

Jewish Counterculture Oral History Project

STEFAN and MARY KRIEGER

Interviewed by Jayne K. Guberman

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

Stefan and Mary Krieger, 02/13/17

Jayne Guberman (JG): My name is Jayne Guberman, and today is Monday, February 13, 2017. I'm here with Stefan and Mary Krieger at their home in New York City, and we're going to record an interview for the Jewish Counterculture Oral History Project. Stef and Mary, do I have your permission to record this interview?

Mary Krieger (MK): Yes.

Stefan Krieger (SK): Yes.

JG: As you know, today we're going to explore your experiences during the late sixties and early seventies, particularly your involvement in Havurat Shalom, and also the impact the *havurah* has had on your own lives and the Jewish community beyond. So I'd like to start by talking with each of you about your personal and family backgrounds, and to flesh out a bit who you were at the time you first got involved with Havurat Shalom.

So, Stef, let's start with you, and let's begin with your family when you were growing up. You were born in 1946, in Bradford, Pennsylvania?

SK: That's correct.

JG: Can you tell us a little about your family growing up?

SK: I had a brother, who's five years older than I am, and a sister who is seven years older than I am. Bradford at the time had about 17,000 people, forty Jewish families. The city had two shuls, a Reform one and a Conservative one. There was an Orthodox one, not that distant away from where I was born. And we belonged to the Conservative shul.

JG: Tell us about your parents.

SK: My dad, Norman, was at that time a University of Michigan chemistry graduate. During the Depression, he had come to Bradford because he couldn't get a job, so he worked for his father-in-law. My mom was a Phi Beta Kappa University of Michigan graduate. She was a stay-at-home mom until I was eight, and then she began working as a copywriter for the local radio station in Bradford. She always wanted to be an author. She always wanted to write, and she would send to magazines — manuscripts, and they would be rejected, and she wasn't happy about that.

JG: How would you describe the Jewish environment in your home?

SK: It was a—Judaism was part of a day-to-day in the home. We always had a Shabbos meal together, (00:03:00) although during the meal we would always, every other week, talk with my dad's parents in Batavia, New York on the phone during the meal, as if they were being brought into the meal. My dad worked on Shabbos. He was — my grandfather, his boss — was a real slave driver. My grandfather, I think, thought of himself as a traditional Jew, but on the second day of Rosh Hashanah, he would have my father and my mother's brothers-in-law, who also worked for my grandfather — he forced them to come in. But my grandfather would put newspapers over the windows of his store, I think so that no —

JG: So no one would see?

SK: That was one. Although my father would say, it's so God won't see. [*laughs*] And I think at some point, to my grandfather, it was that. We were one of the only three families in Bradford that kept kosher, and that was something my parents were very proud of. They would get food shipped in, kosher food shipped in from Philadelphia, we would go to the train station and pick it up. We had dry ice, and then we would take it to a frozen-food locker in Bradford. My sister had the first bat mitzvah — *bar mitzvah* — in Bradford. It must have been 1952.

JG: This was in a Conservative synagogue?

SK: It was a Conservative synagogue. The rabbi at the time — we had multiple rabbis, every other year there'd be a new rabbi — this rabbi was Orthodox! Orthodox *smicha*. But he wanted my sister to have this bat mitzvah, and on the first evening of Shavuot, she had her bat mitzvah. My sister hated it. She was forced to do it. This was kind of an occasion more for my parents than for my sister. She gave up any sort of observance after that. I would go to shul probably every week, on Shabbos morning. It was a lot of old men, although probably (00:06:00) those men were younger than I am now. But I don't know why I liked it. I had nothing in common, but I felt a kind of warmth there. And we would have to call up people, including my grandfather, to send one of his sons-in-law to the shul so that we would have a minyan. From that age, I loved *davening*. And my dad — I think my dad is the one that instilled me with that. I can remember going very early in the morning on a Yom Kippur morning to shul, seeing my father in the front row, *davening*, and looking at me quizzically — why I would want to be there? But my dad, I don't think, believed in God, or if he did, he would have been agnostic. But there was something about *davening* that was really important to him. When he passed away — his last probably ten, fifteen years of his life, he *davened* three times a day. And when he died, on the bed stand next to him, was a *Chabad* siddur, a Bokser — (00:07:35) a

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Conservative siddur, a Reconstructionist siddur, and a Jewish humanist magazine. And that's my dad.

JG: How did you feel about *davening* when you were young?

SK: I liked it, and I thought it was kind of part of my nature. I mean, when I was fifteen, sixteen, I began, starting with my bar mitzvah, I put on *tefillin* every day that you need to put on *tefillin*. In my life there were a few periods where maybe for a month or so I didn't, but I've been doing it. And I began when I was fourteen, fifteen, to write my own liturgy. I'm not sure why, because at my base, I'm not so sure whether there's a God, but it gave me a sense of meaning.

JG: You moved to a different community when you were twelve-ish?

SK: Yes, when I was twelve, thirteen, we moved from Bradford to Amherst, New York, which is a suburb outside Buffalo. (00:09:00) It was a pretty drastic change. At least that's the way I felt about it. It was an upscale Jewish community — not a Jewish community, an upscale community. The Jewish community that we belonged to at the time was a Reconstructionist shul. My dad was a chemist, a scientist, liked classical Reconstructionism. My mom couldn't stand it. My mom — she was always searching for proof that there was an afterlife. One of the guest rabbis for Yom Kippur one year had a sermon on the life hereafter, and actually my mom, in her scrapbook, she has a copy of that sermon. It was really an important part of her religious life. She believed in a personal God. And so Reconstructionism wasn't something up her alley, but the egalitarian part was, from the get-go. Perhaps the bat mitzvah for my sister had something to do with my mom. She had a tallis way before women had tallisim. So we were part of this Reconstructionist shul and there couldn't have been anything better for me, because I was going through a crisis in belief. I did not believe God created the world, I didn't believe in an afterlife, and this Reconstructionist shul just fit the bill for me. I can remember one Hebrew school teacher, Mel Davidson, *alav ha-shalom*, and Mel — one morning, Shabbos morning, we had classes, he was talking about how you could be a Jew without believing in an afterlife. I remember running, at the Kiddush, up to my mother to tell her. [*laughs*] Of course it appalled her, but it gave me the ability to keep a connection to Judaism. And I was fourteen, fifteen, and I was reading Mordecai Kaplan.

