though I think he says his thinking was also influenced by what he experienced there — I hate to start mentioning people because there's so many people that fall into what I'm talking about. Steve Mitchell's translations. I mean, like, this is amazing work that came out of — and Art Green, of course. And Joe's starting the field of Jewish experiential education. Like, who thought about that beforehand? So I think it's not — there are certain places in history that make it possible for a whole lot of other things to happen. You can focus on what happened in that place and how it has an impact beyond it, but you also can say, another way of looking at it is, who was there, and in what way was that space enabling to what they did later and the impact that they had?

JG: Right, and what impact their relationships with each other — just the confluence of having that group of people in the same space at the same time. So you didn't mention the impact of Jewish feminism, which has clearly been major, and clearly women who were involved —
GTR: I mean, Merle Feld, the poetry that she's written, that is used in temples and synagogues and other places all over. B'not Esh, by the way, was the group whose name I could not think of. But, the kind of work that so many of the women who were in the havurah, and then ended up in B'not Esh, have been doing — yeah, so of course the feminist stuff.

JG: To transform the Jewish world.

GTR: Right.

JG: Absolutely. Absolutely. Is there anything else that you would like to add, Joe, Gail, before we —

JR: Yeah. Just one more thing that I would like to add is this. We talked about Buzzy and Art and Jim Kugel, and there are probably others like this. In each of their work, there is, on the one hand, profound textual knowledge, and on the other hand the willingness to explore the personal aspects of what that knowledge means for them. Those are three people who immediately come to mind who have done that in profound ways, but it's not limited to them. Again, I don't think Havurat Shalom caused this, but I just think it opened the possibility a little more readily to others. I was sitting with a scholar from the seminary last Shabbat who does this in a very different way. He would probably not attribute this to Havurat Shalom. But when I asked him his influences, Michael Fishbane was right there. A really respected biblical scholar who's willing to say, what do these Biblical texts mean today for our religious lives? That's the best of the havurah (04:24:00) as it has grown and reflected itself among scholars — not all scholars — in the American Jewish community. That's just one more thing I wanted to mention because I think that's important.

JG: Would you say that's also sort of infused the rabbinate?

JR: I think so. I think so. Again, obviously the Rabbinical School at Hebrew College is the most direct outgrowth of Havurat Shalom, but these tendencies gain legitimization in a small context and then spread, and when they spread, they don't just simply replicate. They go in thousands of different directions. But let's not underestimate the importance of that cell that allows this to gain some initial expression, and then for people to carry it in the many different directions in which they do.

GTR: I don't know if people talked about this in other interviews, but one thing I do recall at Havurat Shalom was lots of people — there were lots of tourists who came to
see what is this thing that's happening. Those included rabbis from the area, and each of them took something away. I mean I'm sure some just dismissed it, but many of them took something away. I think about Larry, for example, Kushner. And then Larry Kushner teaches at —

JR: HUC.

GTR: HUC. So the way in which this all — again, I think that's where the place, the way in which it was not only the talented people who were in it, but then the tourists who came to see it, and then took something away and then made something.

JG: I mean, not just tourists, but in some sense —

GTR: Maybe tourist is an unfair word.

JG: Well, I was going to say, in some sense what Art was looking for —

JR: Sympathetic.

JG: Spiritual seekers.

GTR: Yeah.

JG: Speaking to what Joe was saying in the beginning.

GTR: Right.

JG: Well, thank you so much.

GTR: Wait! I have one more thing to say, which is, I made a mistake earlier in the interview. [laughs] For the record, I need to correct it, especially since my husband was one of the roshei aidah at Camp Ramah. There was no nudity in Hair that summer.

JG: [laughs] Thank you for that correction and thank you for your time.

JR: What a wonderful way to end.