

Jewish Counterculture Oral History Project

DAVID SHNEYER

Interviewed by Jayne K. Guberman

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**A Project of the Jewish Studies Program
at the University of Pennsylvania**

Jayne Guberman (JG): My name is Jayne Guberman. Today is Thursday, December 15, 2016. I'm here with David Shneyer at his home in Rockville, Maryland, and we're going to record an interview for the Jewish Counterculture Oral History Project. David, do I have your permission to record this interview?

David Shneyer (DS): Yes, you do.

JG: As you know, today we're going to explore your experiences during the late sixties and early seventies, and particularly your involvement with Fabrangen and the impact that the *havurah* has had on your own life and on the larger Jewish world.

I'd like to begin by talking about your personal and family background a little bit, and to flesh out who you were at the time you first got involved with Fabrangen. Can you tell me, to start, very briefly about your family when you were growing up? You were born in 1948 in Brooklyn, right?

DS: Right. —

JG: Tell me about your father and your mother, and your family.

DS: Both my parents were also born in Brooklyn. They were married in Brooklyn and left New York to start a poultry farm in New Jersey. My father had been working in the poultry business before then and wanted to have his own place. My mother was looking for a way to get out of Brooklyn. So, they settled just outside of Lakewood, New Jersey, in Jackson Township, on an eleven-acre poultry farm. That's where I spent the first twelve years of my life.

JG: Tell me about your father, who you said was a Communist. Is that right? Or, his family —

DS: My father, he wasn't a Communist. His parents were Communists. My grandfather actually had gone to yeshiva in the Ukraine in a city called Dnepetrovsk, but then he was attracted to the revolution and got involved, as well as my grandmother. They came to this country, and by the time they came to this country, they were card-carrying Communists. That's how my father grew up, in that household, he and his brother. My uncle, *alev hashalom*, he continued his Communist affiliations for a long time and was very much the activist in the family. My father was a bit more of a capitalist, but an enlightened capitalist. So, that's pretty much that, the family story.

JG: What about your mother, on your mother's side?

DS: On my mother's side, they were also — she was born in Brooklyn, and my grandparents were from Poland, Przemsyl is the name of the town. (00:03:00)

JG: What's the name?

DS: Przemsyl. t's the provincial capital out there in southeastern Poland. They came here in the early 1900s. They were affiliated or associated with the Arbeter Ring, with the Workmen's Circle, and they were also workers. They were involved in union organizing, my grandfather more than my grandmother. She was more involved in raising the kids. They had three daughters. So that's a little bit about that background, yeah.

JG: Your family moved to the Lakewood, New Jersey area, which had been a home to Jewish chicken farmers starting, I think, around the 1920s or so.

DS: That's right.

JG: What year was it, approximately, when your parents moved there?

DS: They moved there in 1947, I guess? I was born in '48. They were already established there, and my mother wanted to give birth to me in Brooklyn, because she didn't trust the hospital “in the sticks,” as she called it. So I was born in Brooklyn, lived in Brooklyn for a few weeks, and then came back to the farm. [*laughs*]

JG: What was the Jewish community in Lakewood like when you were growing up?

DS: The Jewish community in Lakewood — well, it was a center for the poultry farming industry. It was also a resort town. There were numerous hotels, and horses and buggies in the streets, and folks coming in from New York. This was mainly in the winter. During the summer, I guess folks would go more toward the Borscht Belt. But in the winter, because of the pines — pine trees were just all over; it's the Pine Region of New Jersey — people would come for the fresh air and for the lovely hotels. It was also the beginning of a center for the yeshiva called — now I'm blocking the name — Beth Medrash Govoha, which was transplanted from Europe, as I understand, just after the Holocaust. When we moved into Lakewood when I was twelve, we lived around the corner from the Beth Medrash Govoha, and I had the opportunity to meet some folks associated with the yeshiva, and actually took a study and a *shiur* there when I was in high school. The Jewish community was primarily a couple of Orthodox congregations and a Reform temple. Neither of those institutions appealed to my parents. My father really didn't care so much about (06:00:00) how religion took hold in the family. He really left that up to

my mother. She had much stronger feelings about that. They weren't comfortable with the Orthodox or the Reform options, and they started, along with a few other families, a Conservative synagogue in Lakewood. They founded Ahavat Shalom, which, recently within the past few years, now is part of the Orthodox community. So, they started that and that's where I got my primary Jewish education. The rabbi there became very close with my family. He encouraged me to go to Camp Ramah, and I went to Camp Ramah for three summers in the sixties. But the Jewish community, I don't know the exact numbers. It was a relatively small Jewish community. The town itself maybe numbered 11,000 in the sixties, as I recall. But it was a very close-knit Jewish community. Those who founded the congregation were very close to each other. The excitement of starting a community is very vivid in my memory. I think because my mother especially — but also my father — they were both on the board of directors, and they both were in the choir. My parents were both in love with singing and music. My father was kind of strange, because he didn't have a serious Jewish education. They both spoke Yiddish, but because he was also a trained singer, he sang for a while in the choir, and really enjoyed that part of it.

JG: Was there a lot of singing in your family life, around Erev Shabbat, holidays, Shabbos?

DS: Not so much in the immediate family. As we grew into the congregation and became more familiar with I guess melodies, especially on Pesach, we sang a lot of melodies that were created by the Malavsky Family Choir.

JG: What's that?

DS: A famous family. Samuel Malavsky was a cantor born in Europe, and he started a family choir. If I recall, he had four daughters and one son, and all were wonderful singers — maybe three daughters and one son. They were Orthodox, and of course because of *kol isha*, they weren't allowed to sing in the synagogues. They couldn't perform in Orthodox settings. So he created his own independent family choir, and they traveled all over the world. They were on cruise ships. They sang in the Borscht Belt. They went (00:09:00) to Israel. Goldie Malavsky, the more prominent singer in the choir, female-voiced, she was our choir director and taught me music. Her husband, Menachem Goldman, was also a teacher of mine and just a wonderful singer. I learned so much music from him personally as a kid.

JG: Did you sing in the choir when you were a kid?

DS: We had a children's choir, and I still teach some of the melodies that we learned to our community, our *havurah* community here in Bethesda. It had a major impact on me — their teachings, his teaching, and the family. We didn't do much singing at home. My father often sang in the truck when we were delivering either eggs or baby chicks to folks in New Jersey.

JG: What would he sing?

DS: *'O Sole Mio*. It was more of the Italian. He didn't sing anything, really, in Yiddish. My mother was much more — she played piano as well. I still have her books of Yiddish music.

JG: Was there Yiddish being spoken in your home when you were a child?

DS: Yes, it was the language at the table between my parents, partly because, and this was pretty common, they didn't want us — us being my sisters and myself — to know what they were saying.

JG: Did you?

DS: No, until I started on the side getting some lessons from my grandmother.

JG: Sounds subversive.

DS: Yeah, it was little bit subversive. I picked up some Yiddish from her, and I also studied Yiddish later on, on my own. It was pretty common. My father went to visit with the other poultry farmers. He often spoke Yiddish with them, because many of them were immigrants who came here before the Holocaust. So he spoke with them in Yiddish. I remember hearing the language a fair amount actually.

JG: Tell us about your Jewish education, both formal and informal, when you were growing up.

DS: Both formal and informal.

JG: Start with formal.

DS: Formal. I went to this Orthodox nursery school, which was a terrible experience, as it turned out. One quick story — the teacher was talking about God, and I asked, I said, "Where is God?" She said, "God's in the shul, behind the Arc." I said, "Okay." So, one

day we went to the cafeteria for snack, and we (00:12:00) were on our way back — you know, make a straight line and be quiet. Well, I went to the end of the line, standing with another kid, and I said, "Let's go into the shul to find God." So he and I went into the shul to find God. I walked up on the *bimah*. It was pretty dark in the room. I went to the curtains, the *aron hakodesh*, and I called out, "God, are you there?" and there was no response. So I asked again, "God, are you there?" and there's no response. So I reached up. I couldn't reach the string to pull the curtain open, but I could move it with my hand, so I opened part of the curtain and I stuck my hand in the *aron hakodesh*. [laughs] I said, "God, where are you?" and there was no answer. I was really upset. The teacher didn't tell me the truth. So, I went back to class. I got back to class, and she started yelling at us. "Where were you? What were you doing?" So I go, "I was looking for God." And she's yelling at us! I started crying. I was a very sensitive kid. I started crying and my mother came for me, and I said, "I'm not going back." I threw a tantrum. And that was my last day in nursery school at this Orthodox congregation. The next experience was my parents then sent me to Freehold, New Jersey, which was not that far from our farm. Our farm was sort of between Freehold and Lakewood. She sent me to another Orthodox Hebrew school there where I learned regular Hebrew and whatever else. The teacher there started teaching us Hebrew, and her method of teaching was read until you make a mistake. I would almost always make a mistake on the first or second syllable, or first or second word. There were some kids that would just read for like five, ten minutes, and this was a class of about twenty kids, so I never had a chance to even read. It was super frustrating. Also, they made me wear *tzitzit*, which was always getting tangled up, especially in the bathroom. It was just really a very uncomfortable experience. One day, I just threw another tantrum. I said, "I'm not going back." So, I was taken out of that Hebrew school experience. I didn't have a very positive Hebrew school experience or Jewish educational experience. At that point, my mother, who herself is an organizer and a very (00:15:00) capable woman, she decided, "Okay, let's try and do something about this." She met other people in Lakewood who also were looking for an alternative, and they created the synagogue. My mother was convinced that they were going to find teachers that would work well with the students, and that's what they did. They found wonderful teachers. Menachem Goldman, I mentioned, who was a resistance fighter in the Holocaust. Another teacher was a Holocaust survivor. Wonderful, wonderful teachers. I had, for me, a totally positive experience in the Hebrew school I went to there.

JG: You mentioned —

DS: That's in its early form. I was also part of the rabbi's study group. I was in LTF, which means Leadership Training Fellowship group. It was special for a few of us. There were maybe four of us or five of us who were teenagers at the time, and who had additional studies with the rabbi. Occasionally we'd go to New York, to the Jewish

Theological Seminary, and have a special section with Chaim Potok. I didn't know who he was at the time. *[laughs]* He was very nice, that's all I know. So, I had those kinds of experiences, and of course I went to Camp Ramah. Those summers we studied formally in classes in the morning, and I didn't mind it. I kind of liked it. I loved, loved the environment of Ramah.

JG: What did you love about Ramah?

DS: The sense of community. The singing was fantabulous. The outdoor services around the Etz Chaim. The tree, the lake, being in nature. It was like going back to the farm for me in a way. The friendships and being in community. That experience, Ramah, really set me on a certain path in the work that I've done in communities that have tried to mirror the experience that I had at Camp Ramah. So, I thank the Jewish Theological Seminary for that experience. Therefore I decided, actually, to go into the joint program at the seminary and Columbia University when I graduated high school. But, partly for financial issues, and also the idea of being in a city and not close to the country kind of didn't feel right, so I decided to go to Rutgers. It was a lot less expensive. I started out majoring in sociology, but then gravitated more toward Hebraica and Judaic Studies. So I graduated with a degree (00:18:00) in Judaic Studies from Rutgers.

JG: How would you characterize your experience with Rutgers Hillel? You were involved with that.

DS: Yes. It started out fine. That's where I ate. It was part of the kosher eatery there.

JG: You were at Rutgers starting in 1966?

DS: Sixty-six.

JG: To '70.

DS: To '70, that's right. This is in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Yeah, it was a good experience. The rabbi there was very nice and very open. I got involved in the programming at Hillel pretty quickly. I organized creative services. That was one of the things that I enjoyed doing, contemporizing services on Friday nights or Saturday nights. I forget exactly when.

JG: Contemporizing in what way?

DS: Incorporating poetry, special readings, quotes, music.

JG: Jewish, or not necessarily Jewish?

DS: Jewish and non-Jewish. I don't know where that idea came from actually, but I had the desire just to contemporize the worship or the *davening* experience. That felt good. I became a Hillel officer as well. But I became increasingly aware of the world around me, and at that time we're talking about the Vietnam War was going very strong. In fact, I was in ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] for a brief time. I don't know if I wrote about that previously.

JG: No.

DS: For a pretty brief time. I was convinced to join ROTC by the president of Hillel, who was in ROTC. He was two years ahead of me, and he thought it would be a really good thing because there's this war, and you'll go in as an officer and get benefits. I didn't know from anything, you know. 1966. So, I did that. Then one day I went marching down College Avenue, and someone who I knew from USY, from United Synagogue Youth in Northern New Jersey, he calls out my name. He says, "Shneyer, what are you doing?! What are you doing there?!" He was out there kind of throwing flowers at us with a bunch of other people. This person's name is Daniel Siegel. So, he says, "We've got to get together." [*laughs*] So we got together, and afterward (00:21:00) he basically informed me of several different things I basically didn't know about. Some of them were the politics of the Vietnam War. And I began thinking. I began looking more into what I was doing and feeling disconnected from that whole experience in the ROTC. I wound up actually flunking out of ROTC, because I stopped polishing the brass and I did miserably on the exams. I racked up so many demerits that there was no way I could advance in ROTC, even though the colonel on campus tried to convince me to stay and to help me. I bowed out of ROTC, and then the following year I moved out — was it the following year or was it a year later? I became close with some of the folks at SDS [Students for a Democratic Society]. So, my whole kind of worldview changed and became much larger.