JG: And the rabbi, Gaynor?

SK: Nathan Gaynor, *alav ha-shalom*. Oh, he was a classic Reconstructionist. I mean, he would give sermons mocking mystics (00:12:00) and supernaturalism, and I would just sit there, in awe, eating it up. For me, a girl that I knew was not Jewish, but we would

always say goodbye to each other by saying, “May the principle of goodness and creativity be with you,” which was the language of Mordecai Kaplan for God. Yet it kept me going. And during that time is when I wrote a morning *davening* for when I put on *tefillin*, which was very much in a kind of Reconstructionist trope.

JG: So you went to college in the mid-sixties at the University of Chicago, and were also very involved with Hillel there. These years, your college years, 1964 to 1968, were a period of tremendous social ferment among American youth, especially on college campuses. To what extent were you personally involved with and influenced by the major social and political movements of the sixties?

SK: Very much. It was '65 when I began college, and I was very involved — I was a latecomer. I was not that involved in the Civil Rights Movement, but the Anti-War Movement, I threw myself into. There was a very active SDS — Students for Democratic Society — at the University of Chicago, and I never really was part of the leadership of it but would always go to the activities. There were two sit-ins that had to do with the Selective Service, requiring universities to rank male students.

JG: Rank them in what way?

SK: Rank them just in terms of GPA. At first, I wondered, why object to it? And it was Danny Leifer, may he rest in peace, the rabbi at Hillel at Chicago, who kind of urged me on, helped me on with this, saying, “Well, there’s no academic reason to just rank males. You can rank males and females, there might be some sort of academic purpose, (00:15:00) but to just do males is for no other reason than to help the military.”

JG: What use would the military have made of these rankings?

SK: What the Selective Service did was that if you were ranked below, I think it was the top half of the class, your draft deferment, which was 2S, would be revoked.

JG: This was a student deferment.

SK: It was a way of weeding out student deferments. Actually, some students at the University of Chicago were so low in terms of the male rank that they left, so they could go to a school — actually Old Westbury is where I know somebody went, where he could be closer to the top of the class. There was a policy piece by the head of the Selective Service, General Hershey, called “Channeling,” that *Ramparts Magazine*, a leftist magazine at the time had in which the purpose of the ranking, the purpose of the deferment system, was to channel men into particular professions, and those that just

quite didn't make it would go into the military. And so there was a big anti-rank sit-in in 1966, and that was my first taste of real live protest. At that point, I became very involved with going to anti-war protests. Back in 1967, a friend of mine who was a member of the Chicago Area Draft Resisters, we were talking. It was not far before the High Holidays, and he was talking to me about how having a deferment was actually discriminatory. Keeping a deferment, the 2S, and that I should not cooperate with the Selective Service System. And I don't think this is revised memory, but it was Yom Kippur when I thought to myself, I cannot be part of a system that discriminates — this channeling against blacks, who are the ones (00:18:00) who are being sent over to be cannon fodder, while I'm at Chicago. And so, on December 4, 1967, I handed back my draft card, and I wrote a letter to the Selective Service — Ramsey Clark, who was the attorney general at the time — saying, I'm not going to have anything to do with the draft. And this decision was really a private decision. I don't think I talked with anybody about it. I just — I kind of went through it. And then I went to Hillel, to Shabbos morning services, and I can remember, Max Ticktin, who was the director, one of the two directors, taking me out to the kitchen and saying that he heard this is what I had done and how proud he was. I — that's wrong. It's how much he supported what I did. I can still see his face. And it was a very important moment. Max — who unfortunately is not going to be able to be interviewed for this — Max was a CO, a conscientious objector, during World War II, and then after that, he — when the War of Independence came, he went over to fight —

JG: The Israeli War of Independence?

SK: Right, the Israeli War of Independence. And so he was — he and his wife — I learned this at his funeral, met at a meeting of Zionists to discuss the issue, "Can you be a Zionist and a pacifist at the same time?" So Max had gone through — well, had gone through, was still going through the struggle, and he was supporting me and what I was doing. It was a very important moment. Later that week, I met with Danny Leifer, the other director, and they both were there for me (00:20:13) through it.

JG: Was there — for you — a religious component to your decision?

SK: Yeah. I mean, I mean, if you want, I can show you my letter to the draft board, in which I say, it's my — this is religiously motivated. There's some self-righteous language in it. You can say that somebody who's twenty-one years old has a right to do that, *[laughs]* but I said that other people had been persecuted because of their religious beliefs. If this is what happens to me, this is what happens to me.

