

Jewish Counterculture Oral History Project

GEORGE JOHNSON

Interviewed by Jayne K. Guberman

February 1, 2017

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

Jayne Guberman (JG): My name is Jayne Guberman, and today is Wednesday, February 1, 2017. I'm here with George Johnson at his home in Chevy Chase, Maryland, and we're going to record an interview for the Jewish Counterculture Oral History Project. George, do I have your permission to record this interview?

George Johnson (GJ): Yes.

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

I'd like to start by talking about your personal and family background, and to flesh out a bit who you were at the time you got involved with Fabrangen. Can we start by your telling me briefly about your family when you were growing up, your parents and other family members?

GJ: Starting from where, in their lives for example?

JG: Who they were when you were growing up, and/or where your family came from.

GJ: My mother was Canadian. She married my father in 1935. My father was born and raised on Long Island, in New York. My father was a gas station proprietor in Port Washington, Long Island. Subsequently, after the war, he became a car dealer. He sold foreign cars. He was a businessman. My mother did not work for the most part, although I think she did jobs. Like, she was a salesperson in one of the department stores or did office work, but most of the time I remember her being home. I think on my father's side originally when they came to the U.S., he was born in 1909, and his father came in 1902. His wife's parents I think were founders of a Long Island synagogue. It was Orthodox, but they did not live Orthodox lives, as far as I could tell. My mother's family, I never met my grandfather. He died when I was two. She had been born in Cochrane, Ontario, which is in the far north of Ontario, and lived in London, Ontario and Toronto, Ontario. They were, I guess, Conservative Jews. My father was the first president, I think, (00:03:00) of Temple Beth Israel in Port Washington, Long Island. I think it was founded sometime in the thirties, the late thirties. We kept a kosher home.

JG: Do you have siblings?

GJ: I have two sisters. I'm the middle child. I have a sister who's five years older and a sister who's five years younger. Family background — one of my mother's brothers married my father's sister, and they lived on Long Island also. They lived in Sayville,

Long Island, which is in Suffolk County. We had family get togethers, which was virtually every Sunday at my grandparents' house, my father's parents' house. It was a large gathering every week. So they were there. I had two cousins, girls who were older than I am, who had the same four grandparents.

JG: Wow. That's an unusual story.

GJ: Yeah.

JG: So you were born in 1942, in Port Washington.

GJ: That's right.

JG: This was a time before Port Washington had many Jews living there, I gather.

GJ: That's correct.

JG: What was it like for you growing up there as a child?

GJ: Well, you felt different. I felt different. I was very conscious of the fact that I was Jewish, because I had no Jewish friends, no Jewish classmates, until fourth grade. In those days, that was before political correctness, and before the work of the ACLU or whoever it was, the ADL, that got religion out of the public schools. There was plenty of religion in the public schools, and that was kind of a fact that made me feel different.

JG: Beyond Christmas celebrations there was a lot of religion in the schools?

GJ: Well, I can't remember exactly. Christmas obviously would have been the main time.

JG: What happened in fourth grade?

GJ: Two Jewish boys moved into the neighborhood, one of whom actually lives in Washington not too far from here now. We were friends together. That started with fourth grade, but until then, maybe there were some Jewish friends through the synagogue, but not in school.

JG: And yet, it sounds like (00:06:00) some of the main businesses in the area were owned by Jewish families.

GJ: In fact, most of them. It was this group of Jewish businessmen who formed the shul. The furniture store, the drug store, the hardware store, the men's haberdashery, you know, the clothing store, the optometrist. Then one of the friends, his father was a caterer — he had a restaurant near the high school. I'm probably leaving out a few, but many of the main businesses were owned by Jews. I think that was pretty typical of small town U.S.A. in earlier times, but it was true of Port Washington in the forties and the beginning of the fifties.

JG: And yet their children weren't in school with you?

GJ: Not in my class.

JG: So when you were in sixth grade, you moved to a nearby town.

GJ: Right. My parents wanted to move to Roslyn, and the house that they bought wasn't finished, so we lived for one year in Roslyn Heights, and then when the house was finished we moved the next year to Roslyn.

JG: What was Roslyn like, and what was the draw of Roslyn for your parents?

GJ: I think it was more Jewish. There were two big synagogues in Roslyn Heights actually, and there were, I think, going to be more Jews in the schools. I think that was the main consideration that I can think of, although there might have been others.

JG: How did that affect you in terms of how you felt?

GJ: Well, it was more comfortable. I had more friends. I had more peers in the synagogue environment.

JG: How would you describe the Jewish environment in your home? You described your family as Conservative Jews. What did that mean in terms of your parents' attitudes in terms of observance and practice in your home?

GJ: We celebrated Shabbat, in a way. We kept kosher. In terms of celebrating Shabbat, that meant lighting candles and having a Shabbat meal and then going to synagogue Friday night, driving to synagogue. Many times we went Saturday morning, and we had a seder. I don't think we celebrated Sukkot or Shavuot.

JG: You said you kept kosher, but not too strictly.

GJ: Not too strictly. (00:09:00) There was a third set of dishes, some glass dishes that my mother would bring Chinese food home for, and we would go out to Chinese restaurants usually on Thursday nights. That was the night. I'm not sure how that custom started, but I think it was pretty widespread.

JG: And your dad worked a lot, it sounded like? Seven days a week.

GJ: Yeah. As the proprietor of this gas station, he was there virtually all the time. He had a half-day on Sunday, until sort of late in the day, but he closed on Sunday at some point. When I was growing up for the most part, he was working Monday through Friday until maybe nine o'clock. He came home for dinner, and maybe he came home for lunch. I'm not sure now. He worked all day on Saturday until six, and then Sunday morning. Then he'd come home and we'd have dinner. Very often, we went out to eat for Sunday lunch, and then from there we would drive out to Northport, East Northport, Long Island, to visit his parents. That's where the whole mishpachah got together.

JG: How was Saturday?

GJ: Typically, we'd go to shul in the morning. We didn't call it shul at that time. Then what I remember, and I'm sure it wasn't every week, was, we lived very close to my father's station. We lived about five or six blocks up the street. Then there was the movie theatre, and there was a little eatery between the movie theatre and my father's station on the same block. I would come down and I would eat at this Beacon Sweet Shop — that's the name of it. My favorite thing was the jiffy steak. I would have it for lunch, and then from there I would go to the movies. My father, of course, was a businessman and was almost next door, so it was always a big treat to just charge it. [laughs] Then I'd go to the movies. I saw many iconic movies there. The original *Superman* series, the cartoons. *Kon-Tiki*. I had many great experiences Saturday afternoons going to the movies. Then when I was a little older, I played little league baseball on Saturday morning. I guess it was in the spring. I wasn't going to shul then, I guess. Does that answer your question?

JG: Absolutely. Your mother, you said, was involved in Zionist organizations?

GJ: Yeah. She was (00:12:00) a very ardent Zionist. Her father was also a very ardent Zionist, very well known in the Toronto community. She showed me, and I still have, a clipping from his funeral. Five hundred people came to his funeral. He was a businessman, but also a writer. He wrote in the Yiddish press. I lost my train of thought.

JG: You were talking about organizations and Zionism.

GJ: Oh, my mother, right. My mother was president of a whole bunch of different Hadassah chapters, no matter where she was, whether it was in Port Washington or Roslyn, or in West Palm Beach when they moved to Florida. She was president of one of the chapters down there. They made trips to Israel, and they were very proud of having their name on the wall at, I guess it was, Hadassah Hospital, I'm not sure. My mother was very proud of the pins that she got, and she gave at least one of them to my wife.

JG: Do you have any personal memories of the founding of the State of Israel?

GJ: No, not really.

JG: You were a little boy.

GJ: I'm sure I was made aware of it. My first memory of politics was the end of the Second World War, and that was three years before. Well, no, my first recollection is two years after the end of the war. It was a year before the founding of the State. So I'm sure I became aware of it, but I don't have any specific recollections.

JG: You mentioned Yiddish, that your grandfather was a Yiddish writer.

GJ: Yeah.

JG: Was Yiddish familiar to you from your home environment?

GJ: Yes, in a way. My parents spoke Yiddish to each other, mainly when they didn't want the children to understand what they were saying. For the most part we didn't, but sometimes we did. So Yiddish was spoken. My mother knew Yiddish songs and used to play the piano and accompany herself singing these songs. Also English, but yeah, they both knew Yiddish, spoke Yiddish. But they didn't particularly want us to learn it or to teach it to us, so if we picked anything up, it was just accidentally.

JG: And your grandfather spoke to you in English?

GJ: Yes. I don't know about one, but the other, (00:15:00) yes — my father's father.

JG: So what kind of Jewish education did you have growing up, and what was your experience of it?

GJ: In Port Washington, there were very, very few Jewish boys, and even fewer my age. My recollection of the shul was a very kind of simple place. It wasn't wider than our

house here. It was narrower probably. It was long. It was like, bowling-alley shaped. They did have a religious school, so to speak, in the basement. I have recollections of learning with a Rabbi Harbader. I used to go to his house pre-bar mitzvah. But not pre-bar mitzvah — it was earlier, when I was, I want to say, eight years old. I had Hebrew instruction when I was a little boy. Then there were classes, I'm pretty sure, because I remember learning about the Abraham story and stuff like that in that building in Port Washington. We moved to Roslyn for sixth grade, so from there I was enrolled in classes at the Conservative synagogue in Roslyn Heights, which is Temple Beth Sholom. That's where I was bar mitzvahed and confirmed.

JG: They had confirmation even in this Conservative shul?

GJ: Yeah. That was pretty standard in Reform and Conservative synagogues at that time.
(00:17:00)

JG: What kind of a learning environment did you find the Hebrew school and the Sunday school in this new community?

GJ: Terrible.

JG: Terrible?

GJ: It was terrible in almost every way.

JG: Can you describe that a little?

GJ: There are two things, two big strikes against it. The kids in general had no interest in afternoon school.

JG: Was this girls as well as boys?

GJ: I don't remember any girls, to tell you the truth. There might have been some girls there, but I don't remember any. Then there was the teacher. Sometimes, or maybe even often, it was an imported yeshiva student or something like that from Brooklyn, whose English was okay but not that great and really didn't know that much about how to teach kids in a suburban, non-religious environment and had very little ability to control them. So the environment was, you didn't learn very much, and if you wanted to learn, there was a real problem. I was one of those people who wanted to learn, and we never got too far. I mean, we learned to read the prayer book, and I think by the time I got to confirmation classes, we learned about Jewish history. It was instruction from the rabbi. I

remember those classes. We learned about the Judges. I did bar mitzvah instruction there, I guess with the cantor. I remember we had my bar mitzvah — in those days, there were a lot of kids in my cohort, and this was 1955. 1955 I was bar mitzvahed. It was pretty common. I shared the bar mitzvah date with another child. I still remember his name. The congregation had to suffer two versions of *Ki Tavo*. [laughs] But the haftorah — in those days, we did not read the Torah. That was not something that was taught. The rabbi didn't have a very high opinion of our learning. I remember in confirmation class, he taught us the last part of the *Shema* to sing, the last few lines. I remember him introducing it as this very esoteric melody, and it's only later that I realized it was just the regular Torah reading. [laughs] (00:20:00) It showed a certain amount of disrespect, it seemed to me. But it was not a positive learning experience.

JG: Was there a youth group at the synagogue?

GJ: Yes.

JG: Were you involved in it?

GJ: I actually joined the Reform youth group, because most of my friends were in the Reform one. That was the “in” place to be. It was a Reform one down the road. It was Temple Sinai? I'm trying to remember what the name was. It was on the other side of Northern State Parkway, a little bit to the south. I joined — I think it was NFTY? Whatever it was. That was the better youth group. I probably was part of the youth group at Temple Beth Sholom also.

JG: You also attended Jewish summer camp.

GJ: Yeah, starting when I was about six.

JG: That sounds like it had an impact on you. Can you tell us about your experience there?

GJ: I don't really remember much about the first year. It was a camp in Pennsylvania, I believe. When I was six going on seven, I think it was, I started going to Ceiwin camps, which I think was loosely affiliated, or very affiliated, with the Conservative Movement. That was really a great experience. It was a very Jewish experience. It was a very Jewish communal experience. There was a lot of learning that was done. But the main thing about it that was different than the rest of my life was that it was a very positive environment for being Jewish. You didn't have that positive environment when I was on Long Island. On the one hand, people weren't interested in learning that I was in contact

with — and the instruction wasn't that great and I was among non-Jews. It wasn't great to be Jewish in those days, because I got picked on. I had non-Jewish friends mainly, and I stood out a little.

JG: So here was an environment that was more immersive, and a very Jewish environment.

GJ: Also, let me say that Roslyn was different, but I was in Port Washington through fifth grade.

JG: So your Ceiwin years actually coincided with Port Washington.

GJ: Yeah, and that was the reason my mother sent me to those camps, because she thought that I needed to be around Jewish children and to have a more positive Jewish environment.

JG: Do you have memories of any particular things that happened during camp that had an impact on you?

GJ: There were two things that I can remember. The summer I was going on nine, it was the second (00:23:00) year at Ceiwin, and they were asking for people to volunteer to be in the camp play. I had a very small role in the previous year's play, and so the counselor who did the play contacted me. They were doing Joseph and his brothers, and they basically wrote a musical. There were two counselors that were involved, and two boys, and I was one of them. We wrote the music and the lyrics to the songs during rest period, which was really — *[laughs]* that was special. We got out of rest period for most of the summer. Then when it came time for the play, which was the first week in August, there was an afternoon version that was for the camps that were for the small children. There were seven or eight camps for different age groups, so the lower ones came to the afternoon show. I was the lead. I was Joseph. It was really a wonderful experience. I can still hum you a melody from one of the songs.

JG: Can you? Can you do it?

GJ: *[sings]* “*Oh woe is me. I cannot tell, oh what — something, what befell —*” “That was, I don't know, when I was in prison, or when that was. *[laughs]* I was really into it. I guess I had a pretty good voice, and when it came time to meet Jacob, and he came to Egypt and I was supposed to cry, I actually broke down. Well, this really impressed the counselors, so they contacted my parents and they asked them to drive up to the camp for the evening performance. I didn't know that, so I saw them afterward. I was very proud. I

felt very good about that, and I was kind of like a star from that time forward. They wanted me to do something in the next year, but my voice changed. It was in the process of changing, so I couldn't sing. So I was finished. *[laughs]* That was the end of my acting career.