JG: Did you begin getting involved in protests?

DS: Yes, somewhat. But this brings us back to Hillel, because Hillel was not involved at all. The Hillel program had nothing to do with what was going on in the larger society. Meanwhile so many other folks on campus were getting more engaged in responding to the war. I felt that need, and I saw that in the Jewish community at large. There was very little engagement in any of the movements — Women's Liberation, I mean, nothing.

JG: Civil Rights?

DS: Civil Rights, Women's Liberation. I mean, no — virtually no involvement, no connection. This began to weigh on me, so I, along with one of the other members of the kosher eatery at Hillel, who was formerly an Orthodox Jew, who kept kosher but was also a member of SDS, he and I and another two people started a Jewish Religious Fellowship for Action on campus. We started organizing other Jewish students, and faculty that we thought would be simpatico, and we organized this group. There was a real estate guy in town who heard about us and liked what we stood for. He was also apparently anti-war. He said, "Listen, do you need a place to meet?" Of course we said yes, (00:24:00) and he gave us the loft of a building that he owned and that wasn't being used, in New Brunswick, next to the railroad station. We moved into this loft, which was larger than the Hillel actually. We started meeting there and having dinners there, and organizing, and having classes there. We met with local rabbis studying about social justice and studying about Jewish spirituality, and also meeting with people who could inform us about what was going on politically.

JG: How large a group were you when this was getting underway?

DS: It's hard to say. The meeting with the most number of people that we had at the time at this loft was maybe fifty. But we organized the *Yizkor*, the memorial service for the Vietnam dead, on campus. More than two hundred people came out for this *Yizkor* memorial service. This was in 1969, I believe. We also participated in different marches.

JG: Did you have any relationship with Hillel?

DS: Very little. At one point, I was living with two Hillel officers. When I dropped out of Hillel, I was living with the president and the vice president of Hillel. So, it was okay, but it was a little awkward. We had this — I wouldn't call it a competing organization, but our purpose was very different. Then after a year we changed our name, to the New Brunswick Havurah. Okay?

JG: Yeah. I was going to ask you, I understand that you'd been national president of Atid, and had met people from other schools and communities. Did that have an impact on your vision of what you were trying to create at all?

DS: Yeah, Atid, yeah. In Atid I met a lot of folks who also were interested in growing their consciousness for change that we, not only in the society as a whole, but also in the Jewish community. Who did I meet in Atid? I met folks like Art Green, because he was one of our teachers at our conferences that we had.

JG: Can you say what Atid was?

DS: First of all, the word "*atid*" means future. It was the college-age organization of the United Synagogues of America. The high school group was called United Synagogue Youth. Michael Lerner, by the way, was one of the first presidents. Michael Lerner was the president of (00:27:00) of Atid. Two years after he was president, Daniel Siegel was president of Atid, and then two years after that, I was president of Atid. So, it was kind of an interesting lineage, those of us who found grounding in this organization. It helped us discover who we were in relationship to the Jewish community and the rest of society. It was very helpful. In the year I was president, we had our National Convention in Chicago. The theme for that convention — and that was 1968, right after the riots, the '68 riots. It was Columbia and also Chicago, and the Democratic National Convention, also —

JG: Assassinations, also.

DS: Assassinations. It was an intense year. So our theme for that year was a take off from a teaching in the Talmud. The teaching in the Talmud was, *dina d'malkhuta dina hu*, "The law of the land is the law," as a way of saying to the Jewish population that when you're living in a country to follow the law of the country. So our theme that year was, "The Law of the Land is the Law?" You see? We explored dissent and what that meant in our tradition. So, we were engaged. My vice-president at the time was — Mark — Novack —

JG: Bill.

DS: Bill! I know another person named Mark Novack who's a musician, and also a Renewal rabbi in town, so [*laughs*]. So Bill Novak was our vice president. At the time, he had just, I think, taken over as editor at *Response Magazine*. So these folks were part of the same connection, and at the same time in 1968, '69, the Havurat Shalom was emerging. I had taken a class with Art Green actually, at the seminary in New York, in 1967 I think? I think it was '67 during the summer. I was on staff alternate summers at Camp Ramah in Glen State, New York. So, I took a class with him, and then he went off to Boston. I knew Peter Geffen from national USY. He was the director of the national USY camp, which shared the same camp with Ramah in Glen State, and we were on one side, Ramah was on one side of the camp, and Peter Geffen heading up the national USY campers on the other side. So, there are these connections. Who else? I haven't thought of some of these people's names in a lot of time. I knew John Ruskay from those years, and —

JG: So you were hearing about the —

DS: (00:30:00) — so you were hearing a lot about what was going on, and not just within the Jewish world, but also within the general society. You know, the different collectives that were being created. Young people were taking charge. We were creating our own institutions, in the Jewish world and in the non-Jewish world. All of this had an impact on me personally, of course.

JG: You were also involved in the protest at the GA in '69.

DS: Yeah, that was interesting, of course. Hillel Levine spoke. He also was a speaker at a number of the Atid conferences that we had, summer conventions. We also had summer encampments. So we went up there, a number of us from the New Brunswick Havurah went up there. Then, right after that, we went up to Washington D.C., where we participated in the March on Washington.

JG: When did the name change? When was the name of the Jewish Religious Fellowship for Action change to New Brunswick Havurah, and why?

DS: Part of the change was, we wanted to reflect something a little larger than ourselves. The students involved were both from Rutgers and others, so it was Jewish Religious Fellowship of, what? What were we talking about? So, there was that. The word '*havurah*' resonated with us because we had become very close, and it was a member-directed fellowship community. The word 'fellowship' is the same word as '*havurah*.' We wanted to use the word *havurah*. I think that the awareness that there was at least, at that time, one or two other *havurot* in the country might have felt right to us, that we were somehow connected to other *havurot*. Our particular *havurah*, as I recall, was much more political than the other *havurot*. We were closer to Na'aseh in Philadelphia, in terms of the political.

JG: What was Na'aseh?

DS: Na'aseh was a political action fellowship, I guess, started by Daniel Siegel in Philadelphia.

JG: During the same period.

DS: During the same period, yeah. Would they have called themselves a *havurah*? I don't know. We felt comfortable with the word *havurah* because we had Friday night dinners

together, and we studied, but we were much more engaged in what was happening (00:33:00) in the society politically.

JG: Were there any membership criteria for being part of the New Brunswick Havurah?

DS: No.

JG: Even if you wanted to.

DS: Even if we wanted to. We never incorporated ourselves or anything like that. We didn't seem to have to worry about money. We had a building. People would chip in. So, there was no formal organization. People would never apply for a 501c3. [laughs] No liability insurance either.

JG: Was the *havurah* engaged in training people for activism, would you say?

DS: Absolutely. One of the things that we did, one of our goals, was to create peace groups in Raritan Valley. So —

JG: What's the name of the valley?

DS: Raritan. Raritan Valley. There were a number of synagogues in Raritan Valley.

JG: Where Rutgers is.

DS: Rutgers is based in Raritan Valley, and Highland Park, and Edison, and Woodbridge. Numerous communities. So, we basically organized ourselves to go into the synagogues and temples asking for a podium to talk about the Vietnam War and to talk about why we as Jews must take a stance against this war. And so we studied and we developed a strategy for organizing, which essentially was, we'd ask the rabbi if we could speak briefly from the *bimah* about who we were, as I guess the Jewish Religious Fellowship for Action, at that particular moment in our history, and then afterward we had other members in our group meeting with people after services at the *Oneg Shabbat*, and trying to find people who were sympathetic with the cause, and to ask them if they would host a meeting, a coffee house or something, at their home. That's how we got people to do that. We ultimately created eighteen peace groups in Raritan Valley using that strategy of organizing.

JG: What did the peace groups do? What were their effect?

DS: That was left up to them after they got going. I don't think we kept track of what they were doing. I know that they (00:36:00) probably kept much more aware of other opportunities for getting together, but that I don't know.

JG: So this was also the period when anxiety about the draft was definitely on the rise. The first of several draft lotteries took place in December of '69.

DS: Right.

JG: This was shortly before you were about to graduate.

DS: Right.

JG: What was your situation vis-a-vis the draft?

DS: My situation was not so great. My lottery number was nine, so I was called up for a pre-induction physical. This is when I became a draft dodger. I did a couple of things. One, I got a passport, just in case it meant leaving the country. The other thing I did is I looked into registering at a yeshiva in Brooklyn sponsored by the Lubavitchers. It was called Hadar HaTorah. But the deal there was you needed to come study there a couple of days a week, and that would have been a little too difficult. So I didn't go that route, although maybe I should have. *[laughs]* Then the other way was to put on weight and somehow get my blood pressure up and fail the physical. So I did that. I got my weight up. I was already a little on the heavy side, so I got my weight up and then worked on ways of getting my blood pressure up. Then I went to Newark, New Jersey for the U.S. physical. I also went up dressed like a Hasid. *[laughs]* I went up there, and I wasn't exactly willing to cooperate with the system. I refused to get undressed. They were nice. They showed me a bunch of robes, and I put a robe on so I would not be standing there naked with all the other folks. It was really strange. I got out. It was for overweight. I failed the physical. I had to go back a year later or two to do it all over again, but then I got out actually because I failed the physical. *[laughs]*

JG: So that was in '70?

DS: Yeah, that was '70. It was sometime in '70. I worked at Camp Ramah in the summer of '70. I was a teacher. I had been trained also in the seminary in the Milton Method of teaching, which is the method of inquiry, and (00:39:00) also learned to teach Hebrew through the dialogue method called B'Yad HaLashon. So I was a teacher on staff there, and I was trying to figure out what I was going to do with my life after that. I wanted to continue the activism, and at that time there was really only one group in the country that

sounded really interesting to me, and that group was called Jews for Urban Justice. I had been to the Washington D.C. area. I had gone camping in the Blue Ridge Mountains. I liked the area. I really wanted to get out of New Jersey. [laughs] So I was attracted. This rabbi comes up from Washington. He was the associate rabbi at a Conservative synagogue. He meets me, and he sees me, whatever, doing my thing, and I was also playing guitar, and this and that. He knew about my background organizing the *havurah* in New Brunswick, and he says, "Listen, would you like a job? We need someone to teach, but we also have a member of our community who wants to buy a house and create a *havurah* for teenagers, because they're not coming to the synagogue. This will be a great way to have the teenagers there. They can have their own place, they don't have to bother with us." So I said, "Wow, that's great. I would love to do it." So he pretty much hired me on the spot, and after camp I went down to Washington. I met the principal and started teaching.

JG: What community was this?

DS: B'nai Israel Synagogue. It's one of the oldest, if not the oldest, Conservative congregation in the Washington area. It's the second largest Conservative congregation there. They now have a building. Their center is right over here, two blocks away. At that time they still were meeting in downtown D.C., and also had a school out in the 'burbs. So, I started teaching there, and started working with the youth group, but the problem was, the person who was going to buy the house withdrew his offer, so the *havurah* wasn't going to happen. Meanwhile, I was looking for a community for myself, and I around the same time connected with Jews for Urban Justice, got involved with their activities.

JG: Tell us a little bit about that. How many people were involved with JUJ?

DS: JUJ, hard to say. The meetings I went to on Friday nights, maybe as many as thirty people. It's hard to remember — sometimes more, sometimes less. It was nice. it didn't feel, like, cozy, or like a *havurah*, the kind of feeling that we had in New Brunswick (00:42:00) At one of those Friday night meetings, I met Rob Agus. Rob and I hit it off immediately, sharing about our backgrounds, and then he lays out his vision. I said, "Wow, that's great! Count me in!"

JG: His vision was?

DS: His vision was to create a Jewish counterculture center — I think that was the terminology he was using at the time — in Washington, D.C. It would be the creation of a holistic Jewish community, with different aspects. We'd have a center but then we'd

have these — it might not be his exact words, because who remembers — spokes in the wheel. We'd have our own school. We'd have a restaurant. We'd have a place in the country. A hub for *havurot*, a coffee house, services. It was, like, meeting the needs of young people in D.C. I said, "Wow, this is great." I signed on. He also started fundraising. He did virtually all of the administrative stuff, the development stuff, fundraising. I have virtually nothing to do with any of that.

JG: And he wrote a concept paper, I gather.

DS: A concept paper. Yeah, of course. I may have it around someplace. I used to have better files, and then moving here and there, and a lot of stuff from those days is probably at our retreat center in the country. But he obviously needed help, and I became part of the team, and another person that he knew, a lawyer named Peter Wendt.

JG: Wendt?