JG: You were essentially applying for CO status? (00:21:00)

SK: No! And that's where I — I think, Max and I — well, what I did resonated with him. I was what's called a "selective CO." There are wars I would fight in — at least, that's what I said. But this one I won't. And the conscientious objector rules then, and I think now, are you have to be a pacifist, and I'm not a pacifist. And then even if I was, I know people that were COs who would not accept a CO, because that in itself had a discriminatory basis. You know, that there were certain upper-class, or upper middle-class people, that could get it, but not lower-income people. What happened was that I was immediately sent notice that I was a 1-A delinquent, which means that I'm at the top of the list to get drafted. I was visited by the FBI. This was like a week after I wrote my letter to Ramsey Clark, and I can remember, after it — after they came to the door — going up to my room and packing my bag to go off to jail. And there was this lawyer, a wonderful man who I think in some ways probably has inspired me in what I do, Carmen Petrino, (00:22:49) may he rest in peace, and he had agreed to represent me. He actually brought a case in federal court on behalf of me and some other draft resisters in Buffalo, that the selective service system was unconstitutional. It was a totally bogus case in the sense that there was no way we were going to win, but he was trying just to help us have a voice to what our position was. So I called Carmen Petrino. He said, "Don't worry, they won't arrest you until you refuse induction."

JG: Were you scared?

SK: When I packed my bag, (00:23:35) I was scared, but there was a part of me that was — that felt like this is a mission that I have to do. And there was certainly a religious component. I remember, and I don't think its revised memory, I packed my *tefillin* and my tallis with my stuff. There was this — (00:24:00) God, there was a neurotic component — there was this, you know, that I'm something, that I'm really doing something, but I think there was something very deep, that this was, yeah, I'm going to go off, and I'm doing it for a moral purpose. I read lots of books at the time, about resisters during World War I or World War II. One was about how to live in a prison, how to survive in prison, and make sure you get a subscription to the *New York Times*, this kind of stuff! [*laughs*] And that's what I — this man had been in Lewisburg, and I was going to do that. And then — I mean, if you want, I'll go fast-forward to what happened.

JG: Please.

SK: I — Carmen Petrino had me have administrative appeals through the Selective Services stuff, to just continually confront them. And I did that.

JG: Continue to —

SK: Confront the system. So I would go and I would tell my draft board why what they were doing was a war crime. And then — so this is throughout 1968. In March of 1969, I was in Havurat Shalom — and by that time I had met Mary, on February 4, 1968 — and in March of 1969 I was going to be inducted. And I was not going to just let this go away, and you know, not show up. I was going to go to the induction to confront the United States government. This was going to be my moment of saying, No! Now at Havurat Shalom, I could have gotten a divinity deferment as some other people in the *havurah* had. But I wasn't going to accept that either. That was really “channeling.” So the night before my induction, Mary came in, my mom came in. My mom really became involved with anti-war stuff.

JG: Was she supportive of you?

SK: *Very* supportive! My dad, [*laughs*] when I first told him I was going to prison, kicked me out of the house. But this was not the Russian communist in the garret, by candlelight. (00:27:00) I ordered a cab and went to my sister's house! [*laughs*] And as time went on, he became very supportive. He wrote a letter in support of my resistance that is really kind of comical. Name-calling, [*laughs*] how the system is attacking my son. My mom was deeply involved with a group called Clergy and — Laymen at the time, it's Laity now — Clergy and Laymen against the War in Vietnam. And she was involved with rabbis and ministers in support of it. So she came in. Mary came in, and throughout the night at Havurat Shalom, there was — we had a *tikkun*. We had an all-night study session. And different people — Joey Reimer, Art Green, Zalman — led sessions in which we studied texts on peace. And then in the early morning, we *davened*, and then [*laughs*] — this is the height of self-righteousness — we read from the Torah. Burt Jacobson read the section from the Torah on Moses confronting Pharaoh. [*laughs*] And that was my aliyah. And then everybody marched me off to the bus, to take me to the induction center, and I remember — Joey actually said this later, Joey Reimer — I wore *kippah* throughout this whole experience. At the Boston army base — the bus took me to the Boston army base — I took the intelligence exam, and then they give you a physical. And I was the last person to get the physical, and it was, I believe, a Jewish doctor. I'm not sure what he was up to, but he said my heart was beating a hundred and seventy beats a minute. It was too fast — and he rejected me. And it was — a devastating moment for me, because I wanted to refuse induction! I wanted that moment, to say no to the United State government. I remember I called Art. Art picked me up. (00:30:00) He was half-asleep because he had been up all night long. He was very — he didn't get me. He didn't understand it. Mary *absolutely* did not understand it.

MK: No, I was very happy. [*laughs*]

SK: My mom was really happy, and I just — I lashed out at her. And I can remember, Joey Reimer that night said to me, “This is the first time in my life I’ve ever seen anyone with a *kippah* doing anything that was courageous.” And that’s the way *they* looked at it, and I looked at it that I had left myself down.

JG: *You* had let yourself down?

SK: Yes. My body had let myself down, that somehow I wasn’t able to go through this, to get through this. And the next day, I met somebody from Boston’s Draft Resisters Group, which I had had very little to do with. Again, I think much of my resistance — in Chicago, I had done some stuff with Chicago Area Draft Resisters, but I did nothing in Boston. And I went there, to BDRG, and she said, “Well, now that you’ve gotten your personal little craziness put aside, now start — now you have work to do.” To this day, the resistance is a kind of defining experience for me. The day after the election, with that in mind, I put my draft resistance button back on — this year! I have my old draft resistance button, I put it back on.

JG: Say why, and for the record, this is the election of Donald Trump, on November 8, 2016.