JG: It sounds like it must have been a sort of singular experience in terms of such an intensive relationship working with these counselors on a text, on a story, a biblical story, and bringing it to life in a way that must have been extremely engaging for you.

GJ: Absolutely. Then the next year, or the last year I was in camp, I forget (00:26:00) which year it was. No, it was the next year. I had a yeshiva student as a counselor. Don, his name was. He had a big influence on me. I remember telling my mother — I think it was during parent's weekend — how close I was getting to him and how interested I was. I think it was maybe the next year I fasted on Tisha B'Av, and I remember my mother telling me that she did not want me to become a rabbi. I think she felt like *[laughs]* it was not a good profession for a nice Jewish boy.

JG: But her brother was. Was it her brother that was the rabbi?

GJ: Yeah.

JG: And a well-known one at that.

GJ: Yeah. So I got kind of this signal to not do that, but I think if she had encouraged me, I might have gone in that direction. Those are the two major things I remember.

JG: But what kind of influence did this *yeshiva bochur* counselor have on you?

GJ: Oh, positive modeling. He was a role model.

JG: In what sense?

GJ: Well, he was somebody who was religious and learned, and so being religious and being learned was a positive value, more so than the general counselors there. There weren't many of these kinds of people at this camp.

JG: So you were just saying that you considered being a rabbi, or you might have —

GJ: It entered my mind.

JG: It entered your mind. And you had an uncle, as I just mentioned, who was a well-known rabbi. Tell us a little bit about him, and what kind of influence he had, if any, on your own sense of Jewishness and what was possible.

GJ: I don't remember him specifically having a big — a direct influence on me.

JG: What was his position?

GJ: He was Director of Interfaith Relations for the American Jewish Committee. That was a very big job in those days. For example, he was the person who led a group of rabbis to the Soviet Union in 1955, and that was the first visit of rabbis to the Soviet Union from America. It was a very big story. He wrote two articles that appeared on the front page of the *New York Times*, with his picture. He was on television quite a bit. He became known as the "television rabbi." He did seders (00:29:00) on TV. My cousin, his daughter, the oldest of his children, was bat mitzvahed on television. He was a very good role model, and also things he was doing filtered to us. For example, he was a follower of Mordecai Kaplan. He was ordained in 1934, so in the fifties, he brought to us, or gave to us, the first Reconstructionist seder — the Haggadah. I remember using it at our seder. He was the kind of person who made an impression on me, but specifically did I say, I want to be like my Uncle Morris? First of all, he was way out of my league, as far as I was concerned. He was up here [*gestures up*] and I was down here [*gestures down*]. So there's no question of me trying to be like him. But having him around and seeing him regularly, which we did, must have had some kind of a positive influence.

JG: Do you think he recognized you and your interest in Judaism and tried to nurture it?

GJ: I think he tried to do that for all his young relatives. He was really very involved with everyone in the family. He went to every event. In fact, he went to my wedding in Israel. He happened to be in Israel anyway, but he was under the chuppah, which is fairly unusual for a situation like that, because he had been a Reform rabbi. He migrated from Conservative to Reconstructionist to Reform over the course of his rabbinate. [*laughs*]

JG: But he was ordained as a Conservative rabbi?

GJ: Yes. So he had an influence, but I can't say what specifically he changed in my life.

JG: So despite these influences, you sort of turned away or moved away from Judaism during your high school years.

GJ: That's exactly right.

JG: Why was that?

GJ: Well, I became very critical of the synagogue environment. I felt like it was a really empty spiritual experience. I felt like I needed something more. I wanted something more in terms of spiritual growth (00:32:00) and experience than it was affording me. I mean, I was learning there, but I didn't — the environment seemed kind of rote. Most of the people in this environment were not knowledgeable. They knew the prayers, but they didn't necessarily know what they were reading, and as I said, with the children it was kind of a negative feeling. Even though we went to Hebrew school and all that, it was kind of negative.

JG: You got interested in Aldous Huxley during this period.

GJ: Oh yeah, right. I don't know how I got onto reading Aldous Huxley. I think I probably read *Brave New World* first, but then I found out that he had written all these mystical kind of books and started reading them. I became fascinated. I really wasn't acquainted with mysticism at all, and I certainly didn't know anything about Jewish mysticism. I didn't learn about that until much, much later. But the ideas and the feelings that I got from reading his books, it turned me on to this thing. I read almost every one of his books of that genre through the last two years of high school and into my freshman year in college. That's where I turned to for my religious experience — my spiritual experience.

JG: Your college years at Cornell, 1960 to 1964, coincided with a period of really growing social foment that spawned the growth of the counterculture, as well as the Civil Rights Movement, opposition to the war in Vietnam. To what extent, if at all, were you involved with or influenced by these social movements?

GJ: Well, it was hard not to have some contact with the Civil Rights Movement, even in high school. Many of my friends were involved in the Civil Rights Movement.

JG: You're talking about in the late fifties.

GJ: In the late fifties. I graduated high school in 1960. That got me involved in some ways with the Civil Rights Movement, but I felt — I don't know, I was kind of like a — what's the word I'm looking for? Not contrapuntal but — I always wanted to be different in some ways. So instead of getting that (00:35:00) directly involved in going South or going to sit-ins, I decided to do a research study about restrictive covenants on Long Island. So I wrote a paper, I think, on that.

JG: For one of your college courses.

GJ: No, I was in high school.

JG: Oh, this was in high school still. You're talking about the fifties.

GJ: Yeah. I was conscious of and peripherally involved in that kind of stuff in the late fifties, and then in college, I really was not — was on the school newspaper — and the editor in chief and the editorial page editor, they were really left-wingers. I considered myself a conservative next to them. I mean, I was sympathetic with the Civil Rights Movement. Martin Luther King Jr. came to Cornell. I remember it was a big deal. But I was more in the middle. I was not a Civil Rights activist in the early sixties.

JG: Is that because you weren't an "activist activist," or because you weren't really caught up in what the Civil Rights Movement was about?

GJ: I think I was sympathetic to it, but — my main involvement, besides a fraternity — I joined a fraternity, a Jewish fraternity — my main extracurricular involvement was with the *Cornell Daily Sun*, which I joined second semester.

JG: This was the newspaper.

GJ: The newspaper. It was there that I seemed to be to the center or maybe even to the right of the leadership, so that's where I felt I was. It wasn't that I didn't sympathize with Civil Rights or anything like that, but I wasn't really active in it.

JG: So you then went on to Columbia Law School in 1964 and graduated in '67. How did you decide on the law, and what were you seeing as far as possible career directions?

GJ: Well, it was really a default. I really was interested in political science, government, history, and journalism. I really thought about going for a Ph.D. in history or government, but I guess I was so in awe of my professors that I didn't feel that I could reach that level. And journalism — I (00:38:00) really loved journalism. I really loved it. I loved everything I did at the *Cornell Sun*.

JG: Did you have a beat? What did you write?

GJ: Yeah, I did. I had two beats. My first beat was the fraternity council, and after that it was the student government. By the end of my sophomore year, I had the best beat in the

news staff, which was student government. But then I tried to join the editorial board, so I left. As part of the news board, I competed for managing editor. They had a competition. They called it “Compete” or something. Anyway, each spring, people competed for the editorships, so both my sophomore and junior years, I competed to be managing editor. I wasn't chosen for either, for managing editor or for assistant managing editor. There were a lot of very good people who were on the news board at that time, and I just didn't make it. So when that happened, I tried to join the editorial board, but I didn't make the editorial board. I wasn't politically in-tune with them.

JG: Where were they? How were you not politically in-tune?

GJ: They were really far left. They were far left, and I wasn't there. I changed over time. I think '60 to '64 was not — if it was a time of ferment, it was really the beginning of Black Power, and I didn't identify with that. It was the beginning of feminism, but really it wasn't a force that — I mean, Betty Friedan wrote her book, I think, in 1963?

JG: Sixty-three.

GJ: *The Feminine Mystic*?

JG: *The Feminine Mystique*, yeah.

GJ: It was there, and people were interested in that, but this kind of ferment really — Cornell from 1960 to 1964 was not a place of social foment, social action.

JG: Well, there were students going South, from Cornell, at that point.

GJ: Oh, yeah.

JG: They'd have sit-ins and voter registration drives, I believe.

GJ: Yeah, yeah.

JG: So you went to law school.

GJ: Yeah. Your last question was, why did I go to laws school? It was mainly — I thought about doing the first two things I mentioned — becoming a professor or being a journalist — and I kind of thought there were drawbacks to both. So I decided to go to law school, because I was interested in government, and I thought this (00:41:00) is a

good way to move in that direction, or any direction that I decided. I really didn't know what I wanted to do, so I applied to law school and got in and went.

JG: What did you see yourself doing at that point? Or, was it still totally sort of amorphous — I mean, as a lawyer?

GJ: I really did not focus on it. I really didn't know what I wanted to do, but I think my impulse was to go into government. The first summer, I worked for the American Arbitration Association. The second summer, I had two offers. One was to work in the USAID, in the State Department, and the other was to work with Arlen Specter. He was the D.A. in Philadelphia at the time. Unfortunately or fortunately, the General Council of USAID called me first. The same day, Arlen Specter called me, but I had already accepted the job at the State Department. So I think it's clear that I was interested in public service. I was never interested in private practice, never. I ultimately did go into private practice, but I was not interested in business. My father was a businessman, and I kind of distanced myself from that. I didn't want to be a businessman. I went for interviews with Wall Street firms because I had good grades, but it all seemed really odd to me. I couldn't picture myself writing these books of agreements [*gestures to indicate a very thick book*], these indentures. I would go to these Wall Street firms and the guy would interview me, and he had behind him — and he would talk about them, that this set of books was an indenture for this financing. I just really felt out of place. I knew I didn't want to do that. So I thought I would probably go into government. I did apply for a government job after law school, in the Justice Department's Antitrust Division. I think I got an offer, I'm not sure, but I deferred it because I was going into the army.

JG: So in 1967, you graduated from Columbia. This was a period where anxiety about the draft and serving was growing. There was growing anti-war activism and sentiment, particularly among young people. (00:44:00) What was your personal situation? How did you feel about the draft and the war?

GJ: Yeah. Well, I was already an officer. I was a Second Lieutenant when I went to law school, because I was commissioned as an officer in college.

JG: You had been in —

GJ: ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps]. So I was already in the army, so to speak.

JG: And why did you decide to do that?

GJ: Well, I didn't want to be drafted, and I was pretty patriotic. I just thought it was better to be an officer than an enlisted man, and it was good to be in the army and to serve the country. It was voluntary for the first time at Cornell my freshman year. It had been mandatory.

JG: To do ROTC?

GJ: Yeah. Up through the entering class of 1959, yeah. So I tried actually to back out of ROTC after two years. I wasn't sure I wanted to do it, but I had one of these heart-to-heart talks with one of the instructors, or mentors, in the ROTC program, and he persuaded me that if I dropped out, I would be an enlisted man, and I would not fare as well as if I were an officer. So I just stayed in and got my commission the same year as graduation. But when I went to law school, they deferred me from active duty. In those days — this was the fall of 1964 — Vietnam was really not on my radar at all. If there was anything in Southeast Asia, there was involvement in Laos. So it didn't seem like a problem. But once the Vietnam War started to turn from just some advisors to sending troops, that really energized me as someone who was against the war. I really believed that it was wrong, both politically and morally, and as it ramped up and it got closer, it became more of a problem for me.

JG: This is while you were in law school.

GJ: Yeah, yeah. It was like a treadmill going into the meat grinder, you know? *[laughs]* I felt like I'm getting closer and closer all the time to this thing, and so I was really struggling against the war.

JG: So your involvement with ROTC and getting commissioned was all (00:47:00) happening without your being concerned about actually serving in —

GJ: I didn't have a problem with serving in the army. I didn't know about the Vietnam War. It didn't exist. I thought there was a good, strong possibility that I'd go on active duty maybe for six months, and then the next six-and-a-half years would be reserves. It just didn't present either the practical or the moral issue that it became. It was a very big thing for me. I was really strongly against the war.

JG: It must have been a very strange position to be in, knowing that you were going to have to serve.

GJ: I remember, when it was the spring of 1968, and I was already on active duty in training, first at the Infantry School, in the fall of '67 in Georgia, and then in the

Intelligence School in Baltimore. Just before I was going to California and then to Vietnam in April of 1968, I was visiting this friend of mine on the Upper West Side near the law school, and I walked out of the law school and there was this big demonstration. Who was it — Mark Rudd? I'm trying to think who it was. They were having a sit-in and holding some dean hostage, and it was right there. I think it was Hamilton Hall. It was right in front of us. I remember standing there, one week from going to California, two weeks before I went to Vietnam, and really feeling like it was an out-of-body experience. I remember talking to a policeman. I said, "What's going on here?", and he was explaining how there was this occupation going on in the building. There was a lot of foment, and I thought — maybe it was later that I thought — what would happen if I had graduated in 1965, and I was still in law school when Mark Rudd took over that building? I don't know what would have happened. But I was already in the army and on active duty at that time, and so I was very torn.

JG: So are you saying that when you were applying for jobs, accepting these jobs, you knew that you were going to have to do this active duty?

GJ: Yes.

JG: First, before you could actually —

GJ: Yeah. Part of the job interviews that I was describing were for the summer jobs, too. I don't remember which interviews were which, but I interviewed on Wall Street, (00:50:00) I think, both times.

JG: So what was your position in the army?

GJ: I was an Intelligence Officer. I was trained as an Intelligence Officer at Fort Holabird.

JG: Fort?