DS: Wendt. W-E-N-D-T. Peter Wendt. I forget how he knew him, but he brought him in to help with the development of the coffee house, and to do draft counseling, because we also did draft counseling at the original Fabrangen. Rob got funding from the Federation. It wasn't called the Federation at the time. It was called the United Jewish Appeal. He convinced them that we were going to save their youth, you know? *[laughs]* Did he talk about that? Did he get into that piece of —

JG: Yep.

DS: He did? *[laughs]* Okay.

JG: A little bit, a little bit. Say what you would say about it.

DS: So we got a nice sum of money to get things off the ground.

JG: Fifteen-thousand.

DS: Yeah.

JG: For six months.

DS: Yeah, for six months, exactly. We got things off the ground. We found a beautiful place on Florida Avenue, (00:45:00) a four-story former convent building, and I became

the resident staff person. I already had a place out in the 'burbs, and I had a job, so I didn't need to have a salary.

JG: What does "resident staff person" mean?

DS: I was there at night. I lived there. I lived on the fourth floor. I had my own room on the fourth floor. I was basically there taking care of the place in the evenings and providing a presence in that sense. We created an amazing program there, within a short period of time.

JG: What did you do?

DS: What did we do?

JG: And where did the name come from, Fabrangen?

DS: Rob and I, as I recall — I don't remember exactly where it was, but it was in D.C — we were sitting and we were talking about what to name this thing, to name this community, and the word Fabrangen came up. It resonated with both of us, as I clearly recall. I personally had — and maybe Rob did, too — experiences with the *farbrenge* at 770 Eastern Parkway. I had been to a couple of *farbrenge*s up there. And the word — I liked the sound of the word, and I think Rob liked the sound of the word. We probably didn't get the spelling right, as people have noted to us. Did I not tell you his reasons for —

JG: What were the reasons?

DS: As I recall, the 'r' was left out. The first, in "far." So, when you pronounce it, it sounds like "fah-brenge". You don't hear the 'r'. So one of the reasons, I don't know how he came up with this, I don't remember, it's been so long. Well, 'r' stands for rabbi, and this was not rabbi-centric, this way of organizing the community. We didn't want it to be a top-down kind of thing, which is part of the *havurah* philosophy. It is a fellowship. It's a cooperative. There is no one person who is so central, and it's certainly not rabbi-led.

JG: You had said that you'd been to several *farbrangens*.

DS: A couple in New York.

JG: What were they?

DS: Oh, a *farbrengen*? On a Saturday night, *Motzei Shabbat*, after Shabbat, the hasidim would pack into the hall at 770 Eastern Parkway, and the Rebbe, with his council, or the other elders, he would come out and he would sit. People would be singing *niggunim* (00:48:00) and swaying back and forth. *Niggunim* are melodies. All men — the women, we didn't know where the women were. I'm sure they had a place. I never even asked the question at that time. But it was a pretty awesome experience being there. The Rebbe would speak. It was all in Yiddish. The person who took me, he was having to translate a little bit, but it's kind of an interesting experience. I was always attracted, since I was a teenager, to Hasidism and the spirituality that was of the hasidic tradition, especially in its formative period. Hasidism actually has very much informed those of us in developing new spiritual communities and the development of *havurot*. So to experience that was special, because I knew something of the background. For me, it had other meaning, too, because my last name is Shneyer, and the Alter Rebbe, his name was Shneyer Zalman, and those who followed him were Schneerson, you see? So I always felt an affinity because of the name. That, and also the mystical tradition on the other side of my family. On my paternal side, my grandmother, my father's mother, was a Luria. So I always grew up with this kind of awareness of somehow a connection, even though it never was documented, to the hasidic and the mystical traditions. When I went to Israel for the first time, I didn't go right to Jerusalem. I was actually drawn to Sefat. I was drawn to Sefat. It was that kind of thing.

JG: So all of this had resonance with you as you were talking with Rob.

DS: Oh, yes, tremendous resonance. Thank you. Then we worked closely and we developed the coffee house, and the *davening*, how we would do —

JG: We'll get to that in one second, but tell me, what were these early activities as you were getting underway. What was the coffee house?

DS: The coffee house was Saturday nights. People would get together, and, what did we do? I don't remember specifically there. We'd do some singing.

JG: Poetry?

DS: Do you know something? I don't remember the specifics of the coffee house, and it was probably someone else — it was Peter — who was organizing more of the coffee houses. I may not have gone to as many that first year that he was there. See, after the first six months, we lost our funding. We didn't lose it. We were just not (00:51:00) refunded, for interesting reasons. So, the coffee houses, we had a few. He did the draft counseling. I was responsible for putting together the educational programs. We had an

Institute for Jewish Studies, which morphed later into the Jewish Studies Center, which then separated from Fabrangen several years later and became its own 501c3. Fabrangen ultimately gave birth to a number of — we had a number of collectives, a musician, an artist collective that met at Fabrangen that did workshops. Rob's roommate, Paul Rutgay — did he mention someone named Paul Rutgay? A wonderful artist who then later became an Orthodox Jew; he's living in Baltimore, too — he had a workshop there. I gathered the musicians and we started creating our own music. I can show you, I have a “show and tell” here. This is the first album that we created. [*shows album*]

JG: Fabrangen Fiddlers?

DS: Fabrangen Fiddlers. On the back, it talks about the Fabrangen community. Some of these old photos — I don't know where the originals are. So, we created the musical environment. The design on the front was created by Stu Copans. I have to mention Stu Copans, because he was very involved with Fabrangen in those years. Stu Copans is the illustrator of the *Jewish Catalogs*, another connection between us and the other *havurot* — though when we started Fabrangen, we were not a *havurah* at first. For those first six months, it would be hard to call us a *havurah*, because the vision was much greater than a *havurah*, which was a more inward kind of focused concept, that's sort of limited perhaps in numbers by what a *havurah* means.

JG: How do you distinguish between the vision for Fabrangen and what the other *havurot* were doing and also represented to you?

DS: Well, the original Fabrangen was a center doing outreach, to doing outreach in order to create a more holistic Jewish community.

JG: But not a small, intentional membership community the way the others were.

DS: Yeah, that was not the intention of the original Fabrangen, certainly as I recall. It became that, out of necessity, because nobody wanted to fund it. We could no longer do it. We didn't have the funding. We didn't have staff. We had to move out of the building that we had to a smaller facility. We (00:54:00) —

JG: So, let's get to that, because I want to talk a little bit more about the background, what happened when you lost the funding. So, we're going to go back. I just want to have you read — this is, again, looking at the first album from the Fabrangen Fiddlers. So, read that little blurb on the back, please.

DS: Okay. “This record has grown out of the coming together” — that's what Fabrangen means — “of creative talents in an atmosphere of new Jewish discovery and rediscovery of a tradition once thought lost and of a future once though abandoned. It is the rediscovery of a tradition which has not been transmitted from parent to child in recent Jewish generations in America, a tradition truncated to meet the diminishing demands of an assimilating American Jewry, and the searing indictment of the Hebrew Prophets and their call to return, the joy and pathos of the hasidic masters, the belief in a God at once personal and omnipotent, a yearning for a way which will enable Jews growing up and seeking livelihoods to attach meaning to every part of their lives, and the discovery of untapped means of opening up, to feeling close to people, to learning, to working in a communal environment, to social and political action. Jews are nothing without each other. We can't be Jewish by ourselves. We survive or not, grow or not, as a community. The songs and arrangements on this record were created like the Shabbos meals, like the silkscreen posters, dashikis with *tzitzit*, and other Fabrangen arts and crafts, because Jewish communal spirit gives them meaning. *Shiru L'Adonai Shir Hadash*, it is a new song we are singing.” Those words were also set to music, and became, like, the theme song of the early Fabrangen.

JG: Can you?

DS: Do you want me to do it? [*brings out guitar and begins to tune*] So, this song was created for Fabrangen, and I guess we started singing it the first month. [*speaks lyrics*] *Shiru L'Adonai, Shir Hadash*. Sing to God a new song, sing to God, all the earth, and bless God's name. [*sings*] *Shiru L'Adonai, Shiru L'Adonai, Shiru L'Adonai, Shir Hadash. Shiru L'Adonai, Shiru L'Adonai, Shiru L'Adonai, Shir Hadash. (00:57:00) Shiru L'Adonai, Kol Haaretz. Shiru L'Adonai, Baruch Hu Shemoh. Shiru L'Adonai, Kol Haaretz. Shiru L'Adonai, Baruch Hu Shemoh. Sing to Adonai, sing to Adonai, sing to Adonai a new song. Sing to Adonai, sing to Adonai, sing to Adonai a new song. Sing to Adonai, all the earth. Sing to Adonai and bless the name. Sing to Adonai, all the earth. Sing to Adonai and bless the name. [finishes song and puts down guitar.]* There were other ones that were created during that period, if we have time.

JG: Yeah. Let's go back for a moment to the relationships that existed in the beginning between Fabrangen and JUJ and their relationships to the larger Jewish community.

DS: Okay. Well, JUJ was a much more activist kind of an organization with a political purpose and was much more of a thorn in the Jewish community. [*laughs*] I got involved with JUJ in 1970 when I first came down, and some of their more radical actions had already taken place, like releasing white rice on the White House lawn, for example, and pouring red paint on grapes at Giant Food Market, or dumping shmatahs on the table of

the Jewish Community Council at their board meeting in protest of the way Jewish realtors and apartment owners and builders did their work. So, it was a strained relationship the JUJ had with the Jewish community. (01:00:00) There was the action when the Jewish Community Center was opening up here in Rockville, just down the street. At that time, the E.J. Corvette Shopping Center — they were bussing people there to see and to visit the Jewish Community Center, the new Jewish Community Center, for the first time, because there wasn't enough room on the grounds apparently to park everyone. So, they were bussing people over. Because the Jewish Community Center for a bunch of people from JUJ represented an erosion of Jewish values and Jewish content, culturally, religiously, and spiritually, and a center for assimilation — that's how it was perceived by some — there were people from JUJ sitting outside the busses with signs saying, "This is the bus to Auschwitz." Pretty heavy. So, JUJ didn't have the love of the Jewish community at all. When we were creating Fabranken, Rob — I think, rightfully — thought that there needed to be a major distinction. We needed the support of the Jewish community, financially primarily, I think. In some ways, they were a blessing. I think it was also felt that it was important to have the established Jewish community involved in this new way. So there had to be a distinction between JUJ and Fabranken. Meanwhile, the vision of Fabranken had been presented at JUJ meetings, and there were some people at JUJ who felt some ownership for this concept of a Jewish counterculture center. But when Rob and I and others started organizing Fabranken and creating our own board, it became this very difficult situation where these two bodies were talking about this emerging center. So that became increasingly uncomfortable. When we got Fabranken off the ground, a number of folks who had been involved with JUJ kind of gravitated to us, and the activities of JUJ became — their coffee house that they had become less and less active. They became less active. It was significant. The last major action of JUJ was in December of 1970, when thirteen of us were arrested across the street from the former Soviet Embassy, protesting the arrest (01:03:00) of Jews. This was the period of the Leningrad trials. So that was the last significant action. We brought out, I don't know, a couple hundred people to this protest, and thirteen of us didn't move fast enough, so folks like Arthur Waskow and, I think, Rob was also arrested, and Michael Tabor. A number of folks who would later become more and more involved with Fabranken were arrested. So that was the last action. Then, as Fabranken got off the ground, it didn't seem to make sense for JUJ to continue, but the level of political activity also could not take place within Fabranken, because we were essentially a cultural countercultural center. We were not defined solely by the politics.

JG: Was there a sense within Fabranken, those forming Fabranken, that there were strings attached in some sense to the UJA funding, in terms of what kinds of activities you would do or not do, or the particular relationship between JUJ and Fabranken?

DS: I personally never felt there were strings attached to the funds. It was never said, "You can't do this because of that." I mean, ultimately, because of some of the things we did, there were a few people in the UJA and the established Jewish community and the Jewish Community Council, that seriously felt we were a threat to the Jewish community. But we never felt there were strings attached in the six months that we operated. That was not the —

JG: Michael Staub writes in *Torn at the Roots*, his book *Torn at the Roots*, that most people at the time accepted that Fabragen was the non-political wing of JUJ. Others felt that JUJ in fact became Fabragen. Do either of those resonate for you?

DS: Not at all. I know people who have thought that, and there are some people who would like that to be the narrative, but I never felt that at all.

JG: So, JUJ was formally abandoned, right? In 1971.

DS: Yeah, formally abandoned, dissolved.

JG: Dissolved.

DS: Yeah, formally dissolved.

JG: In summer, in July.

DS: Yeah, formally dissolved.

JG: So, that was almost six months after Fabragen had gotten off the ground.

DS: Yeah, I mean it was pretty much over by March of that six-month period. We opened our doors at the end of January, in '71.

JG: Are they related?

DS: What?

JG: The (01:06:00) dissolving of JUJ and the —

DS: Yeah, I think so, though there were a lot of people who had been involved with JUJ who were not involved with Fabragen, and to say we were not political is kind of wrong. I mean, in May of that year, Fabragen became a center for the March on Washington.