SK: The button is an Omega, which is an electrician’s symbol for “resist,” for resistance in electricity. And I think that, for me, that I was back to where I was back in 1968, although I think in a much, much darker way. And I think that now’s a time when people have to be willing to go to jail. Not just kind of symbolic civil disobedience, but when deportations are taking place, people have to be willing to put their bodies in front of the immigration officials and to stop the deportations. And I’m struggling — I think probably in those situations, I will be the lawyers for them, but I think at some point, I will — (00:33:00) I might be arrested. When I applied for the bar in Illinois, I was — usually if you apply for the bar, there’s no character and fitness interview. If there is, it’s one person who interviews you. For me, I had five people. And there was one lawyer who was really beating me up, another who was the brother of John Paul Stevens, the Supreme Court Justice, who was very sympathetic. But the one who was beating me up said, “Well, you would have fought for Israel, wouldn’t you?” [*laughs*] What’s funny is that, since I’m not a Zionist, it was not the question to ask me! But it certainly had an anti-Semitic smell. And then he said, “Well, now that you’re going to be a lawyer, are you going to get arrested?” And I hadn’t thought about that question until recently, and I think the answer I gave was the right one. I said, “I think I will be more conscious of it, more concerned about doing it, as a lawyer, because of what it would mean. However, there might be circumstances where I would be.” And at that point, he kind of put his

head up and thought to himself, and then he said — these were his exact words — “Yes, I guess we’re not robots.” So, I’m not a robot! Our daughter, who is now a legal aid lawyer in Austin, Texas, is going through the struggle about — she represents lots of immigrants. At what point is she going to put her body there? I don’t know. Mary might be able to say, but I think that in some ways our kids have heard the resistance story a lot, and it’s kind of part of how our kids think. I don’t know.

MK: Well I think they certainly — moral issues are very important to each of them, I think.

JG: Stef, we can come back to this a little bit later, but I want to go back for a minute to your experience at — more about your experience at Hillel, at Chicago, because it was a very important experience for you, and you were also part of the Upstairs Minyan there. Can you talk a little bit about what that experience meant to you?

SK: I mean, the Upstairs Minyan is really proto-*havurah*. (00:36:00) You might say it was the beginning of *havurah*, communities such as those. Danny Leifer, Max Ticktin, were dissatisfied with the Yavneh Orthodox Minyan, and wanted a minyan where they could feel that there was more intense spiritual *davening*. They thought it was way too fast, the speed of the *davening*. And I think they wanted more of a community. So they started what was first the Library Minyan, in the U of C library, and then went up to the top floor of Hillel. That was the Upstairs Minyan. Most of the people in that minyan were graduate students. I think I always felt like Danny and Max — I loved them both, but I think that the outreach to undergraduates wasn’t great. Maybe they had their purpose for it. The undergraduates were myself and a guy by the name of Alan Gold. The minyan began, I think it’s ’65. I was not that active the first year, and then I became very active in it. And we would *daven* — it was basically a traditional *nusach*, (00:37:57) except we had poetry, we did not do *Musaf*, and we had a discussion — a long, long discussion.

JG: A discussion based on?

SK: On the parashah. And they would get to be very heated discussions. And I’m not sure what the lay of the land was in terms of egalitarianism. I do remember that I was *gabbai* early on, and I asked Esther Ticktin if she would have an aliyah, and she said no. For historical purposes, Esther has been a real leader in the feminist movement in the *havurah* movement. So I’m not saying this was (00:39:00) *lashon hara*, but this was back in ’66, ’67, she didn’t feel comfortable with it. But I know that we had women having aliyot. I can remember, I think ’68, a woman led *davening*, which to me — and I come from a Reconstructionist background — seemed odd, but okay! What I do remember is that we did play around — “play around” — we had more creative *davening*. And Danny

Leifer, for me, ordered ten Reconstructionist siddurim, so that when I led, I could use what was my siddur. And so, it was — I remember once Danny said, “We need to have a service where we start off — where in part of our *tefilah* is reading from scientific texts.” So I was taking a course in biology, and when I came to the part in the *davening* about the creation of the world, I read a section from a book on entropy. It probably was really kind of hokey! But he was calling on us to do something. The learning there, at Hillel, really helped me grow. And I can remember taking a class with Max. It must have had to do with theology, because he said, “Stef, I know *exactly* what text you have to read, because this is the kind of theology you have!” And I was sure it would be some sort of Kaplan-esque thing, and he said, “Bertrand Russell! You’ve got to read Bertrand Russell!” What a wonderful rabbi, what a wonderful teacher, that he was willing to give me over to the atheist! I was kind of taken aback by it, but I read it. And those were the kinds of give-and-take we had. I can remember a wonderful class with Danny Leifer on Martin Buber, and what living in kind of in a mythological world is like, compared to in a historical world and fact. And what happened through the Upstairs Minyan, (00:42:00) what happened through these classes, is I gave up Reconstructionism. I can remember, there was a Shabbos where I stopped saying the — before the Torah reading, the Reconstructionists say, “*Asher kervanu la’avodato*,” “who has brought us here unto thy service,” instead of, “*Asher bachar banu mikol ha’amim*,” “who has chosen us from all people,” and “chosen us” is *not* classical Reconstructionism. When I chanted the blessing through 1968, it was the Reconstructionist, and I changed. I can still remember when I changed it. Esther Ticktin and Max were to my left, and Esther nudged Max and said, “Did you see what he’s doing?” And Max went— [*mimes gesture; laughs*] you know, “Don’t interfere!”

JG: And yet you said that you struggled with what you called the tribalism of the Upstairs Minyan?

SK: Again, and this is who I am — here was a sense of — the ’67 War really was a demarcation for me.

JG: This was the end of your junior year, essentially?