GJ: Holabird, in Baltimore. It closed a year or two after I left, and they moved the intelligence command and school to Fort Huachuca — in New Mexico, I think? I'm not sure. I was sent to infantry school, and I couldn't believe that they would send me to Vietnam, because I was a lawyer. I maintained that for a while. Then in infantry school, I got an assignment to Korea, not Vietnam. I thought I was going to Korea, but midway through intelligence school, my orders were changed to Vietnam, and that's where I went. I was a liaison between the American units — I was an advisor, so that meant I lived in the district village government compound with six or seven other American army people

who were also advisors. I was the intelligence advisor, and there were other advisors for different purposes. I lived there for a year. My main function was to collect intelligence from the Vietnamese and to supply it to the American units that operated in that area. There was a US Infantry division stationed — the base camp was two miles away. So I basically got intelligence. If it was operational, it would be handed off either to the Vietnamese units or the American units. That was my job.

JG: Did you feel like you were in personal physical danger when you were there?

GJ: From the moment I stepped off the plane [*laughs*] until the moment I left.

JG: So a couple of years later you ended up writing a memoir, right? About your experience in Vietnam.

GJ: Right, right.

JG: Does it have a title?

GJ: At one point it was called *Letters from Cu Chi*. I'm actually re-writing it right now.

JG: So what impelled you to write a memoir, and what impact would you say, at least briefly, your experiences in Vietnam had on you?

GJ: (00:53:00) Well, it was — it was trying to work out the moral dilemma that I felt and trying to reconcile my feelings with my actions. It was sort of like an internal accounting. That's why I wrote it.

JG: How did you feel Jewishly, in terms of your sense of Jewish identity, Jewishness, during this experience, and then afterward?

GJ: It was pivotal. It was absolutely pivotal, because it made me question the values of America. I really felt I was engaged in something that was immoral. I sort of started thinking about alternative values systems, and my Jewish values system was that alternative. Also, although I really was not observant, I didn't keep kosher, I started feeling internally a positive being drawn toward being Jewish, starting in Vietnam. It was kind of pretty nascent for a while, until a year or two after.

JG: Was there any way in which you acted on it during those years?

GJ: Yeah, a couple ways. There was a chapel at the 25th Infantry Division base camp in Cu Chi. I went to services there on Saturday morning. I met some other Jewish fellows who were stationed on base camp. Saturday morning minyan was run by a dentist and a psychiatrist, and they were actually keeping kosher. They roomed together, and they got bologna and things like that from the Jewish Welfare Board shipped to them from the States. [laughs] That was the meat they ate. I mean, there's no way to get kosher meat in Vietnam. I really valued that. I felt really a sense of home, going to the services. I also went for Rosh Hashanah services (00:56:00) to a different base camp around twenty miles away. It was kind of like an island of home and a different kind of identity that was mixed in with all this fighting and war and death.

JG: Let's turn now to once you came back from Vietnam, and how you became involved in Fabrangen, and your experiences as a member. So what brought you back to Washington DC once you got out of the army, which was in —

GJ: '69. Well, I picked a job in Washington. I had a definite job offer at the Treasury Department, and I had another likely offer from a really nice, small law firm in New York City. My best friend and roommate at the time — maybe one of my best friends — was planning to go to Washington, so that was a big factor. I really wanted to do public service. I really felt like that was my calling, to try to make the world a better place, and that the government was the way to do that.

JG: The government *was* the way to do that?

GJ: Yes.

JG: Even though the government had engaged you and the American public in this war?

GJ: Yes, but I did not equate my feelings about Lyndon Johnson and the war with the government in general. But even if I did — which I don't think I did — it didn't deter me from the idea that I could make a difference by working in the government. I was very interested in foreign policy. I started being interested in foreign policy from the time I was a senior in college. I really wanted to go into foreign policy, and that's why I took the job at the State Department after the second year of law school, and why I eventually picked the job to work in the Treasury Department. It was in the Office for International Affairs, the General Counsel's Office for International Affairs. So I worked on foreign affairs. (00:59:00) It was banking and international aid I was working with the World Bank and similar regional institutions, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. So I was involved in foreign policy, international financial policy there. It was a kind of a niche, a very small niche in the government, and it was a very nice place to be.

JG: It sounds like a good fit.

GJ: It was. It was a good fit, except for one thing — the Vietnam War. I became — it took awhile, it took a year or so, but I started to feel uncomfortable in the government. It was at that time that I joined Jews for Urban Justice [JUU], and that became Fabragen. I started expressing and living out my anti-war-ness through that. *[laughs]*

JG: How would you describe your Jewish identity at that point, as you were just —

GJ: Pivotal. It was pivoting. It was pivoting. I had this good, fairly decent background. Not the best background in the world, but I knew quite a bit. But I was not practicing in pretty much almost any way. It took me a few times. I went to one thing, a Freedom Seder, I remember, at GW [George Washington University] one year. I don't know if it was the first year or not, but I was turned off.

JG: You were turned off?

GJ: Yeah. I thought, I didn't — but, I changed. I actually became much more sympathetic to that viewpoint over the next year. There were certain events that triggered it. Then my roommate said, "Why don't you go to a JUU meeting? I think you'd find it interesting." So I went, and it was. I found it fascinating. There were these young people — some older, some younger, some the same age — that were talking about Jewish issues — Jewish politics, Israel politics, linking the Civil Rights Movement with being Jewish, linking things that were going on in Israel with leftist politics. (01:02:00) I really found it fascinating and interesting, and I got involved.

JG: So this was '70, '71.

GJ: It was maybe '70. It started in 1970.

JG: Your involvement in JUU, which was a couple of years old at that point.

GJ: So a lot of the baggage that JUU had was already — I mean, in the Jewish community, it had a lot of negative baggage. The main things that gave it a bad reputation in the Jewish community had already happened.

JG: And what were those things?

GJ: They did a sit-in or some kind of protest at the site of the new JCC [Jewish Community Center] in Rockville, because the owners were seen as slum lords. Not the owners, but the main —

JG: Funders.

GJ: Funders were seen as slumlords, and this kind of thing. That was a big part of the political ethos, how the Jews weren't living up to Jewish values.

JG: The ethos of JUJ.

GJ: Yeah. The idea was to bring an alternative way of being Jewish to the Jewish community.

JG: And a politically engaged way.

GJ: Yeah. You know, there was a wide spectrum. I wasn't particularly comfortable with some of the people, some of the views, but I was comfortable enough to be involved. It was a way of expressing my outrage at the Vietnam War, which was pretty great.

JG: To what extent was JUJ focused on anti-war activism during that period?

GJ: A lot. It was a lot. I don't remember — I think it was when JUJ was still in existence. We planted a tree on the Capitol Grounds, a tree of peace or something like that — tree of peace, or tree of life, or something. It wasn't legal to do that. *[laughs]* I don't remember specifically — I think the first time we had to take it away or something. Then the Senator from Alaska — I'm trying to remember his name — but he either passed a resolution or something that allowed us to plant the tree. Eventually the tree was planted. I think it got moved at some point. I don't know if it died or just got moved. But we planted a tree, and then we had a ceremony. I was the soldier. Well, I wasn't exactly the soldier. There was actually another Vietnam veteran, my close friend, that was my roommate in law school.

JG: Was he also involved in JUJ?

GJ: Yeah, I think so. (01:05:00) I think so, and Fabbragen. I kind of became the member of JUJ who was the former military anti-war Jew. *[laughs]*

JG: Did that give you a certain status or credibility?

GJ: I don't know about status, but I think — here were anti-war activities, like Vietnam Veterans Against the War, during that general period. In 1971 there was a Mall camp-in.

JG: On the Mall.

GJ: On the Mall. A Vietnam veterans sleep-in or something. So I was involved in those things.

JG: Did you know Kerry, John Kerry?

GJ: No, but I was aware of what he was doing. I was working in the Treasury Department at that time, so I was still in one world and another world at the same time. It was around that time that I started growing my beard. I grew a beard at that time. I was thinking — I was talking about this with my wife this morning — I think it was kind of an expression of separation. I was trying to separate myself. I was kind of trying to get ready to leave the government, and this was like, the longer it got, it was closer. *[laughs]* I must have looked a little off in that environment at the time. I was getting more and more anti-war and anti-government. It was a real problem working for Nixon.

JG: Were there others in your department or in the Treasury Department who joined you?

GJ: No, I was the only one — anyway, where I was. There may have been others.

JG: To what extent was Israel a focus of JUJ actors at that point? The Six Day War had just happened just a few years earlier.

GJ: It was. It was a major focus. We were sympathetic to the peace camp, which was considered the radical left in Israel at that time. We were sympathetic to the idea of giving back the West Bank and this kind of thing. And I was.

JG: Had you ever been to Israel?

GJ: I made my first trip to Israel in 1971. I'm trying to remember. Was it a summer? I'm not sure. (01:08:00) I coordinated it with my uncle, the rabbi that I spoke of. We spent some time together there. After Fabrangen had started I went back and spent four and a half or five and a half months at a kibbutz. I was at an ulpan. I took an ulpan, so I worked and was at an ulpan learning Hebrew.

JG: Which kibbutz?

GJ: Kibbutz Be'erot Yitzhak, which was a *dati* kibbutz, Mizrahi.

JG: Where is it?

GJ: It's near the airport, near Lod. It was the winter and spring of 1972. But the politics on Israel was pretty left wing. Even so, there was a variety of positions from really radical to more moderate, within JUJ and Fabrangen.

JG: Let's focus on JUJ for the moment. Can you talk a little bit about what the range of opinions was, from the radicals to the more moderate, within JUJ?

GJ: I think some people were pretty sympathetic with the Palestinians, and others weren't necessarily that much allied, but they felt like I did — that Israel should have more peace-oriented policies, and more humanitarian policies.

JG: Were there positions JUJ was espousing vis-a-vis what the long-term prospects for peace would entail?

GJ: I don't really remember much about the details, but they espoused positions that I'm uncomfortable with today.

JG: That were so far left.

GJ: Yeah.

JG: — that felt anti-Israel, or not particularly?

GJ: I don't think they were anti-Israel. I don't think anybody was anti-Israel. Maybe some people were, but that definitely wasn't me. That's why there was this spectrum. I think some people were in fact anti-Israel or expressed anti-Israel views — at least what was perceived to be anti-Israel. In those days, if you said anything nice about the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] it was anti-Israel, because that was the days of Black September and hijackings. They were terrorists — the political outfits, Fatah and PLO, they were terrorist groups — no question about it. So I was not sympathetic with them. But by the same token, (01:11:00) I was sympathetic to the plight of the Palestinians, and I tried to encourage moderation. That wasn't a very popular position in the Jewish community in the United States. Even moderation was not considered kosher. So that led to a lot of opposition to JUJ and to Fabrangen among the establishment community, even though Fabrangen did get a grant for its first year from the JUJ in Washington.

JG: From the UJA.

GJ: From the UJA — it was the federation at that time — but it lost it for political reasons after that year.

JG: Let's go back for a second. I wanted to ask you about how, in your recollection, Fabrangen actually got started, and who the central players were in getting it off the ground.

GJ: I think the key person who was pushing the idea of a religious component to JIJ was Rob Agus. He worked with Paul Rutkav and David Shneyer. I saw them as kind of a triumvirate of the leaders of the movement within JIJ to this religious manifestation of JIJ, so to speak. Ultimately JIJ fell away, and there was no more JIJ, so it's easy to think of the two as separate. But at one point, they weren't separate. It was in a meeting, a JIJ meeting, when Rob brought it up.

JG: The idea.

GJ: Yeah, and we talked about it. I believe it was the focus of a retreat that we had at Harper's Ferry in December of 1970. By then I think there had been pretty much a decision to start Fabrangen. I don't think the idea initially was that JIJ would go away, but it quickly actually did go away after Fabrangen started, because Fabrangen became a venue for doing the politics. It became problematic to do the politics, but it was very political at the beginning. We had a draft resistance counselor. I mean, how? *[laughs]* For some people, that wasn't very popular. People came to Washington, and they could sleep at Fabrangen when they went for the protests. There were anti-war marches, and people stayed at Fabrangen. They stayed over there. We had lots of room. (01:14:00) These things were not popular. *[laughs]*

JG: No. Do you remember the concept paper for a New Jewish Community that was circulated by Rob Agus?

GJ: In general, I do.

JG: As you said, it was launched with a fifteen-thousand-dollar grant for six months, a grant from the UJA.

GJ: Was it fifteen-thousand-dollars?

JG: Fifteen-thousand.

GJ: It's just funny, I think of it as being fifty thousand, but that's just my faulty memory. You remember it better than I do.

JG: In his book *Torn at the Roots* — do you know Michael Staub's work?

GJ: No.

JG: He writes that most people of the time accepted the idea that Fabringen was the non-political part of JUJ, and that others felt that JUJ sort of became Fabringen. What do you think of the relationship between the two?

GJ: I think that's accurate.

JG: Which?

GJ: There was a distinction there?

JG: That Fabringen was the non-political part of JUJ, so they were two distinct —

GJ: I think initially, that was the thought.

JG: But then it sort of morphed, you're saying.

GJ: But then really, the JUJ people became Fabringen, and there was no more JUJ. It didn't take very long.

JG: What was the relationship of JUJ and Fabringen to the Jewish federation that was providing the funds in the beginning? Were there tensions there from the beginning?

GJ: You know, Rob really was the person dealing with the UJA Federation.

JG We'd been talking before we took a lunch break about the relationship between JUJ and Fabringen, and I wanted to ask you what your recollections are of the relationships between JUJ and Fabringen and the Jewish establishment, in the organized Jewish community.

GJ: There were elements of the established community, meaning the federation community and the Jewish Community Council community, that were afraid of us. They were watching us, and there were articles about us in the *Jewish Week*.

JG What was the tenor of the articles?

GJ: Very negative.

JG: And what was the critique?

GJ: That we were outposts for the Palestinians, Al Fatah. There was an article, it was (01:17:00) called, "Al Fatah Goes to Shul." Does that say it all? [*laughs*]

JG In your recollection, were there any conditions or strings attached to the fifteen thousand dollar grant that UJA gave Fabrangen to get off the ground, in terms of the kinds of activities Fabrangen could engage in, or the kind of relationship between Fabrangen and JUJ — anything in that vein?