We housed dozens of people who came in for the march, for the protest, the anti-war protest. We became the medical center and the first aid center at that time. There were weeks when we were working at the center, and feeding people, and the wafts of tear gas coming through were debilitating, because we were just two blocks from Dupont Circle. So that's pretty political. *[laughs]* We were, I mean, Fabranken was listed on the House Un-American Activities list, independently of JUJ.

JG: So, what happened? Why did the federation decide to cut off funding after those six months?

DS: Oy, I could tell you. It's a whole story. I think the principle reason had to do with some folks in Fabranken talking about — regarding the Palestinians. It had to do mostly with Israel, talking about a Two State Solution to this problem. That kind of discussion was going on. People in Fabranken, formerly in JUJ, who were much more sympathetic to the Palestinian cause than others. They were not representing the Fabranken. Their presence there was picked up, I think, by the Jewish Community Council, who planted spies at the Fabranken. I don't know if anyone has talked about this yet. Has anyone talked about it yet?

JG: Not at that level.

DS: Not at that level?

JG: But —

DS: Should I? *[laughs]*

JG: Yes! Yes. This is a historical record.

DS: Yeah, there was an incident where — I was very involved in Soviet Jewry as well. I mentioned the arrests. I had gotten involved with the Union of Councils for Soviet Jewry. There was a Washington branch called the Washington Council for Soviet Jewry. I was at the Jewish Community Council office one day in — maybe it was April? May? June? Something like that. Maybe June (01:09:00) or July — it was around that period — to speak with someone there, one of their staff people, about Soviet Jewry. So I'm sitting waiting to speak to him, and the secretary calls out, "So-and-so is called to report on Fabranken." Just right there! Right in front of me! She didn't know who I was! So meanwhile, this staff person comes out to acknowledge this call and sees me, and we look at each other, and I say, "Well, I guess we have nothing to talk about." And I just walked out. I just left at that point. We had suspected that there had been people checking

us out. That really bothered us. That's an example of the kind of relationship. I guess at that time we were getting more involved in maybe anti-war stuff a little bit more. Of course, we housed all those folks, so there was the anti-war issue. Then the Palestinian issue. That summer we hired a Rabbi Gelman? Mark, I think, is his first name

JG: Gelman.

DS: Yeah, a Reform rabbi. He came in — he might not have been a rabbi at the time; he may have been a rabbinical student. Sorry, Mark, if you're listening to this. He helped us organize the summer study programs at Fabringen. This is the same time that George and I were renting a place out in the country.

JG: George Johnson?

DS: George Johnson, in Orlean, Virginia, which we gave the name Kfar Out. We used it for our own agenda, but also for a place where Fabringen used to come and have retreats. So he was there, and there was a protest. At that time, there was a Black September Movement that was coming down heavily on the Palestinians in refugee camps on Israel and Jordan's border. We were asked — and I forget how this happened, because I was not at Fabringen most of this summer — to really respond — at least that part of the summer. We were invited to participate in protest at the Jordanian Embassy on behalf of the Palestinians.

JG: Fabringen were?

DS: Fabringen members were involved, or whoever was there. Not Fabringen to be a sponsor, but whomever was there. An announcement was made at Fabringen, inviting people to be a part of this protest at the Jordanian embassy in support of the Palestinians, who were subject (01:12:00) to violence from the Jordanian government. Anyways, so this got out in the Jewish community, and the headlines in the *Jewish Week* — I have the paper somewhere downstairs — was, "Al Fatah Goes to Shul." Okay? Shul — we being the shul, and Al Fatah being the Palestinians, and here we are, painted as an organization that is in support of Palestinians. This, of course, raised a red flag, making us, of course, in the eyes of some people in the Jewish community maybe anti-Israel, which is absolutely ridiculous. So that was the beginning. That, plus the anti-war activity, plus the fact that we were not really accountable to them, you know? Like, some people said in the beginning there were strings. Well, some people may have wanted strings, but there were really no strings, as I recall. But there were some people who really wondered about us. So, what happened — I don't know if Rob talked about this — but the federation and the Jewish Appeal convened a meeting to hear both sides, It was like a

courtroom scene. So you had a couple of, I guess, attorneys up front, and people were being interviewed on both sides. You know, should Farbangen be refunded or not? So, it went on. It was really painful, let me tell you, listening to this. Ultimately they decided, at least that committee, that body, Bet Din, or whatever they called themselves, that we were okay.

JG: Based on what you had, what the Fabrangen had —

DS: What our supporters had to say, that we were worthy of support, given the educational programs, the arts programs, the *davening*. The whole thing that we were doing, what our mission was, essentially. The other stuff, yeah, that happened, but it wasn't integral to our primary purpose. So we passed the test there, and we made it through another committee, the Youth Committee. We even made it through the Budget Committee. Then at the Executive Committee — as I recall, because it's been a long time — we were stopped. There was a particular philanthropist who said, "If you decide to fund Fabrangen, I'm withdrawing my contribution," which was substantial in the Jewish community. So at the executive level, they decided not to refund us. I hope I have that history right, because (01:15:00) it's been a long time.

JG: What were the feelings within Fabrangen as all of this unfolded, and what was the impact on the community?

DS: The impact was pretty severe. We knew we couldn't continue to pay staff. Rob was drawing a salary, Peter was drawing a salary. We had rent to pay and other expenses. We knew that we could not continue in the same way. One of the reasons why we created this album was to raise money for the Fabrangen. We raised several hundred dollars, enough to pay for another month's rent. I wish we could have raised more. So, that was one of the motivations for getting the album out. It came out, I think, in the summer of '71. I think that was the time. It had a major impact. We could no longer do — the original vision changed, but community had been built up, a tremendous community. We had a couple hundred people identifying with Fabrangen, coming to our programs fairly regularly. It was outrageous that in such a short time there would be such a response. From out of that first six months emerged the *havurah*, basically. Then there were offshoots.

JG: Lets sort of delve into this a little more. I want to understand more fully —

DS: I'm sorry.

JG: More fully what you mean when you say the *havurah* emerged out of this.

DS: Fabrangen as a *havurah*, as a fellowship community, not as an outreach institution, with a larger vision. I think it became more insular.

JG: Insular in the sense of inward focus on the people who were involved.

DS: On the people who were involved, and to maintain that community, and then to see what would happen down the road. I don't think Rob ever lost sight of the original vision. I certainly know he wasn't happy about it. I don't know what else to say. At that point — this was '71 — I started withdrawing a little bit to focus on other things. I got more involved with the musicians at Fabrangen. We formally became the Fabrangen Fiddlers, and we started out sort of like a collective, but then we became (01:18:00) more focused on our own kind of unit and began doing more gigs in the community. Part of our purpose, or what we saw ourselves as doing, was to bring Jewish music and Jewish dance back into the community. There were those of us who were interested in the Jewish arts, and we started evolving the concept of a Jewish arts society, which I think in 1973 we gave the name the Jewish Folk Art Society. Stu Copans, the illustrator of the *Jewish Catalog*, was one of the co-signers. Myself and Sue Roemer. Some of the members of Fabrangen branched off and created the Fabrangen Cheder community — the Fabrangen Cheder, another *havurah* based in Silver Springs-Highland Park. Arthur and his children became central in that, primarily focused on educating their children. That's where Sue Roemer — Sue Roemer is an important name in the development.

JG: Tell us who she is.

DS: When I first met her, she was also a music teacher at one of the synagogues that I worked at. I was teaching music in the upper school, and she was teaching music in the nursery school. We met then. This was '72. I had heard about her before because she had been, in 1970, when she first came to Washington, she did a couple of JUJ coffee houses, sang Yiddish labor music and other Yiddish music. She had a wonderful reputation coming from a more secular Jewish background. She then became much more involved in synagogue life and in Jewish liturgical music. She learned from several people. I was one of her teachers in that area and others. She became the cantor for Temple Beth Ami for twenty-five years, a Reform temple. She also was one of the founders of the Fabrangen Cheder community that Arthur was involved in, this other *havurah* based in the 'burbs.

JG: Did they consider themselves a separate *havurah* — so people belonged to more than one *havurah*?

DS: Yeah. Arthur still was connected to Fabbrangen, more as a *davening* community. The *heder* was not a *davening* community. It was more for the education of their children and they met on Sunday mornings. So that branched off. The artists — by '73 we had incorporated the Jewish Folk Arts Society, but we didn't actually really do anything significant until 1977 when we ran the first Jewish Folk Arts Festival, which was co-sponsored by the Jewish Folk Arts Society, (01:21:00) the Kosher Kitchen Collective, which was also essentially a *havurah*, and Fabbrangen — because Fabbrangen, even though it became a *havurah*, and a *davening havurah* principally, there still was this vision of enriching the larger Jewish community through the arts and through other forms of spirituality.

JG: Lets go back. I want to look at some of the aspects of Fabbrangen as a *havurah*. Let's focus for a minute on the idea of *havurah* as a community to start with. As it was evolving in this sort of next phase, post-the first six months, how would you describe the community of Fabbrangen as it was taking shape? Who was part of Fabbrangen, and where were they coming from?

DS: In the *havurah*? As it became more of a *havurah*? People like George Johnson and Chava Weissler, and Rob, of course. Max Ticktin had come to the Washington D.C. area, he and Esther, in 1972, I believe. They became integral to the *havurah* that was emerging, partly existing and partly emerging. It was kind of organic. I mean, there were lots of other people that I'm not mentioning.

JG: I just mean who were the kinds of people who were attracted to —

DS: Oh, the kinds of people. People looking for community, many of whom were largely single, I think.

JG: What kinds of Jewish backgrounds were they bringing in general, or was it very eclectic?

DS: Many people were coming with big Jewish backgrounds, as I recall. Those of us who started Fabbrangen, Rob and myself, had strong backgrounds. Chava had a very strong background. Mostly Conservative, some people with formally Orthodox backgrounds. There was more traditional grounding, but people who felt alienated from established synagogues, but also the need for shared values. That was part of the need, and a certain way of doing it, the need for being part of an egalitarian community. (01:24:00) In the early seventies, very few synagogues were egalitarian, as I remember. As I know in my experience, we were the first community where women had the same — there's no

difference. And the language of the liturgy — there was no debate over the *Imahot*, over the Matriarchs.

JG: Right from the beginning.

DS: Right from the beginning, as I recall. There was no — we might have talked about it for two minutes. [*laughs*] That was it. Music, playing musical instrumentation on Shabbat — that was not an issue. No other Conservative synagogue, there was no other shul in town where folks with a good Jewish background could go and have that kind of experience.

JG: Outside of classes and religious services, communal meals and community meetings were an important way that the community came together on regular occasions, right? So what kind of communal meals were there? When did the community come together for meals, and what role did they play in the community.

DS: Well, at the original center, the four-story former convent building, we had meals every Friday night. We had potluck — was it potluck? Now I forget how we did the meals.

JG: Rob said, I believe, that he helped cook in the beginning, and then it became potluck eventually.

DS: Is that what happened?

JG: Yeah, that's what he said.

DS: Yeah, so we had food. Every holiday that we had, food was integral.

JG: And the gathering was on Friday night.

DS: On Friday night, that gathering. We had Kiddush, too, on Saturday mornings, and we also had regular *davening* on Saturday mornings. On the holidays, there were seders, though by that time I was already involved — where was I during Pesach seders? I don't remember. Probably visiting relatives. I don't remember participating in Pesach seders. Maybe one or two.

JG: Can you go back and just try to describe what those Friday night meals were like in the beginning, as Fabranken was taking shape?

DS: It was like a buffet, as I recall. People would take the food and they would sit on the first floor. We had kind of like a living room/dining room there. People would sit wherever they could sit. It wasn't like we had tables that we sat around.

JG: Were they sitting at tables or on cushions or on the floor?

DS: No, they were on that floor — on that floor of the (01:27:00) of the Fabrangen building. People were sitting on cushions or couches, as I recall. We had the *davening* later in the evening, or before we ate? I don't remember. We had cushions. In fact, in the photograph you can see — oh, it's not here. But this is a photograph of a Friday night. It's *Lecha Dodi*. We're doing *Lecha Dodi*. We're sitting on cushions, and we're doing *davening* interspersed with readings. Sometimes, I would hand around Martin Buber's *Ten Hasidic Rungs* and pick out a teaching from Martin Buber. Martin Buber was a key philosopher of ours — certainly of mine, and also Rob, too, and in the vision of what we wanted Fabrangen to become. So, we sat on cushions. We sang, alternating, and it was kind of the right balance of music, the emotive and the intellectual. There was very little talking. It was mostly listening and singing, chanting.

JG: Chanting?

DS: Well, chanting, hasidic —

JG: *Niggunim*?

DS: Right, *niggunim*. That was it. Did we have a prayer book? I don't think we had a prayer book on Friday nights. I don't think we used a prayer book.

JG: What kind of food got served?

DS: You know something? I don't remember. I was too busy to eat. What kind of food —

JG: Were there principles of Kashrut in —

DS: Oh, yeah. Absolutely.