SK: Yeah. The other people in the *havurah* [see addendum] just got into, you know, we have to support Israel. And it’s not — back then, I think I was probably a bit of a Zionist, but my mom was *not* much of one, and I think it influenced me a lot, and I just felt like, there’s this Vietnam War going on, and why are we concerned about what’s going on in Israel? I remember there was this emergency meeting of Hillel people in the library — this was, yeah, it would have been June ’67 — and I came up. I was going away for the summer to be a counselor at a camp, and I asked Max if I could take the daily

Reconstructionist prayer book with me to *daven* with that summer, but I wasn't going to be part of that group. And I never was. I think that the people — if you had asked the people in the minyan, they would have thought I was very much part of it. I came every week. But there was something more going on. I do think that my experience with being involved with anti-war (00:45:00) activities affected me. I just didn't want to feel trapped in this world of just Jews.

JG: Yet was this a time that you were also thinking about going to rabbinical school?

SK: Yeah! [*laughs*] It was! But I think that — two things come to mind. One is that I wanted to be a — there was something about this religious search that I wanted to be part of. And second, my models for teachers — I wanted to be Max and Danny. To this day, when I teach, every so often I think, how can I teach this class so that I can be as good as Max Ticktin, as a teacher? They were a model for me. And the other thing, the third, is Heschel, and Martin Luther King, Jr., and William Sloane Coffin. Those three, the three people were the religious leaders at the event that Mary and I met at. A religious leader could also be doing political activity.

JG: At what point did the two of you meet?

SK: We met going to an anti-war demonstration on February 4, 1967 [see addendum]. It was a demonstration of Clergy and Laymen Against the War in Vietnam. We were going on a bus from Chicago to Washington, and — Mary, you can tell your story about the bus?

MK: Well I was going — I was attending a Catholic women's college, and I was kind of a — there wasn't a huge anti-war movement at my college. I was pretty much it with a couple other friends. And so we decided to go to this anti-war conference in Washington, and there was an odd number of us, I think, and I got on the bus last, so I was sitting by myself, as I remember, and then you came and sat down beside me.

SK: And for twelve hours straight, we talked.

MK: We kept the whole bus up, I'm sure.

SK: At one point we were declining Latin nouns together, and we were in the fourth declension, (00:48:00) and we forgot something, like the accusative singular, and somebody from the back of the bus yelled out the answer, like "Shut up! Here it is!" [*laughs*] I think you — I was struck by Mary's — on her own, going off, because she thought it was very important.

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MK: And I was swept off my feet. [*both laugh*]

JG: And here you are, fifty years later.

MK: The rest is history.

JG: So let's go back to history for a minute. How would you sum up your sense of self, especially Jewishly, when you graduated from college in 1968?

SK: I sent you this letter that I had written to Mary, and I think that letter, in some ways, sums it up. And in some ways the letter is very embarrassing to me, but there are some parts that I think are right on. I did not think — I still do not think — that Judaism somehow demands, objectively, demands a certain kind of approach to war and peace, or the issues of poverty. But I think that the — my experience as a Jew created that motivation for me. And so it was like, there was a connection between wearing *tefillin* every day, keeping kosher, keeping Shabbat, and all of this other stuff, that they were all part of a package. And in many ways, that was who I was, Jewishly, but there was always this push-pull with the Jewish people. [*laughs*] I'm sure a psychoanalyst could deal with it, that I married an Irish-Catholic woman. I mean besides the fact that she's just a wonderful person, but it was something. She was something different. She was outside of the usual cloistered Jewish world. (00:51:00) And my very best friend, through now over fifty years, a black guy who was a Methodist at the time — I didn't want to just stick around Jews. Yet it was — I mean I think anybody who knows me, knows right off the bat that it's essential to my DNA. It is my DNA.

JG: So let's focus now on how you actually became involved with Havurat Shalom. How did you first become aware of the *havurah* and end up creating this intentional small community in Boston?

SK: As I said, I was flirting with going to rabbinical school. During the summer of '68, my dad saw an ad in *Commentary*.

JG: *Commentary Magazine*.

SK: Yeah, *Commentary* at that time wasn't what it is now. But he saw an ad for the Academy for Jewish Religion. And I don't know why I went along with it, but he said, "Why don't you apply there?" And I came out to New York, and I interviewed with them.

JG: What is the Academy for Jewish Religion?

SK: The Academy for Jewish Religion is a nondenominational or multidenominational seminary that started, I think, in the fifties. I think it started more for people that were rabbis as second careers. It's still around, still very — not necessarily robust, but it's still granting *smicha*. And I interviewed, and the first guy, the rabbi-rabbi — I think it was Chaim Pearl? — interviewed me, and you know — “We never had anybody who was a University of Chicago graduate. We love you.” The second guy had been in the military, and when he heard about my resistance he was very negative and felt that I didn't have enough Jewish education. And he was right. But he said they would have to put it off. So I come back to Chicago, and I talk with Max and Danny. Max got really excited. (00:54:00) He said, “We have to start teaching you humash and Rashi, so we can get you ready for it!” And he recommended perhaps the seminary and that I should apply to HUC, Hebrew Union College. I did apply to HUC, and at the interview I was told they would not admit a draft resister, that it would look bad for their congregations if they had a draft resister who was going to prison. So they wouldn't accept me.

JG: What about RRC, which was just being formed?

SK: RRC had just begun, and I applied. I wrote to them — I'm not exactly sure why I gave up on it. JTS I never applied to, but Max was a good friend of Art Green. He was a very good friend of Cathy. He said, “You know, there's this new community starting in Cambridge,” and it seemed right up my alley, because this was going to create an alternative Jewish community, a model. And in some ways, it had some of the ritual aspects of the Upstairs Minyan, but there was also this sense that it was going to be communal living, and that there was going to be — how much of the social justice business, I'm not sure. I don't remember the way Max sold it to me. But it was going to be a creative venture, and I got excited. And so I wrote to Art. I have a copy of the letter from Art to me that I can donate to the archives. And then in November of 1968, I went for a Shabbos at Havurat Shalom.