GJ: I'm afraid I don't — it's possible. I think Rob is the best person, and you've already talked to him. He would be more aware of it than I was, because he was the one that was the interface. He got the money, and he did all the negotiations. At one point when we lost our funding, or were about to lose our funding, we had a hearing at the federation office. They had a committee — it was three people — and we gave testimony about Fabrangen to try to defend ourselves. It was interesting because the committee recommended continuation of funding, but the board of the federation rejected it, and they cut it off.

JG: On what grounds, given that recommendation?

GJ: They didn't mince any words. They said that this is not the kind of activity that the Jewish community should be funding.

JG: Mainly because of the —

GJ: The political —

JG: The political, pro-Palestinian aspects of —

GJ: Maybe they said it was pro-Palestinian, but I think it was more peace-oriented. Criticism of Israel, that wasn't tolerated in those days. It was something that Fabrangen got funding, and it may be that Rob made representations about what it would be, and now that I'm thinking about it, it seems to ring a bell — that it was going to be religious,

and that was the primary purpose, though there might be some politics — but, my recollection is not solid on that.

JG: Were you involved in Fabrangen from the very outset?

GJ: Yes, yes.

JG: So this new community was called the Fabrangen Jewish Free Culture Center. What was the meaning behind the name? Where did Fabrangen come from?

GJ: If you had asked me what (01:20:00) the name was, I wouldn't have been able to tell you. [*laughs*] I would have said, yeah, this is Fabrangen. I wouldn't have remembered any of that other part.

JG: What did Fabrangen mean?

GJ: Well, to me and I think to Rob — and I'll stop there — it was “coming together,” which is what it means literally.

JG: In Yiddish.

GJ: In Yiddish. And now I'm just eliding the name and the purpose together, which was a new way, a new way of coming together, to renew Jewish values and to live a holistic — we used that word a lot — a holistic Jewish life. It was used by Rob, I think with reference to the *farbrengens*, and the Rebbe, the Lubavitcher Rebbe. It emphasized, or at least it connoted, this hasidic flavor of *niggunim* and Jewish feeling, that everybody was equal in Judaism, and that you didn't have to be a learned person to experience the holiness in Judaism and Jewish life.

JG: Why was the decision made not to use the word *havurah* in the name? Do you know?

GJ: You'd have to ask Rob. I don't know. [*laughs*] He gave it the name.

JG: Okay. To what extent would you say you and others involved in the beginnings of Fabrangen were aware of the existence of Havurat Shalom in Boston and the New York Havurah, and held them as some kind of a model?

GJ: We were very aware. We were very aware of them. We thought of them as sort of sister organizations. We were, together, kind of a community of sorts. We understood also that the character of our organization and those two were different, and each of those

were different from each other. First of all, Havurat Shalom was, as we were talking about before, a seminary, a community seminary, and it was more of a scholarly sort of an organization. New York Havurah, I really never got a firm grasp as to what it was, but it also had links to the seminary in New York, the Jewish Theological Seminary. It seemed to me, people who were (01:23:00) graduates went there, or people who were going to school went there. It was very close, on the Upper West Side. Whereas we were overtly political. We were in Washington, and that gave us a different character from the others. They may have been political, but not in the same way, and not as much, I don't think. We were really active politically. There were things to do here you couldn't do in New York or Boston, and we did those things. *[laughs]*

JG: We'll go through those shortly. Both Havurat Shalom and the New York Havurah were membership organizations, membership communities where people had to apply and be accepted in order to become part of the community. How did Fabragen envision how it would create this community and who would become part of it?

GJ: There was none of that. No such thing as applying for membership. Anybody could be part of it. All you had to do was to come to be part of it, and you were welcome. The whole idea behind it — and this was Rob's idea, but I certainly subscribed to it, and most people did — was that it was a way for people to experience Jewish community who were repelled, or turned off, by organized Jewish life and Jewish communities that they were familiar with, and to bring them back to a kind of Jewish experience, to Judaism. We, in a sense, were much more egalitarian and less hierarchical. You know, I was thinking about this, and I don't remember for sure, but I don't remember a hierarchical structure even within it — like in terms of somebody was president, somebody was vice president. I don't remember any of that. There might have been, but I can't remember that being a big part of it. There was a leadership group. There were people who did certain functions. I thought of the other groups as much more elitist.

JG: How would you describe the sort of backgrounds and diversity of the community, (01:26:00) the people who did become involved in Fabragen in that very beginning period?

GJ: It was very diverse. I think Rob was certainly the best educated Jewishly, being a rabbi's son, and he kind of took a lead in that way. Arthur Waskow was certainly the most political, and he was in fact the only real public figure, a person that people knew outside of our group. I think he was really the only one. So he had a reputation and visibility, and he was very politically involved through the Urban Institute — no, not the Urban Institute — what was the name of that? It will come to me, but there was an institute that he was

part of. He was a fellow there. It still exists. It's a left-wing kind of think tank. I think Raskin, I forget his first name [Marcus], is part of that. The rest of us were —

JG: When did Max and Esther Ticktin come on the scene?

GJ: Yeah, well, Max was not one of the founders. I think it was about a year, maybe '72, '73. I remember the first time he attended anything in Fabrangen. It happened to be at my house. It was Sukkot, and we had services at the Sukkah in my backyard, and that was his first time in Fabrangen. He was an assistant or associate director of Hillel at the time. I think it was the parashah that you read, I think from *Zachariah*, where Gog and Magog have the war. It's the haftorah. So it was, I think, *Shabbat Sukkot*, or something like that. Anyway, so he joined later, but being a rabbi and a political activist, and having a wife, Esther, who was also equally involved, they immediately became an important part of the group, adding something substantial that we didn't have before. But there were many other kinds of people that came from a wide variety — this is what you're asking — a wide (01:29:00) variety of backgrounds, some with very little Jewish education or involvement. For the most part, it was that kind of person. There was one person who became a friend of mine, ours, who was the president of the National Synagogue Youth of the Conservative Movement.

JG: USY.

GJ: He was the national president. So there were people who had been involved in Jewish life, but it attracted all kinds of people.

JG: So what kind of activities did Fabrangen offer, as it was getting off the ground, and what were you most involved in?

GJ: Well, I wasn't involved in the draft counseling, or anti-draft counseling, although a fraternity brother who moved from New York became the lawyer who was doing that work for Fabrangen.

JG: What was that work?

GJ: It was advising people who wanted to get out of the draft.

JG: People in the community or people —

GJ: Kids. Anybody. People became involved because of that, or maybe they just came for that. Would you repeat the question?

JG: The kinds of activities that Fabrangen was offering in the very beginning.

GJ: That was something we did from the beginning. We hosted people who were visiting for anti-war demonstrations, this kind of thing. We had classes. I remember Rob's father spoke, early on. We had an opening night festival, or something, in which Shlomo Carlebach did a concert. We had a poster, Paul Rutkay did a silkscreen poster, which I have a copy of somewhere.

JG: If you have it, that would be wonderful to have.

GJ: You don't have that?

JG: No. What do you remember about that? Can you describe that?

GJ: Not really.

JG: Just even a little bit about it?

GJ: I know that Shlomo sang, and it was a very heavily attended event. It was very joyous. I'm sure there was singing and dancing. It was on a February night in 1971. I forget —

JG: So right at the beginning.

GJ: It was the first event.

JG: The very first event of Fabrangen. When you said opening event, that's what you meant.

GJ: Yes. It was the opening.

JG: Was there a crowd?

GJ: A very large crowd. We attracted (01:32:00) huge numbers of people. It caught on very, very quickly. We had big crowds every Friday night.

JG: And what would happen on Friday nights?

GJ: We would have a communal meal after services. We would have *Kabbalat Shabbat*, the evening service. We would meet in the upstairs living room.

JG: This was in the Fabrangen house that you rented with the money —

GJ: Yeah. It was on Florida Avenue. It was a three or four-story house, and it was right next to the Cosmos Club, coincidentally. There was lots of space. There was space for offices, and for meeting rooms. There was a kitchen, of course. We would have services in the upstairs living room. We would sit on the floor. We had one or two guitars. David Shneyer would do his part of the service. Rob would do his part in the service. As time went on, I got the hang of it, and if for some reason or other that David wasn't around, or maybe in addition to David, I would lead services. I had a guitar and I played the guitar and I would lead. That was really one of the highlights for me.

JG: So describe how the evening would go. It would start with *Kabbalat Shabbat*, and how would it start?

GJ: Just singing. There would be the humming, the *niggunim*. Getting into the mood, getting into the spirit of Shabbat, to welcome Shabbat. There were certain kind of songs we would sing, like *Esa Einai* or *Mi Ha Ish*, and probably some others, which I don't remember, and then we would do the regular *Kabbalat Shabbat* service. We would sing a lot of Carlebach melodies to that, which I'll get to later when it comes to what happened with that. That's another subject really. Then we would have the service, and sometimes we had themes. Or not necessarily themes, but we would ask people to give some kind of contribution of their own, people who didn't know the prayer book. One woman was a dancer, so she was encouraged to dance. So instead of giving a *d'var torah* or singing, she would dance — that kind of thing. It was very open and very free wheeling, and designed to allow people to express themselves and to get into the spirit of Shabbat, and to do their thing if they had something to contribute, even if it wasn't something (01:35:00) that the other people were doing. I remember later on, a few years later, when we were meeting at the Religious Action Center of the Reform Movement, that Shlomo — uh — Schachter?

JG: Zalman.

GJ: Zalman Schachter, he did a completely dance version for *Kabbalat Shabbat*. I was a little bit iffy about that whole thing [*laughs*], but I mean, we were up to that. It was not completely set in stone at all. So you could see how it was open. It was designed to bring people in. For a year at least, it was like that. When we moved to more confined quarters, it became rather crowded. That led to something — I'll get to that later. You were asking

what we were doing in the beginning. So we were doing that. Were we doing Shabbat morning study and services? I don't remember, to tell you the truth, but I know we had study sessions. We would study the Torah, which we had been doing at JUJ, too, but it moved into this building. I remember meeting — maybe it was more than once — at Arthur Waskow's home, on Wyoming Avenue — or Street — for Torah discussions. Those were really fantastic discussions. Now, from my point of view, they were quirky, but then it was extremely exciting to hear people bring the Torah portion alive, and to see different things in themselves in the Torah reading, and to express what they were feeling about those things. It gave new dimensions to the humash and Judaism.

JG: Did they bring contemporary issues into those discussions?

GJ: Yes, but more often personal feelings, the way they felt about themselves. That was one of the things that sometimes bothered me — but other times didn't — was how personal people would get. Very revealing. It would feel a little bit like a therapy session sometimes. People would bring their personal problems into it and share them with us. Sometimes that was uncomfortable, but we were always supportive, but that happened.

JG: When did things like the coffee house that Fabranken offered get (01:38:00) get off the ground — the poetry readings and speaker series, those types of things?

GJ: I think pretty much in the beginning. The most active period was in the beginning. The most activities we had was in the beginning, because we had all this space, and we had all this energy just flowing out, and all these people who were interested. As I said, right away it was very popular. Once people knew about it, they came and they came back.

JG: How many people would be there on a typical *Kabbalat Shabbat*, Friday evening service?

GJ: Well, it ranged, and I couldn't say for sure, but it would be fifty or more? Seventy-five? I don't think it was more than seventy-five. If it was a hundred, I don't know. It could get pretty crowded, but it was also so great. After the service, we served a communal meal. Everybody pitched in. Maybe one week I would make tuna casserole for thirty people [*laughs*], and then another time, somebody else would do the meal. You know, we had free meals. That always is an attraction. Then afterward, I don't remember exactly what happened, but we probably hung around and talked. Somebody pulled out a guitar and sang. If we had visitors, there was a lot of schmoozing late into the night. It was free-form. At some point, David Shneyer introduced a looseleaf alternative High

Holiday prayer book, and I remember it was our prayer book. We used it for several years. Now I look at it, and I realize, gee, we really were pretty quirky. [*laughs*]

JG: What was in there that made you feel that, looking back?

GJ: Well, it was everything. It was not just non-traditional things, it was non-Jewish things. A variety of things. One of the members was an artist, and he did drawings and the drawings would get in there. I know he did — where's that book? I'll show you the book. He designed this, I think. [*holds up newsletter*] This is the Fabrangen newsletter. I think that's his drawing — Kol Shechvee, I think that is? And as a present, on my birthday, or for maybe my wedding, he designed a bookmark, a series of bookmarks with different drawings. [*gives JG bookmarks*] He was the illustrator of the first *Jewish Catalog*. (01:41:00)

JG: What's his name?

GJ: Stuart Copans. So as I said, different people had different things to offer.

JG: So what kinds of political activism was Fabrangen engaged in in those early months?

GJ: Well, 1971 was very active anti-war activity going on in Washington. As I mentioned, the Vietnam Veterans Against the War encampment, on the Mall, took place in April in 1971.

JG: Were you part of this?

GJ: I was, and some other people were, too. There were anti-war marches — to tell you the truth, the last one I really remember was 1969, but there must have been ones after that. A lot of political activity was about the war. As I said, we hosted people coming into town for that. We had classes. Rob taught classes, and we had visiting people, rabbis, come in. We had regular classes.

JG: Was there an anti-war rally in 1971, after Fabrangen got started in Washington DC — a big one?

GJ: There might have been. I don't remember. There was another thing that happened, and you probably heard this from somebody else. The musicians that played, David Shneyer formed the trio called the Fabrangen Fiddlers. You've probably heard of that. It included at least one other member of Fabrangen. Maybe all three were members of Fabrangen. They became their own kind of entity. At first they were just the musicians of

Fabrangen, or something, but then it became — it's probably a name that David thought up — Fabrangen Fiddlers, and it became a group. They recorded albums and they started doing gigs. I don't know if they still exist, but for a long time they did play for things, Jewish folk festivals and weddings and bar mitzvahs and things like that.

JG: Yeah. So I want to now sort of delve into some of the activities and program of Fabrangen after that first six-month period, after the federation had cut off its funding, and Fabrangen thereafter moved into a smaller building. Is that correct?

GJ: Right. I think we moved more than once. The place that I remember was 1621 (01:44:00) 27th Street? Something like that. It was in — what do they call that area? It's near —

JG: 1627 21st Street.