JG: Dairy only, or?

DS: My recollection, I think it was vegetarian-dairy.

JG: *Moosewood*, or —?

DS: It was not vegan, that's for sure, and organic was not a big thing at that point. I think it was vegetarian-dairy, as I recall. I simply don't have a strong recollection. Sorry.
[laughs]

JG: Did the Fabrangen *havurah* community become an inviting community? Did people invite others in the community to their own homes for other meals — holiday meals, Shabbat meals?

DS: Increasingly. Not the first six months or so, but increasingly, as it became a stronger *havurah* and friendships became deeper. Yeah, absolutely. (01:30:00) I wasn't as involved at that point in that experience. In '73-'74, I was in Israel, and then '74-'75 I was in Iowa. In '72, I was kind of working on other things.

JG: What do you remember about community meetings?

DS: [groans] Oh, God. They were painful, for me. Maybe other people enjoyed them.

JG: I remember one person pretty much said that they really enjoyed them. People talk about the intensity.

DS: Yeah, that's what I mean. For some people it's intensity. For some people it was painful. It was tense because of people's' different ideas, different visions. There was the tension from some of the people who were from the JUJ community. There was some friction there. I personally tried to stay out of that level of intensity. I was trying to keep the peace. That was sort of, I felt, my role.

JG: What was causing that degree of tension at these meetings? What kinds of issues would cause that kind of tension?

DS: Political issues — the role of politics, perhaps. That certainly was part of it. This is during the first maybe nine months that we're talking about, where we had these meetings where there was such tension. The people who were engaged much more in the struggle with each other would have a much better recollection of the issues. With me, I saw it as a clash, I think, also of certain personalities. I personally didn't engage in that.

JG: So, it's possible, it sounds like, to become a really important part of this community and yet keep some distance from these intense conversations.

DS: Well, yeah. Even amongst the people who were disagreeing or arguing with each other, there was an underlying love and caring (01:33:00) for each other as well, and a respect for each other. Outside meetings, I always felt that. The meetings were like [*makes clashing noise*], and then outside the meetings, and in conversation with some of these individuals over the years, there is a deep respect. That's how I perceived it.

JG: Lets focus on prayer and services at Fabrangen as they were taking shape. Some observers have pointed to an increased focus on prayer and study, as opposed to political activism — that's sort of what you've been saying — as a result of the cutting off of funding. How would you describe the attitude toward prayer? What was *tefilah* in the context of this community?

DS: There was a little bit of a difference between Friday nights and Saturday morning, Shabbat morning. Friday night was more free form, maybe more spontaneous. We sat — well, also on Shabbat morning — we sat on cushions for the most part, in a circle around the room. Friday night was highly participatory. People were not *shuckling*, *davening shuckling* [*does shuckling motion*] like that. *Niggunim*, we learned a lot. One of my mentors, and I didn't mention this earlier, was Shlomo Carlebach, since I was in high school, actually. I performed with him or backed him up a number of times.

JG: How did you first meet him?

DS: I first met him at a concert in 1966. I had gone up to him afterward. I met him actually through his music first, in '63, '64. A cantor in Lakewood gave me an album of his. I fell in love with the music and learned all of it. Then I went to this concert and met him afterward. Then when I went to Rutgers, I heard he was giving a concert there and went to the concert. I took my guitar with me, just in case. He sees me, and he remembered my name. Outrageous. So when I came down to Washington in 1970, he called me up. I was in contact with him to come — at Rob's request. Well, our discussion, because we wanted to infuse Fabrangen with some excitement, and we thought, let's bring Shlomo in and help us open a few times, almost as a visiting scholar or something like that. (01:36:00) We set aside funds for that. We brought him in a few times.

JG: Four times.

DS: Four times? Yeah, to basically infuse the spirit and teach us hasidic teachings and music and take us to that level of spirituality and meaningfulness that most young Jews have never experienced.

JG: What was that like, when he was actually there in the community?

DS: My experience was great. I mean, that was my experience. I'd had that experience earlier. In fact, when I was having these discussions with Shlomo about bringing him in, he said, "*Heiliga Dovid*," as he would refer to me, Holy David, "make for me a concert in Washington." I said, "Shlomo, I never made a concert before." He says, "You can do it! You can do it!" So I spoke to the folks at B'nai Israel Synagogue, and they said, "Yeah, sure." So, I got the space at their main building, the social hall, and I organized a concert for sometime in December, right before Hanukkah. There's a concert there, and I'm backing him up on one side, and I see this fiddler on the other side backing him up. The concert was great. Shlomo leaves, and the fiddler — we started talking. He's a student at the University of Maryland, so I said, "Wow, maybe we should get together!" So, we got together like a week or two later, and he's the fiddler that I still play with in the Fabrangen Fiddlers.

JG: And his name is?

DS: Alan Oresky. He then moved with his wife to the Dupont Circle area. Maybe they weren't married at that point yet. They became involved in Fabrangen, and they became part of that collective of musicians. So, Shlomo has had a very important role in creating the atmosphere of Fabrangen, and teaching me, because I was basically continuing his music. So much of the music that we did was either his music or music that I composed. The Fabrangen Fiddlers may be the first — if you want to give us a place in the archives — probably the first Jewish counterculture band.

JG: Part of the Jewish revival?

DS: Part of the Jewish — it wasn't known as the Renewal Movement then. It was part of the counterculture, the Jewish —

JG: Folk music revival kind of thing?

DS: Folk music revival music. There were some contemporaneous — of course with Debbie Friedman and others who were creating new Jewish music at that time. So what was the question?

JG: We were talking about Friday night.

DS: Oh, yeah. Friday night. So, *tefilah* was an expression of joy, and some contemplation, and then dancing. You know, getting (01:39:00) the whole body, the whole being, into the joy of community and Shabbat. I think that photograph kind of

represents that in a way. That was every Friday night, we would conclude *Lecha Dodi* with dancing, and it was fabulous. On Shabbat morning, it was structured a little more formally. We used a siddur, I don't remember which siddur we used at the time. It might have been the old *Sabbath and Festival*.

JG: Birnbaum.

DS: Birnbaum, oh, right, which we of course took some liberties with. It was more traditional egalitarian *havurah* style as I remember. The Torah discussions were super. I mean, it's not like we would read the whole parashah, but at some point, the focus became on the meaning, on the interpretations that came out of the reading.

JG: Rob Agus was saying that in the beginning of Fabrangen, Friday night was the Kabbalat Shabbat service and meal.

DS: Yeah, and then later, there was a Ma'ariv. Those who wanted to do a more traditional Ma'ariv, perhaps to say Kaddish, or just to have a Ma'ariv for those folks coming from a more traditional background. There weren't that many. Those people went back upstairs into our *davening* space and had a service with Rob up there.

JG: And then Shabbat morning was really a Torah discussion. He was talking about the early days when the services were at the RAC [Religious Action Center].

DS: RAC was later. RAC was after. The original, the first Fabrangen was in the four-story building. Then we moved to another building a block or so away after we lost our funding, and then ultimately to the RAC. I don't recall Shabbat morning ever being primarily Torah discussion.

JG: Oh, you don't?

DS: No, no. It might have at one time, after I left. It certainly was a very significant part of the morning, but there were also *tefilot*. I didn't go that often. Rob facilitated more than anyone else, and Chava I think was very involved on Shabbat morning, more than I did because I had other commitments on Shabbat morning with my work in the suburbs.

JG: Can you describe some of (01:42:00) the innovative features of the service and approaches to *davening* at Fabrangen? What was going to become *havurah*-style *davening*, as you were just mentioning?

DS: I think it varies very much from one *havurah* to another.

JG: So, in Fabringen what was it?

DS: I was the person who led for the most part the Kabbalat Shabbat. So my approach was, there are traditionally six psalms before *Lecha Dodi*, six for the six days of the week leading up to *Lecha Dodi*, and then a couple of psalms after that. I approached it like, okay, let's honor the six days of the week. The way we did that was through a *niggun* based on a verse from Psalms. It may have been one of the psalms from the six. So it was a *niggun* and then a short reading, or maybe a hasidic story, and back to a *niggun*. So it would kind of go back and forth. It would be that kind of a flow. Then, culminating in *Lecha Dodi*. I wrote a melody for Fabringen for *Lecha Dodi*, and that became the principal melody. Should I play it? [*takes out guitar*]

JG: Yeah.

DS: [*plays melody and sings*] “*Lecha dodi likrat kala, p’nei Shabbat n’kabelah. Lecha dodi likrat kala, p’nei Shabbat n’kabelah. Shamor v’zachor b’dibur echad, Hishmi’anu el ha’meyuchad. Hashem echad u’shmo echad; L’shem ul’tiferet v’l’tehila. Lecha dodi likrat kala, p’nei Shabbat n’kabelah. Lecha dodi likrat kala, p’nei Shabbat n’kabelah. Lai lai lai lai lai lai lai, lai lai lai lai lai. (01:45:00) Lecha dodi likrat kala, p’nei Shabbat n’kabelah. Lecha dodi likrat kala, p’nei Shabbat n’kabelah.*” That was a condensed version. I sped it up much more quickly than we would normally do. We would kind of buildup, build up, and then get faster. One of the things I learned from Shlomo is, you start kind of more slowly and more contemplatively, and reach kind of a crescendo, and it might be more ecstatic, even to the level of what's called *devekut*, which is the hasidic idea of ecstasy. When we were dancing, in this picture, it was in ecstasy. You could see it in people’s faces as it became faster and more intense and on a higher level. So, that was kind of the flow of the *davening*.

JG: Was Shlomo your primary inspiration and teacher, or what other sources were you drawing on?

DS: Musically?

JG: Yeah, musically.

DS: Some of the folk singers of the sixties — Dylan, Simon and Garfunkel. They definitely had an influence on me. Leonard Cohen, *alev hashalom*. Just recently in our *havurah*, we devoted a whole — we used his melodies all throughout our Shabbat services. Occasionally I might incorporate, like, do something like this. [*plays to the tune*]

of Simon and Garfunkel's "Scarborough Fair"] "*Lecha dodi likrat kala, p'nei Shabbat n'kabelah. Lecha dodi likrat kala, p'nei Shabbat n'kabelah.*" You see? I might do that.

JG And everybody knew the reference.

DS: Yeah.

JG: Can you say what it is?

DS: That song? "Scarborough Fair." "Sound of Silence" goes wonderfully with *Adon Olam*, too. [*laughs*] A lot of melodies do.

JG: Were you learning *niggunim* from different Hasidic masters? (01:48:00)

DS: Absolutely, going back to high school. I mean, I would listen to Modzitzer. Ben Zion Shenker was the great liturgical composer of this past century. He recently died in his nineties. His sister lives around the corner actually. Ben Zion Shenker. And who else? Bobover melodies and Lubavitch melodies. I studied other *niggunim*. I had anthologies. By 1970, a couple of wonderful anthologies came out by Velvel Pasternak, of Tara Publications, which became a major source of *niggunim* from different traditions. So, it wasn't only Shlomo, but so much of it was inspired by Shlomo. Also from the Israeli Hasidic Song Festivals. Those festivals, also inspired from the hasidic tradition, produced much of the music that we also incorporated into our *davening*. Later, as some of the other folk cantors and folk singers emerged — Debbie Friedman and Jeff Klepper. I mean later on, not so much in the early days of Fabrangen. We didn't do any of Debbie Friedman's music or any of the others. There was no one else then frankly. I don't remember there being anyone else then. The only other Jewish folk singer playing guitar besides Shlomo Carlebach was Theodore Bikel, who I also as a teenager studied his music.

JG: Was Debbie Friedman, for instance, was her music integrated later into Fabrangen?

DS: I think some of it, later on.

JG: *Mi Sheberech*, those kinds of things.

DS: *Mi Sheberech* for sure. Maybe *Shalom Rav*. [*sings*] *Shalom Rav, al-Israel* — that's not hers. That's Jeff Klepper actually. That stuff is more what Fabrangen is doing today musically. We incorporate maybe one or two Shefa Gold. In the Movement for Jewish Renewal, we have wonderful composers — Hanna Tiferet Siegel, the wife of Daniel

Siegel, a wonderful composer, and Shefa Gold, a wonderful composer. So, we do incorporate more of their music into our *davening* than we do Debbie Friedman, for example, and some of the others there.

JG: Were there other ways that you can recall that Fabrangen tried to innovate? For instance, at Havurat Shalom, there were attempts to use quiet, silence, or actual (01:51:00) meditation practices, those kinds of things. Did any of that happen at Fabrangen?

DS: Yes. I mean, not as a regular thing, although we did at Kfar Out. At that time I was studying yoga, so we may have done some yoga. I don't remember exactly what we did.

JG: How long did Kfar Out exist as a place?

DS: Basically one summer.

JG: One summer.

DS: One summer. We didn't have a formal kind of yoga thing happening, as I recall. Meditation, we did a lot meditatively, but I don't recall us having like a set period of time. In our *havurah*, in our community, now we do, but I don't remember that being a significant part of our *davening* experience.