JG: The *havurah* had just opened in September of that year, so this was two months into Havurat Shalom.

SK: And I fell in love with it. I actually think I have here the service, from that date. It's the *Musaf* service, “Shabbat Va'Yishlach,” from that date. And you look at the front page, the first page of it, and there's Buber, there's Norman O. Brown. Norman O. Brown — nobody, (00:57:00) I think, knows about Norman O. Brown these days, but “to be open is to be broken, and to be broken is to be whole,” all that kind of stuff, and then there's Leonard Cohen. So it was — there was poetry. The night that I came in for

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Kabbalat Shabbat, Zalman came in with his shtreimel, just bedecked as a hasid. And then Burt Jacobson, who was a real jewel, and I think he hasn't gotten the play that he should have — just a real mensch but also a phenomenal *davener*. He *davened*. He did a *Lecha Dodi* that I still — that night is the only time I ever heard it — that I've done to this day. Actually, I once did it recently for Burt, and he said, “Who wrote that?”

JG: Can you do it?

SK: Yeah. (00:58:20)

Shamor v' zachor b' dibur echad,
Hishmi'anu el ha'meyuchad.
Adonai echad u'shmo echad;
L'shem ul'tiferet v'l'tehila.

Lecha dodi likrat kala, p'nei Shabbat n'kabelah

Lecha dodi likrat kala, p'nei Shabbat n'kabelah

Likrat Shabbat l'chu v'nelcha,
Ki hi m'kor ha'bracha.
Me'rosh mi'kedem n'sucha;
Sof ma'aseh b'mach'shava t'chila.
Lecha dodi likrat kala, p'nei Shabbat n'kabelah

And it builds on. I was taken in. And then Shabbos morning, they played music — actually, I'm not sure they did it that day, but they used to play —

MK: *Missa Luba*. It was — *Misa Mriola*, (00:59:10) the Latin-American mass.

SK: They would do *davening* — I mean, these days, I would think, if I tried that at my minyan, they would excommunicate me. It was — it was super-*davening*. And that afternoon, I was interviewed, and the people that I remember that interviewed me were Art — Art Green, Barry Holtz, Steve Zweibaum, and I think that was it. Oh, and Michael Brooks. And I can still remember the first questions, you know, What do I see as my spiritual life? (01:00:00) And I said, “I think of it as *Our Town*, in which you start off with the little community around you and then you build to the larger Jewish community, and then you build to the world.” And at that point, Michael Brooks, I think it was, said, “And we here in the *havurah* think that there's another world, and that's the world inside you. That's one of the circles.” And I then waited. It got lost in the mail, but I got a letter

of acceptance. It was only at that moment — Mary and I were already engaged, Mary was going to convert — and it was only at that point that I told them about Mary. I remember, I was thinking about that the other day, that I was talking to Art on the phone about it and he didn't bat an eye. She was going to convert.

JG: At the time?

SK: Yes, at the time she had not converted yet, but she was going to convert. I mean, she was learning with Max, and that probably added to it. So I came to Havurat Shalom. I graduated early from college, because with the draft business, I wanted to get my degree before I was out. I had actually arranged with three professors that if I was going to be in prison before I graduated, they would teach me long-distance so I could graduate. I graduated —

JG: So did you graduate in three years?

SK: I graduated in three and a half years, in December 1968. And one week later, I showed up at the *havurah*.

JG: Okay. Let's switch gears for a minute. Let's turn to Mary. You were born in 1948, in Chicago, to a religious Catholic family. Can you tell us a little about your family growing up?

MK: Well I was a middle child, the third child of six children in a good Catholic family. And I grew up on the Northwest side of Chicago. Chicago is a very ethnically segregated city. My parents were very devout Catholics and we were always very much a part of what parish we were in. We went to Catholic schools. My father was a tool and die-maker. My mother was a homemaker. (01:03:00) She had gone to Teacher's College, she was the only student from her high school, when she told her teachers that she was going to go to Teacher's College, that she was the only student from her high school to go on to college, which she did. But they struggled — they kind of lived from paycheck to paycheck, but it was very important to them to send us to Catholic schools, so they managed to come up with the money to do it.

JG: What was the neighborhood like where you lived?

MK: It was mostly a Polish neighborhood, I'd say. That was the predominant ethnic component. But there were non-Polish people as well, obviously.

JG: Predominantly Catholic?

MK: Yeah, Catholics were — I would say there were a lot of Catholics. In the circles I traveled, I wouldn't have known the non-Catholics, quite honestly, because everything was kind of Catholic-centric in my world.

JG: How would you describe the environment in your home and the role of Catholicism and your local parish in shaping your family's life when you were a child?

MK: Well, I think that my parents — my mother was a convert to Catholicism, basically because her mother was Catholic, but her mother was an invalid for most of her life and raising her fell really to her father who was not Catholic. But he had promised the priest she would be raised as a Catholic, so even though I don't think, there wasn't any Catholicism in her life — at one point, when she wanted to become Lutheran because she was hanging out with some kids who were Lutheran and going to their youth activities, her father said, "No, I promised your mother when I married her that you would be Catholic, so no, you can't." *[laughs]* But she was kind of a seeker. I think she was a very spiritual person, and she really embraced Catholicism. It was very important to her. Her spiritual life was very important to her.