GJ: Ah, I got it backwards. But it was near the big hotel there, just south of the zoo. I can't think of what they call that area.

JG: This was the winter of '72.

GJ: Perhaps. It was a row house. There was much less room there, and we were still drawing big crowds. Then, it started getting very crowded. Oh, 1627 21st Street? I think — I have a recollection of moving. Maybe that's when we were down near the Phillips Gallery. We moved to a place near the Phillips Gallery, and then after that we moved to a place up Connecticut Avenue. So that was the third place. I guess it was the second place. Maybe it was 21st Street, because I'm not sure what the address means, near the Phillips. It's close to the Religious Action Center on Massachusetts Avenue. I just remember thinking: This is oppressive. We have too many people. We can't fit. People can't get comfortable. People can't really feel a part, people are forced to the periphery. I brought up at meetings that we should do something about this, that people are not going to feel a part enough of the community, because we just can't absorb in that space all the people who were coming in. They'll come in, and they'll kind of go away. We saw it as a way for people getting involved, kind of like as an organizing tool for a new kind of Jewish community. I proposed, and I thought it was important, to allow other people to feel this feeling and experience that we had as the original members of Fabrangen — you can't do that with fifty or seventy-five people — and to allow satellites to get started. It didn't fly. People didn't like that. I had other proposals that I'd like to bring up. I don't know what's in your —

JG: Please, go ahead.

GJ: I was interested in communal life. In the spring of 1971, I was a government attorney. Did I mention that? I worked for the Treasury Department, and I quit my job in protest. I just couldn't work in the Nixon administration anymore. I wanted to start a kind of a kibbutz.

JG: An urban kibbutz.

GJ: Well, not so urban. (01:47:00)

JG: Not so urban.

GJ: I remember going out to southwestern Virginia and visiting a commune there to see what they were doing. I was interested in doing something like that. I had quit my job. I was not working anymore. I was looking for a kind of total commitment to this new holistic life, but other people weren't ready. There wasn't a single other person who quit their job, or was interested in this kind of radical change in their lifestyle, and it didn't go anywhere. I investigated. One of the reasons I went to Israel in the winter of '72 was that this proposal had been rejected, and I was going to look again and see what I could find in Israel, on an Israeli kibbutz. That was one of the motivating factors. One was to see how it would work for the purposes of transplanting in Washington and the general area, and also just to experience it, because I wasn't getting to experience it the way I was looking for. Again, during this period I was not working, and —

JG: What was the experience like for you in Israel? And could you repeat what kibbutz you were on?

GJ: I was on Kibbutz Be'erot Yitzhak, and I got out of it what I expected — hoped to — get out of it, in a way. If you read the article that I gave you —

JG: In the newsletter.

GJ: It's complex.

JG: Can you tell us the highlights though?

GJ: Well, I learned what it was to learn in a total Jewish environment, in a total communal environment, in a religious environment, but I also saw that it wasn't the ideal community that I was looking for, that there were a lot of real people there with real failings — *[laughs]* political, social, family, and imperfections, values that weren't

necessarily consistent with mine. That's what the article says. It was a kind of a reality check. But I learned a lot. I wasn't particularly happy there. One reason was, I got mono after about three weeks, and that kind of tinged the rest of the experience, because I was sick a lot of the time. (01:50:00) But, the things that I learned and experienced there were very valuable and stayed with me.

JG: Such as?

GJ: What a full Shabbat, what a full holiday was. What *davening* in an Orthodox environment was. Learning the service completely, the different services. So religiously it was a big education. I learned Hebrew. I was in *kita alef*, but I learned a lot in four and a half months or five months, whatever it was. All that I valued a great deal.

JG: At what point did you meet your wife, who is Israeli?

GJ: I met her in the summer of 1974, which was two years later. Although later on when I was working for this Jewish organization, the Synagogue Council's think tank, I would get introduced — I remember getting introduced [at a speaking event] by somebody in Great Neck, Long Island, at a synagogue that actually I went to for pre-bar mitzvah one year in Great Neck — and being introduced by this leader, who at that time was actually a national Jewish leader. I had dinner with him before I spoke at the synagogue. He asked me how I met my wife. Well, when he introduced me, he said that I had met my wife on a kibbutz, and I told him that no, that wasn't true, that I had met her in Washington, through a Fabrangen friend.

JG: So it wasn't during this period that you were actually on the kibbutz.

GJ: No. It was toward the end of the time that I was with Fabrangen that I met her.

JG: Did you come back from Israel or leave Israel feeling like you could bring some of what you had learned? What were your feelings about trying to live in a total immersive Jewish communal environment after your kibbutz experience?

GJ: Frankly I don't remember, but if I can try to imagine it, I think that I probably was bringing back what's in that article, which was the ideal and the reality of living community. I think my eyes were a little bit more open to the difficulties and the downsides of living communally, and I wanted to share my experiences. Within that article, it shows that I did. Other than that, specifically, I don't remember. It gave my (01:53:00) Hebrew knowledge and my religious knowledge a depth it didn't have before, and I hope that it contributed to what I was able to offer people when I was in Fabrangen.

JG: So you came back in '72.

GJ: Yeah. The summer of '72 I came back.

JG: And got very involved with Fabrangen at that point.

GJ: Yes.

JG: And did what professionally?

GJ: Well, I had left my job in the summer when I came back. I came back just during Tropical Storm Agnes, I think it was. It rained for seven straight days and nights. *[laughs]* There was a tremendous flood. That was what greeted me. It was odd, because when I went to Israel in February, it rained torrentially for the first month I was there also. *[laughs]* So I don't know what kind of a sign that was. I worked for Ralph Nader. I got a job paying almost nothing, working on the so-called Congress Project, which later became Congress Watch, which became a permanent organization. But, the Congress — uh, what did I say it was called?

JG: Congress Project.

GJ: Right. The Congress Project was a study of the U.S. Congress and the way it functioned or malfunctioned. I was given the D.C. — District of Columbia — committee, and the sub-committee of the Appropriations Committee for the District of Columbia. I was to interview people and write up a report that was going to be part of a book. There was a large staff, and I remember meeting Ralph Nader when I first started. I wrote what I thought was really a very interesting report about how the District of Columbia governance by the Congress, worked, sometimes not to the benefit of the District of Columbia. But it was never published. They said it would be published, but they never published it. The only thing — Mark Green, who was one of the directors of the program — he later became an official in New York City — he published a book based on that research. That was the only thing that got published. During the summer, a member of Fabrangen who was also a journalist called me up and told me that he knew somebody who was becoming director of this Jewish think tank of the Synagogue Council, and would I be interested?

JG: Could you say what was the Synagogue Council?

GJ: The Synagogue Council was the umbrella organization of Reform, Conservative and Orthodox congregational and rabbinical organizations, (01:56:00) so that it was an organization of organizations, six organizations. Now people might wonder how such an organization ever existed, because there's very little contact between Orthodox and Conservative now. The organization disbanded in 1994; the Synagogue Council institute was called the Institute for Jewish Policy Planning and Research of the Synagogue Council of America. It started in the fall of '72 in Washington. Ira Silverman was the director and I was the research director.

JG: This was a brand-new organization.

GJ: This was a brand-new organization. The name had existed in New York for a while, and there had been a director, but he got seriously ill. In any case, they moved it to Washington. Phillip Klutznick funded it with seven or six of his friends over a three-year period, so it had a nice funding base. It was to bring serious research, journalism, and academic studies to the issues of Jewish life in America, and elsewhere. At the time, it was unique. Actually, I don't think there's anything like it now or since; that was in the days, at the very, very beginning of the Association for Jewish Studies, and Jewish studies programs generally.

JG: In universities.

GJ: In universities, right. I remember the newsletter. I joined the organization. I spoke there on at least one occasion. The newsletter was a mimeograph at the very beginning. It was a rather small organization, and it became a mammoth organization, just like the number of Jewish Studies programs became mammoth in the country. At the very beginning, there wasn't — people weren't doing academic, serious research about Jewish issues. You had a kind of a Jewish press that was not very critical, not very far seeing and what we attempted to do was to examine various issues that were affecting Jewish life in America, from a serious, sometimes critical perspective. It was the perfect job for me. It was like a dream come true, because when I came back from Israel, I wanted to do something to change and improve the Jewish community in America, (01:59:00) and since I am primarily interested in intellectual things and writing, rather than say, politics as such, becoming a politician, it was perfect for me because it allowed me to address a wide variety of issues that I felt needed to be addressed. I addressed such things as Jews in cults. That was a big thing in those days, Jews joining ashrams. The possibility of negotiations with the PLO, which was a very hot topic in the Synagogue Council, and to this day I'm amazed that it actually got published. It was very controversial. I'm not sure how it actually happened that it got published, because it was very — I've been saying sympathetic — but it listened to and gave the views of the most moderate Palestinians,

and I posed the question in that article about maybe there's a place to talk to these people? Maybe there's an element there that we should be open to talking to? It was anathema in those days, because their biggest expression in those days was killing people, murdering people. Later — I think it was 1974 — I did a study of Soviet Jewish immigration, really soup to nuts. I covered every aspect, including the likelihood that there would be thousands, tens of thousands, of Soviet Jews coming into the United States, which is what happened. A part of that was — a major part, but a small part of that article, was to examine whether the social service agencies that were dealing with immigration of Soviet Jews were up to the task — what were they doing and what needed to change. The article itself, was rather long. It was like — I don't know, it was long, seven to ten-thousand words. It got re-published in Israel. They translated it into Hebrew and republished my article in *D'var's* weekend edition. *D'var* doesn't exist anymore, but it was a big newspaper. It was the Labor Zionist newspaper in those days. At that time, it was one of the major ones. But the part of it that (02:02:00) got interest particularly was what I had to say about Jewish organizations' handling of immigrants, which I was very critical of. The New York Federation invited me up, for example, to speak to them about it, because they were involved in the funding of these Jewish resettlement organizations, and it resulted in an overhaul of what they were doing and who was doing it.

JG: Did you feel like you were having an impact?

GJ: I did have an impact. I not only felt it, I did have an impact. Our publication was called *Analysis*, and it was circulated to three thousand rabbis and Jewish academics and Jewish institutions. There weren't that many, but — to congressmen, to political leaders. I wrote similar articles, shorter ones, for the *National Jewish Monthly*, which were basically condensed versions of these longer research papers. B'nai Brith at that time had 500,000 members, so 500,000 people got the *B'nai Brith National Jewish Monthly*, and never once — and I had several of these articles done in the *National Jewish Monthly* — I didn't get a single letter from that audience of 500,000 people, whereas, for *Analysis*, I used to get lots and lots of letters, from academics, from rabbis. It had a big impact.

JG: What's your interpretation of why the general community didn't respond to you?

GJ: Maybe they don't read the journal. [*laughs*] I don't know. That was a conundrum to me. You'd think, write one letter to the editor, one? Over, what was it, '72 to '77, I must have written three or four articles that were re-published in there, and nothing. Whereas, to the *Analysis* publications, I used to get all these letters from various people, saying how helpful it was, or whatever it was.

JG: Who would read the *Analysis* publication? Who were the readers?

GJ: Well, as I said, it went to three thousand rabbis.

JG: Rabbis.

GJ: It went to the mailing list of the Synagogue Council of America. They were the ones who circulated it. They were the ones that mailed it out. That was the primary audience. It was the majority of printed versions. But I got, for example — I did a study of Jewish hospitals and (02:05:00) whether Jewish hospitals ought to exist as Jewish hospitals. What's the point of having a Jewish hospital? The question was presented in those days, why do we need Jewish hospitals anymore, because Jewish doctors don't have — are admitted to practice in regular hospitals? The reason there were Jewish hospitals was to allow Jewish doctors to practice medicine in a hospital setting in the days of strong anti-Semitism, in academia and in those fields. But that wasn't true in the seventies anymore, so people were saying, "Why are we funding these organizations?" So that was the question I examined, and what I found was, while it's true that ninety or eighty-five percent of budgets for these Jewish hospitals come from federal funds or state funds, there's this ten to fifteen percent of discretionary money that comes from philanthropy that isn't tied to anything, to service or anything, and from that, research is done and advances in medicine are made. So the article made the point that this is valuable. It's true — all these other things that people are saying are true. But it makes these Jewish hospitals make a contribution to society, and to Jewish life. Well, let me just give you one example. I got a letter from one of the administrators of a Jewish hospital, and he asked me, "How big a staff did you have doing this?" I interviewed the director of every Jewish hospital. There's quite a few, maybe twenty-four of them. He said, "Tell me, how many people worked on this with you?" And I said, "Well, actually, nobody." [laughs] I would get letters from people with Jewish academic chairs and things like that. It was very gratifying, to see people reading it and thinking it was valuable.

JG: So you had come back to DC, gotten involved in this incredibly important and meaningful work to you, where you felt you were having an impact. Fabranken was also supposed to be a way in which the Jewish community was experimenting with creating change and having an impact in a different kind of a way.

GJ: Yes.

JG: So I want to go back to talking about that in some more depth, but how were you feeling about Fabranken, as you were re-entering it post your Israel experience, and at the time that you were also getting involved in this very impactful and meaningful work in your professional life?

GJ: They were complementary. For example, I did write an article in *Analysis* (02:08:00) about the *havurah* movement and what it had to teach to synagogues and synagogue life. That was widely read and commented upon. Just generally, the Jewish press picked up these articles and summarized them and so forth. So it did have an impact. To get to the Fabringen part, it was complementary. It was a way of living out some of these things that I hoped to create.

JG: Did you come back from Israel feeling like it was possible for you to be part of a holistic Jewish community?

GJ: Yes.

JG: What did you want from Fabringen at that point?

GJ: I'm not sure much changed at first. This was when I came back, summer of '72. What changed was that when the October war hit in fall of '73, and I saw people's reaction to it, I realized that I wasn't in the same place politically as most of the people in Fabringen.

JG: So this was the Yom Kippur War.

GJ: Yeah. It was Yom Kippur of '73, and it was the beginning of my pulling away from Fabringen.

JG: What happened? What were the differences in where you were and where the rest of the Fabringeners were?