JG: Would you sing, as part of the *davening* experience, songs from the American folk tradition in English? Or some of the people who were writing — Simon and Garfunkel, et cetera?

DS: At that time, the *davening* that I led, I didn't incorporate much from the American folk tradition. Melody-wise, or with words?

JG: With words. Melody-wise, yes, you're saying.

DS: Yeah, melody-wise we would do that, but I don't recall offhand if we did that.

JG: Talk about the role of the Torah reading and the Torah discussion in services at Fabrangen.

DS: Again, we didn't read the entire *sidra*. We would read, I forget how many verses. And I wasn't there all the time on Shabbat mornings. Often I was leading services elsewhere in the community. We would read a part of the *sidra*. Someone might offer

some words to open it up, a short summary or a *d'var torah*, and then it would be open for conversation. Sometimes, I'm not sure if I'm confusing one community for another, but we would read until there was a question. Like, what does this mean? And then we would take off on that. That's kind of the closest I have to a recollection of how that might have worked, but the conversations were always meaningful, and certainly different from what any of us had ever experienced growing up in synagogues or temples (01:54:00) where there was virtually no discussion. By the way, Fabrangen also inspired communities in the Washington DC area to do a lot of what — like the incorporation of music. I was invited — there was a rabbi in Potomac who visited Fabrangen. Somehow he got off on a Friday night, and he saw what was going on and said, "Wow! We've got do this!" So he brought me in, a fiddler, to his congregation, to basically model a Fabrangen service. Then he also started having these open discussion. He would ask people, "What does this mean to you?" Unheard of in Conservative synagogues!

JG: This was in a Conservative synagogue?

DS: Yeah, a Conservative synagogue.

JG: And they allowed instruments?

DS: On Friday nights. It was the first Conservative congregation, by the way, in the country, to allow stringed instruments. This was Har Shalom in Potomac. In fact, there's a mention in a book on Jewish music history, by Ron Isaacson, a graduate of the seminary — Jewish Theological Seminary. He asked me as the first cantor, because I also have the title cantor, as introducing musical instrumentation into services on Shabbat and the holidays. It was a fairly radical thing to do. I'm not sure what they're doing now. In those days, it was more regular — on Shabbat morning, probably less so. Shabbat afternoon, for b'nei mitzvah, yeah, and I was often called in to lead services for a Mincha bar or at mitzvah with music. Friday night, especially during Kabbalat Shabbat, we used music.

JG: At Fabrangen on Shabbat mornings, were instruments used as well?

DS: I have less of a recollection of that. I don't think it was as accepted on Shabbat morning. I don't recall a discussion about it. I know if I wasn't there, it wasn't happening, so.

JG: Is that true? I mean, there was no one else who —

DS: Played the guitar? Not that I recall at that time. There were a couple of violinists. There were other folks who played other instruments, but I don't recall anyone else who played guitar at the time.

JG: We touched earlier on the subject of gender, and you were saying that from the beginning, it was an egalitarian service. Were you (01:57:00) personally or as a community, to the extent of your knowledge, aware of the growing movement toward Jewish feminism in the early seventies? Ezrat Nashim was formed right in this period, '71, '72.

DS: Yeah, I think we were, but we weren't impacted. I don't feel I was impacted by that. One of the reasons why I left the Conservative Movement and the seminary and even the consideration of studying there had to do with that, that there wasn't that sense of gender equality. That's one of the reasons I left. Also, it's lack of involvement in the anti-war movement and other social issues. It was too top-down, and it was not a creative spiritual place.

JG: One of the things that several people have mentioned in regard to the participation and roles of women in the early years of Fabrangen was that there was in fact a gender gap that had to do with knowledge — basic knowledge and skills — because of the roles that women had played and grown up with and seen growing up, and that Fabrangen actually took steps through creating classes and other means for women to actually learn. Do you remember that at all, or any of the first times? There were memorable occasions — the first time, I think it was Chava, actually davened, led *davening*, and the first time a woman actually *leyned*, not because there was negative attitudes toward it, but because women didn't have the skills. Do you have any memory of any of those sorts of firsts for women within the Fabrangen community?

DS: Yeah. I have a memory of a first. I do recall Chava's increasing involvement. I don't recall specifically teaching a class to anyone, or a group, on *davening*, or on liturgy, or *chazzanut*.

JG: Do you remember the beginnings of adult b'not mitzvah?

DS: No, that was later.

JG: In the early seventies.

DS: B'not mitzvah around the country?

JG: No, in Fabringen.

DS: In Fabringen?

JG: Seventy-three I think was the first one.

DS: I was already in Israel.

JG: You were gone.

DS: I was gone by that point.

JG: That was the year you were in Israel.

DS: Yeah. I think I heard about it, but — [*laughs*].

JG: I want to at least touch again on the (02:00:00) issue of study and learning in the community, which also had a central role. How would you describe Fabringen's vision for the role of learning within the community? Where was it in the panoply of activities?

DS: During the period that I was there, learning was a central part of what we wanted to offer the community. That's why we had an array of classes that we were offering. I don't remember the specific subjects of the classes we were offering, but it was central. We almost immediately got a study program, or, I forget what we called it — the Institute for Jewish Studies? No, it wasn't called that. That's something else. Maybe it was — I forget. But the study that was done in discussions on Shabbat mornings was integral. We didn't have *hevruta* study, or people getting together to have more advanced study groups. That didn't happen at that time, and I'm not sure if that happened later. I'm not sure it ever really happened on that level.

JG: What was the style of teaching and learning at that point, and the relationship between teachers and learners?

DS: It depended on the teacher who was presenting and the particular style of teaching. It varied. There was no one particular style. Teachers — this is really taking me back.

JG: People often mention the Lehrhaus House — Rosenzweig and members of the Lehrhaus — as the model.

DS: Yeah, that's later. That's like another stage in what we started originally. That was an example. The model is basically teachers not being paid for just transmitting knowledge. Those who taught at Fabringen in that formative year — some folks were paid, some were not. The person we brought in, I mentioned Mark Gelman, he was salaried.

JG: Was salaried.

DS: As I recall, yeah. So, others I don't remember the specifics.

JG: This was mainly for the Fabringen community, or it was also open to others outside?

DS: Well, at that time, in the summer of '71, the Fabringen community was still emerging.

JG: But, we're talking '71, '72, as we're getting into —

DS: (02:03:00) I think it was always open to a larger group of people. The Fabringen now, which is principally a membership organization, doesn't offer classes to the public. The Jewish Studies Center, which comes out of Fabringen, does, and that is more along the Lehrhaus model. That is certainly more along —

JG: In what sense?

DS: That their courses are being open to the wider public, and that their teachers are giving of their time. So, it's that kind of relationship.

JG: Did you ever actually take classes at Fabringen during that year? Take a class?

DS: No, I never took a class. I know I gave a class, but I don't remember what it was in. *[laughs]* I'd never taken a class, though, no. Part of it was because I was coming with a body of knowledge that is different from where other folks who were coming to us for the knowledge —

JS: So if we turn to social action and activism in this period after the first six months, how did political activism evolve during that period as a focus of community activity?

DS: I think it became diminished after the loss of funding. One of the members of Fabringen, also a violinist or violist — Ken Giles is his name —

JS: Ken Giles?

DS: Ken Giles. He was a very active in the community. He was more political. He started another coffee house. What was it called? Tzedek Tzedek, maybe?

JS: Tzedek Tzedek Coffee House.

DS: Is that right?

JS: Yeah, I read about that.

DS: You read about it! All right!

JS: I mean, the name. I don't know the neighborhood.

DS: All right. So, that was, to me, a need that Fabrangen could no longer meet, but inspired by JUJ and Fabrangen. That was kind of maybe a combination. We used to have a coffee house, but this coffee house was more like the JUJ coffee house, which was called the Jewish Urban Coffee House. JUJ's newspaper was called the *Jewish Urban Guerilla*. Did you read that?

JG: Mhm.

DS: I should go back and read some of these.

JG: So, when Ken Giles (02:06:00) started this Tzedek Tzedek Coffee House, was it considered part of Fabrangen, or it was really an offshoot, essentially?

DS: I understand it to be an offshoot essentially.

JG: What role did Israel and its role in Jewish life play in Fabrangen in this period after the funding?

DS: After the funding was denied us? In the immediate aftermath, not much, as I recall. Others might have a different angle. It wasn't too long after Fabrangen morphed into something else that Breira was founded.

JG: In '73, I believe.

DS: Seventy-three. That became a focus for the members of the former JUJ and Fabrangen to become involved with, including myself. I guess I was a member then. I

just had a folder with some Breira information here. I mean, I wasn't at the center of Breira, but I was involved. I was a member. I think many Fabrangeners or former Fabrangeners gravitated to Breira at that point, and then later the New Jewish Agenda.

JG: Was there — I don't know exactly how it was organized — but was there a chapter or a center of activity in the Washington DC area for Breira?

DS: There was, yeah. I don't remember going to its meetings. I went to conferences, but not to a specific Breira meeting. Again, '73, '74', I was out of the country, and then I took off for Iowa. There's no Breira chapter in Iowa. *[laughs]*

JG: So, you're saying that Breira, that's where people put their energy if they were interested in those sorts of activities.

DS: Yeah, and it was not in the Fabrangen *havurah*. Fabrangen *havurah*, that was not, as I recall, and even to this very day, is not a focus.

JG: Okay, I wanted to talk about one more thing, the issue of retreats.

DS: Right.

JG: So, we've talked about Kfar Out, but Weiss's Farm was also a site where retreats took place. (02:09:00) Were you involved in those retreats at Weiss's Farm?

DS: Not terribly. I went to one or two. I do remember Weiss's Farm, because I didn't live that far from Weiss's Farm. I lived in New Jersey. Then there were other occasions. Atid had a retreat there once or twice, so I was familiar with Weiss's Farm as a place. I went to maybe two *havurah* retreats over the years, and Weiss's Farm retreat — that really was sponsored by the Havurah Institute, the National Havurah Institute, which emerged much later.

JG: In the late seventies.

DS: In the late seventies.

JG: So you're saying that you went to retreats in the late seventies, but not in the first few years. I think they might have started actually just when you were leaving.

DS: It could — Fabrangen went there as Fabrangen?

JG: Fabrangen, New York Havurah, and Havurat Shalom.

DS: Okay, so that's before the Havurah Institute.

JG: But the three retreats a year.

DS: That's probably how the Havurah Institute emerged — was probably out of those retreats, and the coming together of the different *havurot*. I don't recall going to those retreats. Maybe one? Maybe one of those retreats and a later Havurah Institute retreat.

JG: As I say, I think they were getting going really as you were —

DS: Yeah, as I was leaving for Israel. Yeah, that's right. That's probably right.

JG: Before we move on, you wanted to tell us about this garment.

DS: That's right. At Fabrangen, in the early days, we designed our own [*shows garment*] four-cornered garments — this dashiki, as you can see. It was designed actually by one of our members, I guess, Adriana, and we haven't, we didn't attach at the time [*tzitzit*]. There were several actually made, and this is the only one that I have. We attached *tzitzit* to the four corners. The idea was that those who wanted in Fabrangen to wear this garb could do so. No one actually wore this garb. Well, I wore this a little bit, but I don't think I wore it out in the streets. Arthur Waskow did. He continues to wear a four-cornered dashiki. I believe that it was inspired by what we were trying to create at Fabrangen in those days, the idea of being multi-colored. It was later Reb Zalman — Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, of (02:12:00) of blessed memory — created the rainbow tallit. So that idea was floating around, and kind of also we did mention before the kind of bridgework that Fabrangen was doing in DC — Dupont Circle with other communities, principally the black community that was just a few blocks away. I don't remember much in the way of specifics. We didn't do particular projects or actions together, but there was a relationship. It was important for us to have relationships with those in the Dupont Circle area community.

JG: So, we're now going to turn to the concluding section of our conversation, and I'd like to focus on your thoughts on how this period of intense involvement with Fabrangen, this very early period in Fabrangen's life, affected your own life moving forward, and things that you became involved with founding and nurturing, and also your reflections on the broader impact of the *havurah* on American Jewish life. So, just to move us forward, you spent the year '73-'74 in Israel, both in Jerusalem and on a kibbutz.

DS: Not the entire year, but most of the year. I left for Israel in the summer, August of '73, and came back toward the end of April in '74. It was the first time I was there. I lived on a kibbutz and found myself in the Yom Kippur War. I was on a kibbutz on October sixth, a kibbutz that was also bombed.

JG: This was Kibbutz Yifat?

DS: Kibbutz Yifat, in Emek Yizra'el. So that year was a tremendous and powerful experience.

JG: Why did you decide to go to Israel at that point?

DS: One, I had never been. Two, I felt I needed to get away from everything I was doing here. It was an opportunity to also reflect and to try and figure out what my next steps would be. It was an opportunity to learn. I wanted to learn Hebrew. I immersed myself in an ulpan in Jerusalem for a month or so.

JG: Beit HaNoar.