JG: You said your parents really led by example, more than —

MK: Yeah, they didn't really talk about it much. I mean, they went to church every week. I remember, before Christmas my father would make an advent wreath, and we would have prayers after every dinner, short prayers every week, every day, leading up to Christmas. There was a spiritual sense, but they really didn't talk about it much, about like, We should do this because this is what God wants. No, nothing like that. My father, I think I mentioned to you, perhaps in the information (01:06:00) I sent you before the interview, my father for whatever reason was really concerned with social justice, and he never talked about it but he would work six days a week, because he always needed the overtime. So it was really a big deal for him when, like on Christmas Eve, the factory he worked in would shut down for the afternoon, so he would actually have an afternoon off, but he would spend it delivering Christmas baskets for a settlement house on Chicago's West Side. And he would make sure to bring a couple of us down to help carry the food in or whatever. And it was really because he wanted us to see — and I think at one point he may have even said to me, "Not everybody has what you have." There was a subtle didactic purpose there. And then, when I was a teenager, it was, you know, the height of the Civil Rights Movement, I guess, and he never talked about it much, but he and my mother joined the local Human Relations Council. And there would be picnic activities with all these white families from Norwood Park and some black families from who knows where, and we would have a picnic together. And you know, I didn't really even

realize, he talked about it so little, I didn't realize until after he passed away, people were talking about things they remembered about him, and my brother said, "Yeah, I remember we used to get beat up after those picnics by the local kids." And somebody else remembered, Yeah, Dad put a "Support Open Housing" bumper sticker on our car. And that was not something that — he was probably one of the only people in Norwood Park with that sticker on his car. But he just thought it was the right thing to do so he was going to do it. He was very concerned about doing what he thought was right.

JG: How did you personally feel about Catholicism as you grew into adolescence?

MK: Oh well, you know, I guess if there had been Reconstructionism in Catholicism, I guess I would have been a Reconstructionist for a while, and then I just said, "I just can't relate to this in any way."

JG: What was it about it that made you feel that way?

MK: I think that the schools that I went to were not staffed by teachers who were very sensitive (01:09:00) to religious struggle. They had kind of a very emotional relationship to Catholicism, and a kind of very literalist way of looking at things. And so, you know, when I was an adolescent, I just thought, I don't think that this can be right. I basically — I didn't want to argue with my parents, so I would just leave for church ostensibly and go to the local laundromat and read a book until it was time to go home. I just couldn't relate to the theology and the hierarchy, and I don't think I had much respect for the teachers that I had or the religious people I saw around me, particularly —

JG: Did you have any exposure to Judaism or to Jews when you were growing up?

MK: Oh no, not at all. Not in Norwood Park. I don't think there were any Jews in Norwood Park. I doubt it. I think the first Jewish person I met was when I was working over the summer at a job, maybe, when I was in college — there was a woman who was Jewish who worked there. I mean, Jews, my God, I didn't even know any Protestants! *[laughs]* And I felt very smothered, too. I was very intellectually interested and curious about things, so I really read a lot, and I felt very smothered, I think. And I did not want to go to a Catholic college, I wanted to go downstate to the University of Illinois. I didn't want to go to a Catholic college. I just — I wanted something — there was a big world out there and I wanted to see it and experience it. But my father, at that point, was enough of a traditionalist to say, "No, you have to go to a Catholic college, unless you're prepared to move out and live on your own," which I wasn't. So you know, I did well on all the tests and I got a scholarship to a women's college in Chicago, which fortunately for me was staffed by a religious order called BVM — Blessed Virgin Sisters of the

Blessed Virgin Mary, which was, I think — I don't know if it was an Irish order but it was very — it attracted people who were very smart and there was a value of education, and the teachers were very well qualified. Obviously, it wasn't just religious teachers. There were other teachers in the school. But these were the kind of people who really embraced Vatican II and were wonderful teachers. (01:12:00)

JG: Had you been affected by Vatican II, and your family for that matter?

MK: That's an interesting question. I don't remember — I mean I guess I was sort of aware of it distantly, but it didn't really seep down to the parish level much. I mean, maybe the priest faced — changed the altar around, like if the cardinal said, "Change the altar around and face the congregation instead of having your back to it during the service" — it's very hierarchical; they would have done it, I'm sure. But it didn't feel like there was a sea-change. I think in college it did very much affect probably my teachers in college. Yeah, there was an openness and some wonderful people. I mean, they had this chapter of Clergy and Laymen Concerned About the War, that's how I learned about it, I think, because they had this — some of the teachers were involved in that.

JG: So this was a very eventful period.

MK: Oh yes, yes it was.

JG: To what extent within your Catholic college environment were you aware of the counterculture and how did it affect you personally?

MK: I think that I read — I mean, part of my adolescent reading was reading — I mean, Vietnam, everyone was talking about Vietnam, so I read Bernard Fall and all the books, and it changed the way I looked at things, which was very hard for my father to understand, because he was a World War II veteran. But I was like — it was very significant for me, and most of the people that I went to college with, the people that I hung out with most were people who were not very much involved in politics, and pretty conservative, I guess in general. But there were people at the college that weren't, so I organized a teach-in, and I organized some little marches around.

JG: Were you influenced, for instance, by the Berrigans?

MK: Yeah, I mean, I knew who they were. There was real leadership on the part of Catholics in that movement.

JG: But you're saying it didn't really seep too much into the environment in your women's college in Chicago.

MK: We were kind of — things were changing, roles were changing for women at the more elite colleges, I think. Like I think, women at U of C were thinking about, what kind of career will I have? Well, in my college, I don't think too many people were thinking about what kind of career, other than the traditional careers for women.

JG: What were you thinking about in terms of career?

MK: I don't know, (01:15:00) I had a very, I think, a blue-collar attitude, but kind of with a twist, because my mother — I think both my parents prized education. And I always thought I'd go to college, but I never thought about having jobs that would be a career. I thought about, well, I have to have a job. I think in that world, maybe coming out of that world, a job is what you have to do to live. You don't think of it in terms of what will satisfy me, what will make me happy. That doesn't come into it.

JG: Was that as true for the boys in your family?