GJ: Well, I don't remember exactly, but I was much more pro-Israel than the people around me were. I don't remember the exact expressions of it or how it was manifested, but I started feeling uncomfortable, that some of the views that were being expressed about Israel's position in the world, its defense, were not my — they didn't speak for me. At the same time, because I was doing this other thing for the Synagogue Council, I was getting increasingly involved in interacting with the wider Jewish community, and I saw that there was change going on in the Jewish community at large. A big factor in that was Rabbi Yitzchak Greenberg. He became, like, the rabbi in residence to the federation. He was turning people on — especially the young leadership of the federation — to Judaism. (02:11:00) People were starting kosher kitchens of their own, and becoming more Jewish, and the federation was becoming more interested in Judaism and Jewish education, and the kinds of things that I wanted. In fact, what everyone wanted in the *havurah*

movement was reform. If you recall, there was some some kind of demonstration or something, I think it was at the 1969 federation convention.

JG: This was in Boston.

GJ: In Boston. That was kind of like the beginning of this "New Jews" kind of thing. It became the title of a book by —

JG: Jim Sleeper.

GJ: Right, Jim Sleeper. So we were kind of like the "new Jews," but I sensed that there was something to accomplish within the wider Jewish community that Fabrangen was pulling away from, or not integrating itself with, politically and in other ways. They still had this very anti-establishment position, and not the position on Israel that I was starting to feel.

JG: Yeah. So it sounds like the position on Israel became somewhat of a wedge issue, so to speak, in regard to Fabrangen —

GJ: Yes.

JG: — after your return. And you're saying you'd been back for around a year-ish when the Yom Kippur War took place.

GJ: Yes.

JG: You came back in '72, and it was a year later.

GJ: Yes, right. So I didn't leave Fabrangen until, you know, '74, '75, I think — somewhere in there. I know I was still involved in '74, because that's when I met my wife, and we went to Fabrangen together. We went to the retreat. There was a national — well, not a national — a retreat of the three —

JG: Weiss's Farm?

GJ: Weiss's Farm — of the three *havurot*, the New York Havurah and the Boston Havurat Shalom. I went along. She didn't go with me, but she was there. Then we visited with the Strassfelds and so on. We went to the New York Havurah afterward for Sukkot. We went to their minyan. So I know that when she first came, which was the summer of '74, that I was still involved. Exactly when I started doing other things — I got involved

with other things. I got involved with two other small group kind of — I guess you could say havurot. But one was actually a *havurah*, Adas Israel. I was involved in the very early stages.

JG: When did that start?

GJ: '72.

JG: So that had already started while you were at Fabrangen.

GJ: (02:14:00) Very much so, yes. I was involved, a little bit, but I wasn't one of the people who started it. When I found out about it, I started going occasionally. I think Rabbi Harold White was one of the people who started it. There are some people I'm still friendly with at Adas Israel that started it. That still exists. We have off and on been involved with it. For a long time, we went. I read Torah regularly when I went. But, about a year or two ago, I stopped driving on Shabbat, so I stopped going. I tried walking a year or so ago once, and it was, I don't know. It was like, four miles or more, or six miles, in each direction. It was for an occasion. I went for an anniversary for one of our friends. I really was so sore that I said, unless somebody wants to host us nearby, I'm not doing this again. So I don't drive on Shabbat. There might be, once in a blue moon, that circumstances will require it, but otherwise not.

JG: So let's go back —

GJ: Oh! Let me just — so there was another small group that I got involved in the founding of, although I wasn't part of the initial group.

JG: In the seventies?

GJ: Yeah. I started getting involved — what I'm talking to you about is where I went to when I left Fabrangen. One was this *havurah*. The other one was something called an Orthodox minyan. It started in a house on Nebraska Avenue, and then eventually, after about a year or so, moved to Adas Israel. So, we had a room next to the room that the *havurah* was meeting in for this Orthodox minyan. About five or ten years later, it became the Egalitarian Minyan — originally it was not egalitarian — but I started *davening* there. It was within walking distance.

JG: At Adas, you said?

GJ: Yeah, both were at Adas. Rather well-known people were members of that original group. I'll keep names out of it, but you would know the names.

JG: [*laughs*] Okay. I want to go back a little bit more and explore what was happening at Fabringen in that period. One of the things I'd like to discuss some more is the role of *tefilah*, of prayer and worship, at Fabringen, which some people have said came more to the fore as political activism (02:17:00) became less of a communal focus, once the UJA money was withdrawn. Would you agree with that?

GJ: Yes, and one reason was, there were several people who were mainly political and not so religious, or people who — at least one person became a rabbi, so I find it ironic that I'm saying this — but at the time, they went but they didn't take leadership roles so much, because they were mainly interested in the radical politics. Services — Jewish study, the humash study on Saturday morning — they often came to that. But they weren't into *davening* so much. So there were people from JIJ that really were more political than religiously oriented, so those people took less of a role, and as it became more and more of a religious organization and less and less of a political organization, the people who were interested in spiritual experience became the leaders.

JG: In the beginning, as we've said, the main service, public service, was a *Kabbalat Shabbat* service on Friday night, followed by a communal meal. Do you recall when Shabbat morning services became a main feature of Fabringen life, beyond just the Torah study?

GJ: Right away.

JG: Right away.

GJ: Right away. I think the Torah study was JIJ. My recollection was that we had Shabbat morning services right away. And we had holiday services, too.

JG: So, many people have used the term neo-hasidic to describe the *havurah*-style worship in general. Would you say that applies? Is that an apt description for Fabringen as well?

GJ: I was never comfortable with that. I'm still not.

JG: How so?

GJ: Because it conjures up into people's minds people with *shtreimels* and long beards, although a lot of us had beards [*laughs*], so maybe we were, in a way. I guess I'm contradicting myself here, because we used to read Buber's stories from the hasidim. We did a lot — in the services, we brought in *Tales of the Hasidim*. We would read Rabbi Nachman stories, and the Baal Shem Tov stories, and — what's it called — Berditchev —

JG: Yitzchak.

GJ: Yitzchak of Berditchev? (02:20:00) Definitely, the hasidic stories were very important, but something about the name neo-hasidic doesn't strike me in a good way. But I guess you could say in a way we were.

JG: You were, somewhat, at any rate. Many people also point to the creative tension between tradition and innovation as a feature of *havurah*-style worship also, and, as you said, the creation of alternative forms of prayer. What, for you, stands out about that tension when you think of services at Fabringen?

GJ: The music.

JG: Music, okay.

GJ: I mean, for me, that was the path to spirituality.

JG: How so?

GJ: Well, I later in my Jewish learning learned that the intellect is very important in spirituality, but at least at that time, I felt that it was a way of people communicating with each other, as well as with God.

JG: The music.

GJ: The *niggunim*. We were very big on *niggunim*, sometimes without words. And people could make up their own *niggunim* if they wanted. I can't over-estimate the influence that the Carlebach stuff had. I mean, we were singing Carlebach melodies, and he was kind of like our rebbe.

JG: Are there particular melodies that stand out for you?

GJ: Not really, although I have a CD of his Shabbat Services. Those were all things we did. There were so many of them, it's hard to single out one, and some that I didn't find out that were his, that I found out later were his.

JG: Such as?

GJ: Like, I wish I could tell you. I got a CD recently, maybe ten years ago, of his Shabbat services. I play it occasionally. I also, at that time, got one of his House of Love and Prayer albums.

JG: How did people learn the Carlebach melodies? (02:23:00)

GJ: Probably mainly through David Shneyer. He would do them. Now, he also composed his own stuff. He made CDs, and we often sang some of his melodies. They were very good. But David was kind of like the troubadour of the group. He was the one that taught us the songs, I think, for the most part. But then we learned them. I learned them. I learned how to play them on the guitar, and that to me was the thing that stands out the most. The way we would start the services with the singing. We might go together in a circle, and put our arms together, link arms. A sense of unity, togetherness. It's a nice feeling.

JG: It sounds like it greatly contributed to the spiritual environment.

GJ: Yeah. Yeah.

JG: That's important.

GJ: Yeah, absolutely. I think in some ways, in a different way, the Shabbat morning discussions were also spiritual in a way, where we each could put some of ourselves, or interpretations, into the reading.

JG: How did those Torah discussions go? Who led them? Did they actually give a *dvar*, or was it just a thought that sparked a lot of discussion? What was the style at Fabringen, or did it differ from person to person?

GJ: Well, definitely it differed from person to person. I don't remember there being one leader. It was — how can I say? There are stronger people and less strong people, and the stronger people would speak more or lead more. For example, I have this recollection of Arthur Waskow doing a lot of the talking, and Rob Agus doing a lot of the talking. But it

was open, and that was, to me, the first really religious experience that I found of value through this organization. It started at JUJ, before we had regular services. (02:26:00)

JG: Unpack that a little bit. You said this was the first really religious experience you had.

GJ: Not the first religious experience I had, but in this context.

JG: In this context. What made it a religious experience?

GJ: It was bringing it alive. It was making the Torah alive. It wasn't just something that somebody else told you or was part of something that was next to you, but it became part of you, and it was something that we integrated into ourselves in a way that I never did that before. I doubt very many other people who were involved had either, save maybe Rob. I don't know. Yeah. It was, I think, transformative for many people.

JG: Was the Torah — how was the reading of the Torah, actually? How did that take place?

GJ: We would sit on the floor. Whether or not we had a service — in the beginning, I don't think we did.

JG: Did you have an actual Torah scroll in the beginning?

GJ: No, we just read from *humashim*, and we would go around. We would just go around in a circle reading in English, and where we stopped I don't recall, but we would stop along the way and talk. I don't know if we always got through the whole thing or not. I can't remember that either. But it was a discussion. The integration of the Torah with our minds — that was the unique thing, the new thing. That was just as important to me, in bringing that to other people too — we were kind of trying to bring people in — as the *hassidische* style *Kabbalat Shabbat*. It wasn't as big a crowd, but some people like that thing more than others.

JG: When did it move to actually reading, chanting the Torah portion, the parashah, in Hebrew, using traditional *nusach*, that type of approach, as opposed to reading the English?

GJ: I wish I could tell you.

JG: In those early years?

GJ: I think at some point we had a Torah. When we were at the Religious Action Center, I know we had an *aron*.

JG: When was that? It was in those early years at some point, because Rob mentioned it also.

GJ: It probably was in '73. I know it was in '73, because I remember on the Yom Kippur (02:29:00) service, it was there when somebody said, There's a war going on. Israel was attacked, or something. I remember we were in services when somebody mentioned it. It was Yom Kippur afternoon. So it was at least by 1973, and I'm not sure it was before that. But when we were in the Religious Action Center, I remember reading the Torah. I used to read the Torah. I know I read it on Yom Kippur, but I don't know. I wish I could tell you whether we were reading it on Shabbat or not, but it's very possible that we read it on Shabbat and then we had the Torah discussion. It sort of morphed into reading from the Torah and then doing the discussion. But I'm not sure of it.

JG: By the time Fabrangen was founded in 1971, a nascent Jewish feminist consciousness was beginning to form, which wasn't true in the very first years of Havurat Shalom and the New York Havurah —

GJ: Right, right.

JG: — which had been formed in '68 and '69. So how would you characterize the attitude toward women and women's status and women's role in communal worship in Fabrangen in the beginning, in this early period?

GJ: To my recollection, it was egalitarian, but I'm not sure that the women found it egalitarian. I know that the women sort of started their own little group that they just met together at times, that I didn't know much about — at least some of the women. I think that we were very supportive of what was going on. Was it — I'm trying to think, there was a name to that group — Ezrat Nashim?

JG: It was formed in '71. February of '71. So it was almost contemporaneous — '71, '72 — with Fabrangen.

GJ: Yeah. So I think it was part of the ethos.

JG: Do you remember women participating fully as leaders in the service, aliyot, being counted in minyan, those kinds of issues?

GJ: I think so. I think so. I don't think there were many women who could do it, but those who could, did. That's my recollection.

JG: A little later, if I'm remembering correctly, Chava Weissler first *leyned*, maybe in '73. People had to learn how to do it.

GJ: Yeah. It's very possible that we started reading from the Torah in the original building, in the original (02:32:00) year, but I don't have any direct recollection of it. Now that I think about it, we probably did.

JG: You probably did —

GJ: We probably did. We probably had an *aron*, but I don't remember it specifically. I'm sorry.

JG: So let's turn to the issue of study and learning, which was another major pillar of the vision for what this holistic Jewish community would consist of. How would you describe Fabrangen's vision for the role of learning in the community?

GJ: Well, most people didn't know that much, so we relied on the people who did know to teach. There were a few people who were in the position to teach. But some of the teaching was a little offbeat. For example, Paul. He was an artist — he was an engineer, but he was an artist.

JG: Which Paul is this?

GJ: Paul Rutkay. So he would teach silk screening. He'd teach a class on silk-screening, you know? So I don't know. There must have been other kinds. There was a woman named — I can't think of her name right now — who was a dancer. She had a dance class. So we had different kinds of classes. We had a speaker series. I know Rob's father, Jacob Agus, came once, and that was a big deal. We had other people. Often it was a student rabbi, a contemporary, who was coming to speak. I can't remember the names. So we just had courses.

JG: The courses were for the membership or could anybody in the community take a course?

GJ: It was very open-ended. At some point, there was something called the Jewish Studies Center that got started. This was when people had children, that sort of a thing, so

they had kind of a *gan*. They wanted a Jewish educational program for them, but also it was a kind of adult Jewish education thing, too. Maybe it started as adult Jewish education.

JG: Jewish Studies Center was for adults. I think it was called Fabrangen Children's Center?

GJ: Okay, two different things.

JG: Related, and with many of the same people, I think, involved. I think the Waskow children were involved, for instance, in there.

GJ: I have only vague kind of recollections about that.

JG: Were you involved in learning and studying through Fabrangen?

GJ: Yes, yes.

JG: Did you teach anything?

GJ: I can't remember.

JG: In addition to the myriad activities that were going on in Washington, Fabrangen as a community was also participating in retreats. Tell us what Kfar Out is and how that came to be.