DS: Beit HaNoar! How did you know I was there? [*laughs*] Beit HaNoar, and (02:15:00) I audited a class with David Hartman at the Hebrew University and became a little familiar with his teachings. It was a fabulous year — very intense. I came back not knowing what I wanted to do, and re-met an old friend named Ira Cohen. He had a group house, and I moved in there with him, and he was exploring the idea of creating a kosher kitchen, modeled after a community restaurant that he visited in Romania. He wanted to create a kosher kitchen here that would also serve the community and would also be run collectively in a not only non-profit way, but in an anti-profit way. We wanted to also be a center for teaching, for conveying also social values to the larger Jewish community and engaging the Jewish community in communicating more with each other, but also in being concerned about what was going on with the rest of society. He didn't know if the project was going to get off the ground, but it was a very exciting concept. It sounded in some ways like the original Fabranken concept, because we also had — Rob and I — had spoken about a kosher restaurant but didn't think it was going to get off the ground. So I was looking to do something, and I also didn't want to live in the Washington DC area. I needed a quieter place. So I asked Max Ticktin, who was the associate Hillel director at that time, I asked him if there is a place in this country where I could go and it's quiet and I could do something for the Jewish community. Is there a Hillel position out there? He said, "Ah, I have the place for you. Iowa! Central Iowa! There's a Jewish student center there. They're looking for a full time Hillel director to serve the students at Drake University and to do outreach to Grinnell College and to the Iowa State in Ames, Iowa."

And I said, "That sounds perfect." So I went out that summer to start the position at Drake University. While I was out there, I had the experience of creating a *havurah* essentially for the students, because our Jewish students center started to feel more and more what Fabrangen felt like, and that felt really good. We also created Jewish classes, in Jewish Studies, for the university, as part of an experimental college (02:18:00) they called New College, where people who wanted to offer courses could offer courses for credit. So, I was able to teach one or two classes there for, like, one credit. That worked out nicely. It was a great year out there, and in the middle of that year, I learned that the Kosher Kitchen Collective was getting off the ground, and it was really happening. They got some funding, and they got a place, and so I said, "Whoa. This sounds like I need to get back." So following the school term I came back, and I got re-engaged in some of the other work that I was doing, mainly with the band, the Fabrangen Fiddlers, and started working with the Kosher Kitchen Collective. I moved into the house. It housed eleven members of the Kosher Kitchen Collective. Again, it was like, wow, this is great. It was for me a deeper sense of fellowship and *havurah*, and it felt extremely holistic. Part of the concept that Rob had, and which I really like a lot, was the concept of a more holistic community, that was integrating spirituality with responsiveness to social issues, with earning a livelihood, with connection to the country. The Kosher Kitchen felt like that vision, so I got involved. I wasn't such a great cook, so I had other jobs in the kitchen. It was run collectively, it was worker self-managed, and as I mentioned, it was not important for us to make money. The importance was to create a change and to influence the quality of life — Jewish life, and also to build relationships with other collectives in the Washington area. We were part of the Food Federation, it was called, in the Greater Washington area — other collectives and groups that were doing alternative work in the food world. So, here we are connected to the Jewish counterculture, but also connected to the larger countercultural, alternative movements. It felt great. We got heavily involved in the Grape Boycott, in the Farm Workers Movement at the time as well. That emerged out of that. The Kitchen worked out for three years. Then, things changed. People had other needs. In fact, the connection with Fabrangen was actually (02:21:00) pretty strong. The founder of the Kosher Kitchen — or, one of the founders of the Kosher Kitchen Collective — in the third year of the Kosher Kitchen became also the part-time coordinator for the Fabrangen community.

JG: Who was that?

DS: Ira Cohen. Now his name is Ira Kerem. He made aliyah not that long after the Kosher Kitchen dissolved. The restaurant itself dissolved. The collective still meets periodically. We just had a meeting recently.

JG: The Kosher Kitchen Collective formally dissolved in '79?

DS: Seventy-eight-ish, yeah. We turned the restaurant over to someone else in seventy-nine, I guess.

JG: You had referred to the Kosher Kitchen Collective as an urban kibbutz.

DS: Right, well, many of us grew up in Habonim, and many of the members of the collective — several; I wouldn't say more than half — had gone to Camp Moshava, which is the Habonim camp here in Maryland. I, as a kid living on the farm, I was a member of the Habonim youth group in Jackson Township, New Jersey. So, it was a kibbutz in the sense mainly that we were living together, we were sharing income together, we were — everything as you would find on a traditional kibbutz, except that we were in a city. We were living in a house that ultimately would become the Woodside Synagogue. It was in an old farmhouse that we left, and then it was renovated, and then the addition they added onto it became an Orthodox synagogue after we left it. We sanctified it for the Orthodox community. Our restaurant was doing tremendous bridgework in the Jewish community. It was the only place in town where Orthodox Jews could come and also secular Jews. It was a great meeting place. We had a coffee house there, and we offered classes there. We did folk dancing. We gave tours to Hebrew school groups, and we talked about the grape boycott. We interwove the politics. And the whole thing is — here we were, basically a kibbutz. I mean, we're talking about socialism. We were kind of sharing these values with the people who came to the restaurant. Of course, some people in the community were kind of rubbed a little bit by this, but most people, I think, really appreciated that this was the only kosher restaurant in the Washington DC area. One hundred seats. We were able to seat one hundred people, providing this kind of service. We also did a Meals on Wheels service to elderly shut-ins. We brought kosher food (02:24:00) and had visits with elderly shut-ins. So it was a magnificent, magnificent program, and for me, it was the fulfillment of what a holistic community, or what, in our vision, a *havurah* could be in its deepest and highest sense. We were not a *davening* community because on Shabbat, we'd each go our different ways. Some of the collective members went to a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist study group. Others of us *davened*. So it was that kind of thing.

JG: So, throughout the seventies, as we were just saying, the Kosher Kitchen Collective was something you were engaged in. You also were developing these arts collectives. Tell us briefly about the Jewish Folk Arts Festival that actually took place in '77.

DS: So, one of the pieces that emerged from the original Fabbrangen was this emphasis on the arts. It was very important for me and for others, as people realized the lack of arts in

the Jewish community, the lack of creative arts. This was also during the time that Mae Rockland — do you know the name?

JG: Mae Rockland, *Jewish Yellow Pages*.

DS: *Jewish Yellow Pages*, right — her focus on the arts. Another philosopher/Jewish thinker that deeply influenced me going back to high school was, of course, Mordecai Kaplan, who understood Judaism as a civilization. That always resonated with me that we have music, we have the arts. But there was a kind of hiatus, I guess, of creativity in the Jewish community in the realm of the arts, and with the world of folk arts and people's arts emerging in the larger culture, especially in the late sixties, and the emergence of the Smithsonian Folklife Festivals, and bringing it together, revealing the arts of different groups came to the forefront. I mean, this was — what about us? Where are we? So a few of us created the Jewish Folk Arts Society, Stu Copans and I, and Sue Roemer, I mentioned before. We were kind of sitting around there for a couple of years, and then we started to organize the Jewish Folk Arts Festival, which took place at American University in DC. We gathered around whoever was engaged in the arts, musically and also visually.

JG: Locally, in the Greater Washington area.

DS: In the Greater Washington area. We held this initial festival — that was (02:27:00:00) in 1977, and that was sponsored by Fabranken, the Jewish Folk Arts Society, and the Kosher Kitchen Collective. The Folk Arts Society was more like a collective, but it wasn't a *havurah* as such. We didn't consider ourselves a *havurah*. We had this festival, and then as the Jewish Folk Art Society became more known, I guess — I mean, once we developed a membership body, we were able to win space in Silver Spring, Maryland and start developing other festivals. So, the first festival drew maybe three hundred people. The second festival, a thousand people. We rented the Silver Spring Armory. It kind of grew from there, and for more than a decade we had these festivals that grew in number and impact on the Greater Washington, DC community. We were basically reviving — it was a revivalist effort to develop and encourage Jewish expression through the arts. So, it had a major impact on Jewish life.

JG: And it's still going to this day, the festival?

DS: The last full festival we had — what happened is it stopped, the Folk Art Society. I left it, partly to kind of have a family, right? So I turned it over to some of the other people who were organizing in the Folk Arts Society, and it went on for a few years, and then it fizzled — because of lack of funding, because of lack of whatever. So, for ten

years there wasn't a Folk Arts Festival, and what was left of the Jewish Folk Arts Society was then taken under the umbrella of Am Kolel. In 1990, after my kids were a little bit older and I had a little bit more time, I started another organization, another community. I actually modeled the community in many ways on the original vision of the Fabringen — to create a community, to do outreach, and to try to create a more responsive and holistic Jewish community. So the Folk Arts Society, the arts piece, came under our umbrella. We didn't do anything with it immediately. Then we started meeting these unmet needs in the community. People would come to me saying we'd like to do this, we'd like to do that. You know, we're not into *davening*. We don't like going to synagogues, we don't do synagogues, no organized religion, too expensive, whatever. I started identifying these different needs (02:30:00) and created this umbrella to meet these different needs and was able to get some funding from a couple of individuals — not much. Most of the funding came from revenues from High Holiday services. How did that happen? The community. In 1978, I was asked to help a group of people, eight families, to create a *havurah* for them in 1978. I had known them from different places, and I said, "Okay, I'll work with you for a year. I'll help you get off the ground." Thirty-eight years later, I'm still with the community. So, they created a *havurah*, a fellowship community, member directed. It had limited membership each year. Only five new families, five new households, could come in, because they wanted to integrate. Every family coming in had to take responsibility. It was not a *davening* community. Celebrating holidays, absolutely. We met twice a month on Friday nights. The Sunday morning education programs for the kids was really essential, and the adult education was very essential. So we formed this *havurah* —

JG: This was called?

DS: I'm sorry! Kehila Chadasha. We didn't know what to call it, so we called it Kehila Chadasha, which means "A New Community." We started meeting in people's homes and renting space in schools. The community is now a hundred households, and very, very active. Over the years it has gotten increasingly active in social and political issues as well. So Kehila Chadasha. When I said, "I'll stay with you. I will stay with this community, if you do the logistics for the High Holidays and open the High Holidays to anyone who wants to come." So, this small community of, at that time, a dozen families, organized and did the logistics for the High Holidays, and there were a couple hundred people who came the first year. Then we rented a high school, and within a few years there were fourteen hundred people coming to High Holiday services.

JG: Did they buy tickets, or —?

DS: There was a suggested donation for tickets. People paid for tickets. I said to the *havurah*, I said, okay — and people were coming to me from the High Holiday services saying they'd like to do something during the year, too — But we don't want to do like a *havurah*. We want to be involved, but not too involved. You know, that kind of thing? So I said to the Kehila Chadasha people, how about, if all this revenue is coming in, let's split the revenues. (02:33:00) Or basically, give me a grant — essentially it turned out to be like a grant — to create this other institution. This other community — which led to the creation of Am Kolel. It's basically that — I don't get paid a salary from Am Kolel. What I end up calling it is a grant to do the work that I do in the larger community, and to help me to create Am Kolel. And, in Am Kolel, we've created and incubated other groups, trying again to create this holistic community. So under Am Kolel, we created Jews United for Justice. We incubated that organization. It now has over a thousand members here in the greater Washington DC area and Baltimore. That was created maybe fifteen years ago — fourteen years ago? It came out of a class that I was teaching on Heschel and social action as part of the Jewish Study Center. See the connections? Amazing connections, okay? I was teaching a class. Basically, it was a two or week session. I forget. It was Heschel's *yahrzeit* at the time. So a couple of people came to me after and asked, "Hey, is there anything happening here in town where Jews can do social and political action here as Jews?" I said, "No. There used to be. It used to be called Jews for Urban Justice." They said, "Really? What happened to that group?" So I went into the whole story, and we said, let's get together. So we met at a restaurant, and we talked more about it, and then we had another organizing meeting at a bookshop called Politics and Prose. The owner was originally a member of Jews for Urban Justice. We invited some former members of Jews for Urban Justice. Mike Tabor, have you heard his name?

JG: Yeah.

DS: So Mike Tabor came to that meeting, a couple of other people.

JG: Was Avi Rosenblit involved in this at all?

DS: Who?

JG: Avi Rosenblit.

DS: I know the name, but he was not —

JG: Not at this stage.

DS: Not at this stage. We sat around, talked about the vision, talked about the Jews for Urban Justice and what it did, and gave the name Jews United for Justice. So Am Kolel incubated that group for three years until they got their own 501c3, and they got funding from other sources.

JG: What do you mean by incubate?