GJ: Well, it's quite accidental, in a way. David Shneyer and I (02:35:00) had it in our heads to try to find a place for the summer in 1971. I don't remember if it was specifically for the idea of having Fabrangen retreats or not, although it was used for that. So we went to Warrenton one weekend, and he picked up a newspaper in a shop somewhere —

JG: Where's Warrenton?

GJ: Warrenton is west-southwest of Washington DC — in Virginia. It's at the beginning of the entry into the Piedmont which is just before the Blue Ridge Mountains. We saw an ad, a classified ad, for this horse country place. It had a stable. Anyway, it was two hundred acres. I don't know if we called up or we went out. Anyway, it was owned by a lawyer from Norfolk, who kept his — he had a gelding, a twenty-two-year-old gelding, who he road during the fox hunt season. I know he raced the horse. They had some races out in Virginia, the kind of blue blood kind of farm horse people. So somehow or other

we got into contact with him. I think I talked to him. I don't remember. He wanted to rent it just so it would be occupied when he wasn't there. He was there for the horse season, which was fox hunt season, which was either in the fall or in the spring, and this was just for the summer. So we rented it for two or three months. It worked for me, particularly in 1971, because I had just quit my job, and one of the reasons I quit was to write this memoir about Vietnam. So I lived there for the whole summer. David did not. I mean, he came out on the weekends or whatever, but I lived there. I had solitude. I could write. I wrote the majority of the memoir. It wasn't finished until just before I went to Israel.

JG: What became of that memoir?

GJ: Well, I revised it a little bit in '72, and I sent it to a few publishers, who said it wasn't quite ready for publication. So it just got put in a box and sat. I thought when I was older maybe I'd know what the end of the story (02:38:00) was — *[laughs]* or have a more reflective view of what I was writing about. I have actually been working on it for the last year. For one thing, it was done on a typewriter, so I've been rewriting it —

JG: As you put it on the computer.

GJ: — as I put it on the computer, and I've written about seventy thousand words of it. That's about two-thirds of what it is.

JG: Would you say you do have more perspective that you're adding as you're writing at this point?

GJ: Yes. I mean, I do. One of the main added perspectives is that I went back to Vietnam a year ago around this time and met with a Vietcong guerilla, the type of whom I was looking for at the time. I talked to him for about three hours, and I learned a lot of things. I mean, the main thing I was doing in Vietnam is, I was looking for the guerillas in the tunnels.

JG: Looking for the —

GJ: Guerillas in the tunnels that they were living in. This man was —

JG: — in order to expose where they were.

GJ: Yeah, to find them, and, yeah, it was not just to visit them. So I learned many things that I didn't know, or confirmed things that I suspected but didn't know, by interviewing this man, who lived in my district. It was eye opening and made me realize all the

mistakes I had made [*laughs*] about — some of the things I knew, I understood, I was aware of. But other things I didn't know, and it gave me a perspective.

JG: What's an example of something you learned?

GJ: I came to believe that the village folk were sort of under duress, put under duress by the Vietcong, but it turns out that almost all of them were Vietcong sympathizers. I didn't quite get it when I was there. I thought they were kind of on the fence, and in retrospect, I'm not sure they were on the fence. So anyway, to get back to that summer at Kfar Out and what was Kfar Out, so that's how we got there. We rented it for the summer. I used it as a place to write my memoir, and on the weekends (02:41:00) people would come out to visit for Shabbat. We did have one or two community Shabbat retreats there one summer, and it was fantastic. There were also — I remember one funny incident. There was also a head of cattle there, maybe fifty cattle. It was because it was a tax write off for this guy, this lawyer, who was using it for a tax write off — under the 1986 or whatever tax law you could have used as a tax write off if you were raising animals? I'm not sure now. Anyway, one time we were having a Shabbat service in the field, and the cattle started running at us. You know, all of them. [*laughs*] And I said — I had learned from experience out in the field with them — I said, "Okay, don't panic. Just stay where you are and look at them, and this one guy out in front, at the last second — okay, it won't be at the last second, but at some point, he'll stop and run away." And that's exactly what they did. You feel like your life is really in danger, but that's exactly what happened. That one incident really stands out in my mind. [*laughs*] But it was a beautiful place. We had a view of the Blue Ridge Mountains, a panoramic view of the Blue Ridge Mountains. It was really lovely.

JG: Were there other ways and occasions, other than Weiss's Farm that the *havurah* went on retreat — left its building and sort of went on retreat outside DC, as a community?

GJ: I have recollections of going places, but of retreats for the whole community, I don't have. I remember one time we went to Mike Tabor's farm — when he first started it in Hancock? It was in Pennsylvania, I think, just over the border. You didn't — did you interview him?

JG: No.

GJ: Well, he was one of the leaders of JUJ, and he came to Fabrangen, but that wasn't really his thing.

JG: He was one of the really political people.

GJ: Yeah. He started a farm. He actually became a farmer. He used to sell — and still does — sell his produce in Adams Morgan Market on Saturday morning, or maybe other weekdays. I think we went as a group there, but whether it was everybody I don't know. I don't remember. People went to Weiss's Farm. (02:44:00) I think anybody who wanted to go could go to Weiss's Farm.

JG: It started in '73, and it was three times a year, pretty much, on the concept of *Shalosh Regalim* kind of schedule.

GJ: I remember going at Sukkot times, because that's when I went.

JG: What do you remember about the experience of Weiss's Farm — and what was Weiss's Farm? Can you describe it?

GJ: Weiss's Farm — I don't know. It was like a big farmhouse. It was in New Jersey, I think. I remember we had classes. The main thing about it was classes, but I'm sure we had services too. It was the chance to see these other people from these other two *havurot*, the New York Havurah and Havurat Shalom. That was very nice.

JG: Did it create a sense of bonding with these other *havurot*, a sense of being in some of the same space?

GJ: Yeah. I think it gave you the sort of the impression that this was a movement, that we were the vanguard. We were learning from each other. People who wanted to teach courses could teach a session or a course or something. Different people led services. I don't know if we had more than one service or not. It's so long ago. But I went to the first few. I don't remember how many I went to. It certainly was fun, and it was a very nice experience. The best part was just meeting people that I'd maybe met before, on one occasion, get the chance to spend more time, share experiences. It was nice.

JG: Did you come away feeling that there were significant differences as well as similarities amongst the three original *havurot*?

GJ: I know I thought that, but whether I came away from that experience thinking that or not, I'm not sure. I'm sorry, I can't say.

JG: So let's turn to the sort of concluding section of our interview today, and talk about the impact of *havurot* on yourself personally, and your reflections on its impact on the broader community. So as we've been saying, you were actively involved in Fabrangen

from its founding, from '71 to about '74. (02:47:00) And you said that when you left Fabringen — and you were starting to describe your motivations in leaving — you basically dropped out of the *havurah* movement.

GJ: Yeah, well, outside of Fabringen, the New York Havurah, and Havurat Shalom, there wasn't anything else. Although I would say that I developed a friendship with somebody in the Havurat Shalom, a close friendship, and that continued. He, in fact, came down to Washington, and we together wrote a book. I don't think it was published. It was another one of these things that wasn't published. But it was a study of the American Jewish community and of Jewish identity — American Jewish identity and the Jewish community. It had two parts. One was, how is Jewish identity changing, and how is the Jewish community changing? It was sponsored and it was asked for by the Eli Lilly Endowment. They went to the Synagogue Council, and of the Synagogue Council, we were, of course, the research arm.

JG: So why this other person in particular?

GJ: I'm trying to remember how — Oh! I met him in Israel, when I was on the kibbutz. I went to Jerusalem, and he was working for the Jewish Agency, I think, at the time, and he went back to the States. He was also the founder of Pardes Institute in Jerusalem.

JG: What was his name?

GJ: His name was Michael Swirsky. We became friends. So he was the one who came down. We visited him in Boston when he came back. He lived in the States for about five years, and then made aliyah again. He came down, and we wrote this book together. He came down and worked with me at the institute for six months. So he was a connection to Havurat Shalom, and also he created something in Boston called the Jewish Film Center or something? Film library?

JG: At Brandeis?

GJ: I don't know where it was, but they had a publication, and he was the director of it for a time. It was a very interesting publication, and it coincided with the time I was at the institute. So I was reaching out to see something enduring with the *havurah* movement. Here was one of them.

JG: So has this unpublished work found any readers? Have you circulated it? Had you at the time?

GJ: [*shakes head*] It was never circulated. It's something I've actually been thinking about asking Steve Cohen about putting in the National Jewish Archives.

JG: Sounds like it would be an interesting addition.

GJ: Yeah. It made some conclusions that — it was written forty years ago — it (02:50:00) made some conclusions about the Jewish community that turned out to be true.

JG: What year was it written in?

GJ: '77.

JG: '77.

GJ: '76, '77.

JG: Can you say a few words about what kinds of conclusions you were reaching at that time?

GJ: Well, the main conclusion was that there were kind of like two forces that were at work at Jewish life: a centrifugal force, and a centripetal force, and that there was a core getting stronger while — it wasn't just pre-supposed that Jewish life was vanishing, like in the 1964 *Look* magazine article. It wasn't that Jews were vanishing. It was that Jews were changing. There was a dispersion, this spinning out into the outer orbits and then away. That definitely has happened. But at the same time, there was a strengthening of a core, a smaller group but an important group, because it was the creative part. It was the part that was getting stronger and that could build a larger core. To me, that was the major insight.

JG: So at the time that you were moving away from Fabringen, how would you characterize Fabringen's situation? Had it been considered a major success, right almost from the beginning, as you put it? Was there something that was happening at Fabringen itself that was motivating you to move away from it?

GJ: It was a combination of politics and people. It just felt like it really wasn't my place anymore.

JG: You mentioned in your pre-interview questionnaire that Fabrangen was struggling to find a way to organize so that newcomers could feel welcome, heard, and really part of the community.

GJ: Yeah.

JG: Did that continue into this next period that we're talking about, after the very first year or so?

GJ: It was really in the second year that I felt that. It was when we moved into progressively smaller and smaller places, and we couldn't accommodate the crowds that we were getting on Friday night — more that seventy-five people. It just — it was bedlam. [*laughs*] And we were squeezing in and people were (02:53:00) uncomfortable. It was hard. I felt really bad, because we couldn't really achieve what we were trying to achieve. That's what I think. It was really something that happened during or after the second year.

JG: You said that "the organizing opportunity and impact we were trying to have were lost."

GJ: Right. We affected a lot of people. We affected ourselves, mostly. I mean, the people who were at the core, we changed the most. We benefited the most, no question. There were people who were kind of, like, in the middle, who weren't actually in the periphery, but came regularly, who were also — their lives were transformed. It had a larger mission, to transform, and we lost some of the opportunity, I thought, to transform more people's lives. I was about — Rob was about — and I think some of the people were about transforming Jewish life. That's what we were about. And you can't transform Jewish life in one place, and you can't have the intensity of the experience with one hundred people that you can have with twenty-five people or fifty people — and that's what we were striving for. So my feeling was that maybe we split up. This was anathema to people. Split up? They couldn't split up. You know, each one of us, dedicate ourselves to a group, and try to bring that group to what we were achieving, which was kind of an elevated spot. We were feeling — yeah, it was transformative for us. It changed our lives. Each person was changed differently. I mean, I can go through some of the examples, but it changed my life.

JG: Okay, that's a great segue. You said you could give other people's examples and also your own.

GJ: Let me start with other peoples' examples. I remember there was this one woman who was a feminist, a very radical feminist. She was, you know, she went to the retreats — Oh yeah, that's right ee did have a retreat. We went to a retreat, and I don't remember what it was. I don't know if it was Harper's Ferry, but it was someplace. Yeah, we did have a retreat, I know we camped out, because she went to it. Anyway, a few years later she went to Israel, and she got in an arranged marriage with a *haredi* husband in a *haredi* community and became a *haredi* (02:56:00) person with lots and lots of children. I remember Ayah met her at one point —

JG: “Ayah” is your wife.

GJ: “Ayah” is my wife. She [the radical feminist] was transformed. She was a different person. I mean, she was completely different. I suspected that she was sort of an all-in person — whatever she did, she was all-in. At the time I met her, she was all-in to feminism, and she wanted a complete — and in some ways, I was like that. I mean, I wanted a holistic community. I wanted a communal — I wanted to set up a kibbutz in Virginia. [laughs] I quit my job. I was all-in. This person was like that, I think. She found it in Israel, with the — I don't know if it was the hasidim. It probably was the hasidim. But it was that kind of community. It was Ultra-Orthodox. There was another fellow — more than one became rabbis. As you know, Arthur Waskow became a rabbi, but there are others. There's one person who's currently a rabbi in Brooklyn, a fellow who had long hair then, and still has long hair. His parents actually were from my synagogue over here in Chevy Chase. Who was the other person who became a rabbi?

JG: Well, David Shneyer became a rabbi.

GJ: David Shneyer became a rabbi. Maybe it will come to me. Paul Rutkay, he married Helen Bellmaker, *aleha ha-shalom* — she passed away. They made aliyah and they joined the *haredi* community in Meah Shearim. They lived in Meah Shearim. She had, maybe, I don't know, nine children — or seven children? I forget how many children they had. And they adopted the *haredi* life. Paul is still a *haredi* Jew. He lives in Baltimore. He came back. There is another fellow who made aliyah. I don't know if he came back or not. There was another couple who got married and they made aliyah. They had some children. They ultimately divorced, and he lives in Boston now with his second wife, but the children live in Israel. Somebody like Chava Weissler became a professor, an academic. At the time that she was in Fabrangen, she was a librarian at the Library of Congress, and I don't know — she at some point decided that she could be the real thing, that she could be a professor, and she went back to school and did it. (02:59:00) I haven't had much contact with her. She's somebody who was really changed by the experience, I think. There are others. There was another one who became a rabbi. I can't remember. I

guess I should talk about myself a little bit. For me, you can guess from all the things I've been talking about, it was transformative for me. I was looking for something when I came back from Vietnam, and I didn't realize it, really, for a couple of years. It took awhile. I came back in '69, and it wasn't until 1970 that something clicked in me. JUJ and then Fabringen was a vehicle for me to begin a Jewish journey. I think of my life the whole time since as this Jewish journey. I've continued to change and grow, I hope, as a Jew. A lot of it has to do with a study group that I joined. I think they were mostly people from the Adas Israel Havurah, that's been in existence studying together twice a month for forty years. It became kind of like a family even. And we have studied — you name it. We have studied the Talmud, Hasidut, Mysticism, Musar, American Jewish Literature. It started off with the Tanach and the humash. We studied the Prophets. We've had the great advantage of having a person who is really extraordinary writing curricula for us — a very serious guy, who has written just about all the curricula for us, a very detailed curricula. I could show you an example of it, but it's readings, and every other week we meet on Sunday night, and a different family leads and a different family hosts, and over the years we've gotten close together. Some of us have passed away. Most of us are grandparents now. We've shared simchas together and funerals together. But the main thing for me, besides this personal element — I feel close to so many of these people — was how I was able to grow through Jewish learning. The Fabringen experience was this pivot for me. It started (03:02:00) something that has sort of propelled me through different stages. I'm not a radical anymore. I'm not even a leftist anymore. I'm pretty conservative, actually. But in terms of commitment to the Jewish enterprise — that's what I'm about.