DS: It's basically to take a seedling — people with a vision for something, who want to do something for the community — under our umbrella. We would serve as their fiscal sponsor, (02:36:00) which would allow them to apply for grants, and we'd also do the bookkeeping for them, take care of the accounting. So we've done this for a number of organizations, under the umbrella, over the years. These groups — we are connected, but it's not like we're creating a community within a community, you see? It was part of the vision that Martin Buber actually had for creating communities. It's that kind of concept that the Jewish Folk Arts Festival was resurrected, also under that umbrella. It's a committee of the community that plans it, but it's under the umbrella of the Jewish Folk Arts Festival. There's no longer a Jewish Folk Arts Society, but the Jewish Folk Arts Festival is under our umbrella. We had one last year, but the energy is not there to keep it going. It takes a tremendous amount of energy. So, we're changing the concept. We're actually going to be doing focused festivals under the umbrella of the Jewish Folk Arts Festival. We're doing a Yiddish Writers Festival this coming March. It's an aspect of the Jewish Folk Arts Festival that we're focusing in on. It will be a lot easier to focus in. So, every year we'll do a different focus, because it's too much to do. The Jewish Folk Arts Festival included exhibits of artisan craftspeople, included performances on several stages, and included some twenty or more workshops, and also food. It was an amazing operation, and I had hired people to help coordinate it. So, Am Kolel, under the umbrella, is the country connection, which we never can get off the ground. At one point, Fabrangen and the Jewish Folk Arts Society and Kosher Kitchen decided to pool their resources and find a place in the country to have a retreat center, coming back to the Kfar Out idea — we'll talk about that later — to run a camp for kids, to inculcate those values that we cherished — a Jewish counterculture kind of camp. So, we went out in 1977. We went out looking for a place — maybe '78. We couldn't find a place. But, under Am Kolel, twelve years ago, this place kind of just dropped in our laps. It's around thirty minutes from here, a beautiful retreat (02:39:00) center. It serves not only the Jewish community, but also other communities, religious communities and social justice groups and whatever. So, we have that under the umbrella. We also run a summer program.

JG: So that's the Sanctuary Retreat Center and Renewal Center?

DS: That's the Sanctuary Retreat Center and Renewal Center, which is under the Am Kolel umbrella. We also have a havurah under the Am Kolel umbrella that is a more spiritual *havurah*, and that meets regularly on Shabbat mornings for *davening*. *Davening* is very similar to the *davening* in many other *havurot* and Renewal communities. It's kind of a cross between traditional egalitarian and West Coast Renewal. [laughs]

JG: Can you say a few words about Renewal? In the interim, you've also been called a Judaist. You're a cantor. You became a rabbi.

DS: So, I needed — I didn't have a title in the community, but I studied with cantors ever since I was a kid, and through apprenticeship essentially, I became a cantor. That, in fact, was the traditional way of doing it. I also studied with two of the founders of the Cantors Institute at the Jewish Theological Seminary. So, I had wonderful, wonderful teachers and a really good background in cantorial liturgical studies. When the Kehila community started, when they decided they wanted me to serve as their spiritual leader, the title that we chose was cantor. I didn't want to be called rabbi. First of all, that was a loaded term, and I was so kind of not anti-rabbi, but wanted to be part of a Judaism that wasn't focused on or emanating from rabbis. It wasn't top-down. Most synagogues and temples, it's kind of a pyramid structure. You have the rabbi there [gestures up] determining the way a community lives, not only the parent bodies and also the opposition to parent bodies was something that I really had a very hard time with. So, I didn't want the title rabbi. Cantors are more of the people, so that was okay. That felt fine. Then the word Judaist I picked up from Mordecai Kaplan, because he used the word Judaist. As a knowledgeable Jew who was an advocate for Judaism, in that kind of sense, I liked that term, and I had no problem calling myself a Judaist. So, I was hired as a Judaist cantor, or a cantor Judaist, in the Kehila Chadasha community. (02:42:00) Years ago, we started a seminary here actually called Maalot, a seminary for cantors and Judaists, to train cantors and Judaists in Jewish music, liturgy, and the ceremonial arts. That was principally to serve a need in the growing movement of independent congregations and *havurot* here in the Washington area. There are now twelve to fifteen independent communities. I was serving three of them. I was also serving another sort of a *havurah* community, another directed community, called Shoreshim, which means "roots", in Northern Virginia. For twenty years, I would lead services once a month out there for them, and also serve as a Judaic resource person, or Judaist, for them as well. We decided to create this seminary, and Max Ticktin was on the faculty, Sue Roemer, *havurah* people. A couple of non-*havurah* people — Bob Sachs, who was a Hillel director, Mindy Portnoy, other people became part of our faculty, from Orthodox to Reform. It was a wonderful program for a number of years, and we did a lot of education in the community, to the *havurot* and independent communities, and also to synagogues and temples that were looking for more background. I was invited to synagogues to teach members how to read Torah so they can

have different people reading Torah, not just the cantor or the rabbi. I taught people how to play music for their services. That became more popular in sort of non-Conservative, and certainly non-Orthodox, in Reconstructionist and other communities, to help teach their musicians. This project was called Maalot, and actually Maalot, because we didn't have enough funding to keep the administration going, we had to make a choice. Either we buy the retreat center or we keep Maalot. So we decided, okay, Maalot is going to be on hold. We're going to go for the retreat center, because this is like a dream ever since Kfar Out in 1971. Kfar Out was this sort of retreat center that George Johnson from Fabrangen and I rented that summer. I had this dream to find another place like that, and part of the dream had to do with my own personal need to get back to the country, growing up on a farm. So, that's Am Kolel, which is in many ways trying to fulfill that vision that Rob and that I very much bought into so deeply in those formative years of Fabrangen — and to create (02:45:00) again an idea of helping people create *havurot*.

JG: What would you see as the greatest challenges that the early *havurot* faced?

DS: The early *havurot*? One of the challenges has to do with viability. If you don't have children to educate — most *havurot* didn't have schools for their children. The Kehila Chadasha always had children. Fabrangen also had, there were children there, and over the years we've had different kinds of programming for children, but it was the need to educate children that made the Fabrangen Cheder possible, because that became focused more on the kids. So, one of the challenges is renewing itself, not only by bringing in new members, but also by meeting the needs of the members. If members have families and those needs are not being met, then they're going to go someplace else. For young people in the traditional *havurot* — as people age, it became more difficult to attract younger people. The Fabrangen community is an aging community. Am Kolel is an aging community. Kehila Chadasha is a renewable community, because there's a much greater effort to make itself attractive to younger families, through just greater effort, networking. So, we've been able to do that. We're in revival mode right now, which is very exciting. On the High Holidays we have youth services, which also has made it possible for us to bring in younger families. So, that's part of it. Is there another aspect to the question?

JG: I wanted to ask you what, as you look back after this past half century — so, from the early *havurot* through the developments that have happened since then — what we would call the *havurah* movement, but also other things that we've been talking about--what do you see as the impact of the first independent *havurot* on Jewish life?

DS: First of all, I think there was a tremendous impact. The *havurot*, I think, inspired or awakened the established Jewish community, the mainstream Jewish community, and

their leadership to try and be more responsive to the needs of their own members and also those who they'd like to attract. So, the more successful (02:48:00) synagogues, certainly here in the Washington area, are those that have recognized the importance of creating fellowship communities, or *havurot*, under their umbrella. It's a challenge for many congregations. You have to be a congregation of a certain size to do it without diluting your regular *davening*. In fact, when I joined the staff at Har Shalom, the congregation where they brought in music for the first time, part of my job as the Jewish Program Environmentalist — that was my title, Jewish Program Environmentalist [*laughs*] — was to create *havurot* within the congregation. It was working, until the educator of the school of seven hundred and some odd kids got ill and he couldn't run the school, so they asked me to run the school with his assistant, with his secretary. So I couldn't continue doing it. Adas Israel, a Conservative synagogue here in town, has had for years wonderful *havurot* under its umbrella, and now there's a Wellness and Meditation Center. Maybe you know a little bit about it. They've taken many ideas that have come out of the *havurah* movement and also out of Jewish Renewal, and they're trying to apply these ideas to their own institutions. I think they're pretty successful. Other Conservative congregations and some Reform congregations have done the same. I'm not so familiar with the Reform movement. The Reconstructionist Movement, there has always been a close affinity with the *havurah* movement, with Art Green and Art Waskow being on the faculty there.

JG: What's the relationship, if any, that you see between *havurot* and groups that call themselves independent minyanim, and specifically not *havurot*, today?

DS: The relationship?

JG: Yeah.

DS: Well, I think there are some independent minyanim which, I think, are more like *havurot*, because people have relationships that are beyond just the *davening*. Is a *havurah* a *havurah* if it's only *davening*? If it's only for *davening*, is it a *havurah*? If you're only in relationship with that person or persons once a week, like at Kiddish, does that make you a *havurah*? It makes you a *davening* community, but does it make you a *havurah*? My feeling is, no, it doesn't. (02:51:00:00)

JG: So, you're saying that most independent minyanim are in fact *davening* communities.

DS: Most independent minyanim are *davening* communities, but does that make them a *havurah*? If that's the only aspect of life that they're engaged in, I don't think they're a *havurah*. For me, my understanding of a *havurah* is that there is much more going on. Not only is there the sharing of life cycle events, birth through death, being supportive of

each other, having meals together in people's homes, going out together, doing social community service projects together, when necessary, marching together. It's kind of a full-life press. For me, the concept of a *havurah* is a more holistic concept, but I know for other independent *havurot*, it's not necessarily that way. I'd have to ask. I've not been in association with members of other *havurot* outside the Washington area in a long time. The last time I went to a Havurah Institute was, I think, five years ago. I'm hoping to go maybe this summer. Again, different *havurot* meet different needs for their members. Havurah Kehila Chadasha is not a *davening* community, but it has all these other aspects — learning, life celebrations, community service, responsiveness to what's going on in society — doing bridge work with other communities, inviting Muslims to Pesach seders. You know what I mean?

JG: Yes.

DS: That, for me, is a fuller concept of a *havurah*. If it's only for *davening*, it could be called a *davening havurah*, but it's not what I think of as the fuller concept of a *havurah*.

JG: So, finally, as the challenges of the twenty-first century for the Jewish community comes into sharper view, what do you see as the future for *havurot*?

DS: The future? If it's being informed by the past — of independent *havurot*? It's mixed. There's a tremendous need for people to gather. (02:54:00) More than fifty percent — it's probably more like sixty, seventy percent of the Jewish community — is not affiliated. In the Greater Washington area, it's, like, sixty-four, sixty-seven percent of the Jewish community is not affiliated with Jewish institutions. I have discovered through my work that there are a lot of people out there who want to be connected, but they're not going to go to synagogues and temples. They are not into organized religion. They have great doubts about the value of traditional religion, how they have been exposed to it. They want to be connected, many Jews in some way, but there aren't the kinds of institutions. Well, maybe Jewish Community Centers can better serve that purpose, and some are starting to do that. What we need — I think we need to create more Judaic resource centers around the country. Fabrangen was essentially a Jewish resource center. It was an outreach center initially, with the vision of creating *havurot*, of having this kind of community. If we create Judaic resource centers around the country, and Jewish Renewal centers that are staffed with the purpose of helping people who are not connected to come together — kind of like Lubavitch-lite. Lubavitch does a tremendous job reaching out to people. I have great respect for Lubavitch and how they've been able to organize. In Pucon Chile, a nothing town in the mountains, in the Andes, there's Lubavitch. So, they have this ability to do outreach, to bring people in and make them feel good, even though they're coming from this Orthodox framework. If we could do that, create these kinds of

Jewish or Judaic resource centers that are there for the purpose of meeting people's needs and help them meet those needs, either spiritually or through social action or through the arts or through connecting with a fabulous historical tradition, I think that's the way to go. That's the future of *havurot*, creating these centers that then would spawn *havurot*. Have a hub — it's the original Fabbrangen model, the original with Rob Agus. I must — a shout out to Ron Agus, because I loved working with him. (02:57:00) What can I say? That vision is a vision that needs to be perpetuated or developed more, but it would take tremendous resources, I think, to do it. I was lucky, because I had this other community, the *havurah*, that does the logistics on the High Holidays, that provides the income for me to help other people get together. I don't know how that can be replicated easily. That's what I think. The idea of living in community and being in fellowship is at the core of how Jewish life can survive in the coming decades. Without community, we can't survive. Without relationships, real serious relationships between individuals in communities, we're not going to survive.

JG: Thank you. Thank you very, very much.

DS: Thank you, Jayne, and all your supporters, and really everyone collaborating for this project.

(02:58:09)

DS: This is *Etz Chaim Hi*, the Tree of Life, for those — it's called *Etz Chaim Hi*. Arthur Waskow asked me to write a song for a tree planting ceremony. It's called the Trees for Vietnam campaign. It was a tree planted on the Capitol Grounds — in 1971 I think it was, during that first year of Fabbrangen. So, I put this melody to, "It's a Tree of Life for those who hold onto it. It's a tree of life for peace." It's all part of the winding down of the Vietnam War. It became regularly used at Fabbrangen, and in our community, different communities over the years. [*sings*] *Eitz Chayim he lamachazikim bah, Eitz Chayim he lamachazikim bah. Eitz chayim hi l'shalom, Eitz chayim hi l'shalom. Eitz chayim hi lamachazikim bah, Eitz chayim hi lamachazikim bah. Eitz chayim hi l'shalom, Eitz chayim hi l'shalom.* (03:00:00) *l'shalom.*