JG: Why did you decide to go the synagogue route after you left Fabringen?

GJ: There's one other thing, if I can interrupt you — that is, I met my wife — *[laughs]* very important!

JG: How does that fit into this particular discussion?

GJ: I was introduced to her by a Fabringen friend. She was living in Jerusalem with two people from Fabringen when she was a student at Hebrew University.

JG: She's an Israeli.

GJ: She was. She was born in Tunisia, but she was an Israeli there. She graduated from Hebrew University, she was a Hebrew University student, and these women were students in a kind of external program for Americans, whatever it was, and they were rooming together. One invited my wife — to-be wife — to visit the States, and she came

in the summer of 1974. She introduced her to several people at Fabrangen, and I was the lucky one. *[laughs]* So that's how I met her, and in fact, I guess I should feel myself indebted to this person. I'm sorry, you were starting another question, but I didn't want to forget that one.

JG: Thank you. So you were saying earlier that after leaving Fabrangen, you found yourselves at a minyan, Adas Israel here in Washington, and then another more Orthodox minyan that also met in a room at Adas Israel.

GJ: Yeah.

JG: So these two minyans, and then the study group. But they were *havurot* connected, so to speak, to synagogues, as opposed to independent *havurot*. Also, later in the seventies, when the *havurot* did come together in '79, there was the first larger summer conference at Rutgers, and over time since then there's been a (03:05:00) summer institute that's happened, which it sounds like you have not participated in.

GJ: *[shakes head]*

JG: What I want to know is, what moved you away from that model, or actual engagement, with what was happening in the *havurah* world?

GJ: It was two things. One was, I felt like we weren't turned outward enough, and the other was the politics, which I mentioned. Partially it was my experience working at that institute, the Synagogue Council of America institute, realizing that there was a larger world out there that wasn't really being directly affected by us. Over time, Fabrangen turned more and more inward.

JG: And more away from politics, as you say.

GJ: Yeah. It ultimately became more of a conventional kind of a congregation. Although, I don't want to belittle them, because I'm not sure what they're doing, but it just wasn't for me anymore. I was increasingly less interested in the alternatives to Judaism, or to traditional Judaism. I wanted to get more into traditional Judaism, to learn more about it — to understand, to learn. I think that's something that I'm very dedicated to, and I really believe is the key to Jewish continuity: learning. I feel that without learning, how do you perpetuate, how do you continue the tradition? You can change it, but if you don't know what it is, how can you change it? It's just something different. In terms of the style, the connectivity, those things I continued to be involved in at Ohr Kodesh. I was involved in starting a *havurah* there as well. We met for many years.

JG: Actually, those sound like essentially manifestations of the idea you had earlier, of sort of spinning off some smaller communities even from Fabrangen that would become core communities in and of themselves.

GJ: I actually never thought about that until you just mentioned it, but maybe so. I do know that I felt like the problem with conventional synagogue services is still there, and there is this (03:08:00) impulse to smaller groups, and to more personal connection to the people in *davening* and celebrating holidays, and it's pretty widespread. I just decided there were other places I could express this inclination.

JG: So from the perspective of nearly half a century — we're coming up on the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the first *havurah* — how would you assess the contributions and impact of Fabrangen and of the other early independent *havurot* on Jewish life? What were the main contributions?

GJ: Well, one was to stimulate the *havurot* in the synagogues. One was to help the engine of the reform of Jewish education, or the spending of more federation money for Jewish education, the emphasis on religious education in day schools. I think that it moved the needle slightly in that direction. It also was a place for people who populated Jewish academia, the Jewish Studies movement — it propelled them, I think. Certainly, Havurat Shalom is a good example of that. But there were little bits of it elsewhere as well. As I said, I think the idea of synagogue *havurot* owes something to the *havurah* movement, and I don't know for sure, but there's this independent minyan movement now, and it's really a reincarnation of the *havurah* movement.

JG: How so?

GJ: Well, it's a more intense, intensive, more family-oriented, more participatory approach to religious practice and religious education — a more intensive learning. You see the D.C. Minyan, for example, here. You see the Altshul (03:11:00) in Brooklyn. There's something called Tikkun Leil Shabbat downtown here. These are all organizations that a new generation is involved in, that didn't participate in the *havurah* movement. I wonder to what extent does the one draw from the other, because I'm not sure.

JG: Did you say that your son was involved with one of these groups?

GJ: Yes. There's something called Jews in the Woods, which is a confab, a get together, a retreat, for young adults mainly in northeastern colleges, from let's say Virginia to New

England. It usually happens somewhere in New England or Upstate New York. My son was the leader of that for a time. There is something called Moishe Houses — you may have heard of those. He lived in a Moishe House.

JG: What is a Moishe House?

GJ: Moishe House in some ways is a little like Fabrangen. Fabrangen was a house where people came. Usually they wouldn't live there. Some people lived there, but usually people didn't live there. Moishe House is a place where a certain number of people get a room, they get board, on the condition that they contribute something to the Jewish community, either in the Moishe House environment — like they lead services or they cook meals or whatever — or they do social or political action activities. They are in various cities around the country. I think there's one or two here in Washington, there's one in Boston. In Boston, it's in Brookline — it's called Kavod House. That's where my son lived. I went and visited him once or twice, and it felt a lot like Fabrangen. We went to Tikkun Liel Shabbat the same kind of people, downtown when he was visiting one of his friends. It not only felt like Fabrangen, it was in the same place, *[laughs]* although it's downstairs. It was in the basement of the Religious Action Center of the Reform Movement, down on Massachusetts Avenue. It was even in the same place. The same kind of potluck meals, although they're a little different. Now they have vegetarian — kosher vegetarian, strictly kosher vegetarian. I don't think they had non-vegetarian, because they may have — it went for variety, but it was the same kind of social occasion, Jewish and social together. The same thing (03:14:00) for Kavod House in Boston. There was a leader, but it was open-ended. It was people coming to meet people in a Jewish environment, and a service, and a meal. I remember one time we were up there. I don't think it was the first time. It was the second time up at Kavod House. My son lived there I think two years? One year? I don't know. I remember having lunch there, and they were having a discussion about — and these people were involved in Jews in the Woods, too. I remember the discussion was about the next Jews in the Woods retreat, and how do we make everybody comfortable? There are so many different kinds of people. We don't want anybody to come to this thing where they feel uncomfortable. So they were thinking, how do we organize the service, or services, so that there's something for everybody? That is smart thinking, and that's very constructive. I think it's some of the best of what came out of the *havurah* movement, the kind of things that I was hoping would happen. There would be a place for everybody. I see that that — it certainly seems a lot like just a reincarnation. The last thing I'd say is, Carlebach — Carlebach had a major influence in our organization. I don't know to what extent, what role it played at Havurat Shalom. I think I was there once maybe. But it was a major thing, certainly at Fabrangen, probably elsewhere. Today, Carlebach music has taken over the Modern Orthodox world. You go to a Modern Orthodox service, and they're singing Carlebach.

All over, even in Canada. Carlebach's had a tremendous influence, and I think that's Carlebach. I don't think you can necessarily attribute it to the *havurah* movement, but there's perhaps some influence, because we were the fertile ground in which this took root. It was shocking to me when I went to services at Keshet Israel, which is down in Georgetown here in Washington. It was some years ago, maybe twenty years ago. I walk in and they're doing *Kabbalat Shabbat*, and they're doing Carlebach! It's Carlebach! It's all Carlebach! I said, "How did this happen?!" [laughs] So I think (03:17:00) Carlebach and that style has really taken a place in Jewish life, and has made a change for the better.

JG: Are there any things that you would point to or consider the major challenges or failings of the *havurah* movement early on, in these early days with the founding *havurot*, or as it's evolved in the past half century?

GJ: I think I mentioned it already, which is the turning inward — the lack of outreach that was possible but didn't happen. On the other hand, how can you say that — I won't mention any names — but there are many eminent scholars that have come out of Havurat Shalom, who affected many, many people. How do you count that? How do you add that all up? It's hard to do. So even though we were maybe torn between reaching out and reaching in, being elite and being everyman, and a place for everybody, we fell short in a lot of ways, but the idea is, I think, we accomplished something.

JG: Final questions. As the challenges of the twenty first century in the Jewish community are coming into sharper view here, do you see a future for *havurot* per se, or for the offspring of *havurot*? Where do you see this all going as we move into the twenty-first century?

GJ: I think the independent minyanim are a manifestation of this inclination. There is this middle ground that Steve Cohen writes about, the "committed Jewish middle," he calls it. It's mentioned in that article that he sees as the future — the alternative future, the future in the middle, of American Jewish life.

JG: What does he mean by the "future in the middle"?

GJ: It's like the right edge of Conservative Judaism and the left edge of Orthodoxy, and the people in between. We used to call ourselves "in-betweenies." [laughs] I mean, I'm not talking about the days of my *havurah* involvement, but you know, later. People who didn't quite fit in (03:20:00) anywhere. Making space for that is what the independent minyanim do. I can't say how pervasive that is, but they're around in the major cities, and I think there's some bleed out or movement out from those into Modern Orthodox and Open Orthodox. There's a certain kind of institutional weakness to these things. As

people grow older and they're looking for Jewish education for their children — things like that that the *havurah*/independent minyan model struggles with. I've heard people talking about it, because I went to the National Conference of the Independent Minyan Movement. They talked about it. But many good things are happening — like Mechon Hadar in New York, for example. That's descended from the *havurah* movement, in my opinion. That's a very positive influence. I think the left wing of Orthodoxy owes something to the *havurah* movement.

JG: What about Jewish feminism and the changing role of women within Jewish life? Do you see the changes that have come about over the past half century as in any way coming out of the *havurah* movement, or owing anything to the *havurah* movement?

GJ: I don't really know. I would say that many of these people — the women — probably were affected by the *havurah* movement, and therefore they probably got some reinforcement, some positive reinforcement, from this base. It gave them courage to move forward and express their ideas and practices, and their agenda for Jewish life. What you see now — in Orthodoxy, for example, which is a pretty hard nut to crack in this area — you see the Jewish Feminist Alliance or something?

JG: JOFA.

GJ: JOFA. That's pretty much Orthodox women, I believe.

JG: Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance.

GJ: I think that owes something to the *havurah* movement. I think Ezrat Nashim — I think there was an overlap, and then the people who came after that. And then all the Jewish academics, the Women's Studies. If you would go — it doesn't exist anymore — but there used to be a library out in Rockville, and they had a shelf (03:23:00) with books about women, Women's Studies. Or even look at the campuses, where they have Jewish Studies programs. This is like the largest change in academia in the last half-century, Women's Studies and Jewish Women's Studies. There's all these new woman scholars out there, who are now leaders of their communities, and they speak in the larger community. They are sought after speakers. We have plenty of them coming around here, and I assume elsewhere, so I think the Jewish feminist movement propelled that forward, and I think the *havurah* movement, as I said, was the fertile ground in which that germinated.

JG: Okay, is there anything else you want to add before we close?

GJ: I'm sure I forgot something.

JG: I knew you wanted to say something about Adin Steinsaltz.

GJ: Okay, yes. I have a wonderful little story. It's actually a two-part story, separated by about thirty years. The first part of it occurs in 1971, during the first year of Fabrangen. Adin Steinsaltz shows up at Fabrangen. I don't remember who arranged it or how he found it, but one night we found ourselves sitting in the upstairs living room where we held our services. He was sitting on the floor against one panel of windows, and we were sitting on the other side or in the middle, and having a little tete a tete with Adin Steinsaltz, who was about forty — I don't know, he's about eighty now, it was forty years ago, so he was around forty at the time. He was a fairly young man. He didn't look so young. My understanding was that he — well, I'll leave that out. Anyway, we had a really wonderful conversation with him. He was such a great man, so charismatic in his unique way. I mean, he is very special. So he taught us. He spoke to us. But he was just wondering what we were about, because he had heard about us obviously. One of the perspectives I have is from my later meeting with him, but in between I occasionally got to listen to him or speak to him through other connections — once in Jerusalem and a couple of times here in Washington. This one occasion was Martin Luther King weekend, and he spoke at Ohr Kodesh Congregation here in Chevy Chase. So I brought a book that he edited of Rebbe Nachman stories, that he translated and wrote commentary on. I brought it with me so he could sign it. (03:26:00) Afterward, I walked up to him and I said, "Gee, I have this book of yours. I'd really love if you could autograph it for me." And he says to me, "Thank you so much for showing this to me, because I've never seen this book before." [*laughs*] He had never seen an English translation. [*laughs*] Secondly, I say, "Also, you know, Rabbi, we've met before. It was on the living room floor of Fabrangen." He says, "No it wasn't. It was Jews for Urban Justice." [*laughs*] So I found it really kind of amazing that he remembered the details of that meeting, maybe thirty, thirty-five years before.

JG: Well, thank you so much for sharing that story and for talking to us.

GJ: My pleasure.

JG: It's been wonderful to talk to you. We learned a lot.

GJ: Great.

JG: Thank you so much.