MK: Yeah, I don't think that they — well, except for my brother. I have a younger brother who went to law school right out of college, and I think his experience — he went to a better high school, where it was more — it was in a suburban area, and it was really more — I think maybe he had a different frame of mind leaving high school. And he went away to college. The rest of us didn't. The rest of us stayed in Chicago. So he just had a very different experience, and I think he did think in those terms.

JG: Where were you in your college career when you and Stef met?

MK: I was a sophomore, so I was in my second year of college.

SK: You had planned to go to France, right?

MK: Right. I was a French major, I was going to go to France. Because I looked at college like, well, I'm going to learn what I want to learn. I can take things that are interesting to me, It's sort of my chance to explore things, and I really didn't think about what happens beyond that. I really didn't think, well, I guess I'll get a job." [laughs] And I didn't want to be a teacher at the time, so I didn't take education classes. So I just took what I wanted to take and then I would figure out what to do, the next step. I really didn't think beyond college.

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JG: Sounds like you were pretty smitten.

MK: Well, I was! [*both laugh*]

SK: You should tell about what your father said, though, when you told him about meeting me.

MK: Yeah, when I started dating Stef, my father said, “You know, if you get serious, he’s going to want you to become Jewish,” and I said, “Oh no, he would never do that.” [*both laugh*]

JG: So when did that become something you were actually thinking about, and what was the process by which you decided to convert?

MK: Well, when we talked about getting married, Stef had talked about how it was important to him to have a Jewish house, and it was important to him that his wife be Jewish. And that was kind of shocking to me, (01:18:00) because I really hadn’t thought of myself as Catholic, but I also hadn’t thought of myself as Jewish. And I said, “I don’t know. I have to think about it.” So I started to study with Max, and he gave me — at the University of Chicago, and he gave me a list of books to read, and I read about it, and I think I’d taken — there was one class I’d taken at my college. They’d had a local rabbi teach a class in Judaism, so I knew a little something. And after studying, I kind of felt that it was a step that I could take.

SK: Want to tell about the James Joyce paper?

MK: Oh yes, I guess I did have this interest. In one of my classes, we read *Ulysses*, by James Joyce, so the topic I chose to write my paper on was, you know, Leopold Bloom as a Jewish character in this —

SK: This is before meeting me.

MK: Before I met you. So I guess I had some interest, but it was interesting, you know? It’s different from becoming Jewish.

JG: Was there a turning point, a moment or an experience that sort of flipped it for you, where you were not only considering but were actively pursuing conversion?

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MK: You know I don't think — I think it was all very new to me, and I don't think that I really felt Jewish until I had been living as a Jew for a few years — because it was very new, very different.

JG: When and how did you become a convert?

MK: I studied with Max for about a year, I guess. Right?

SK: And you would go to Shabbos.

MK: And I would go to Shabbos. He was wonderful. He invited me down to Hyde Park to spend Shabbos with his family. And everything that I learned about it was very positive, very warm. And *havurah* — I would go out to visit Stef, who at some point was out in Boston with the *havurah* and I would go out periodically and see him, and while I was there we would, you know, go to Shabbos there and whatever. And everybody was very welcoming, and it seemed very warm and wonderful. I had a very positive — I mean, I guess for Jews who were born as Jews, the *havurah* was something very different, but to me this was sort of normative Judaism at first, because this is how I experienced Judaism, through Max and through — I mean, I guess I had gone to a couple different regular synagogue services, but to me, that's what was normative Judaism, the *havurah*.

SK: We married on December 20, 1969. Mary converted Thanksgiving of '69.

JG: So just before.

MK: Yeah. (01:21:00)

JG: So Stef had become a member of the *havurah* in December of '68. And when did you first start coming, and do you have any memories of your early experiences there?

MK: Well I think I went out to visit you on — like I remember being there once in June. There was a retreat, a Shavuot retreat, I think — was it Shavuot?

SK: Yup.

MK: I came out periodically to see him.

SK: And then the anti-war demonstration, November 15, 1969.

JG: In DC?

SK: In DC. A number of people in the *havurah* came down. I think it was very important to them. And Mary came from Chicago, and that was kind of a grade B-movie moment, because she was at one end of the table and I was at the other, and we ran to each other in front of the whole *havurah* and embraced. [*laughs*] But that was something we did together.

MK: Yes, the anti-war demonstration. Whenever there was a big one, we'd be there.

SK: And then you came — well, the wedding was really — you came about a week before the wedding.

JG: You came in the sense that you moved to Cambridge?

MK: Yeah, because I think my classes — I finished college very early. I took a heavy load and I went over the summer, I guess, so I finished college early, in December. It was a trimester. So we finished in December, so then we came out and we were married December 20th.

JG: So right after?

MK: Yes, right after.

JG: So your wedding was the first wedding at the *havurah*. Can you describe it, and how it came to be, and what it was like?

MK: I think we talked about it with Art beforehand, a couple days.

SK: We went to the Boston Public Library, to the wonderful Judaic section, and we got out books on customs for weddings. And I think from that book, we got the idea of the kittel, of your walking around me seven times, of having two, not a kind of a best man and a bridesmaid but having two people carrying candles next to you. So this was all from a book — from books! You did go to Eddie and Merle Feld's wedding in June.

MK: Right, that's right. (01:24:00)

JG: Was that your first Jewish wedding?

MK: That was my first Jewish wedding, and I think my own was my second. [*both laugh*]

SK: And then we met with — the rabbis that married us under the *chuppah* were Max and Art, and we met with them. It was just a few days before the wedding.

MK: Yeah, I remember we kind of talked about it for a little bit.

JG: Where did the wedding take place?

SK: It took place at Havurat Shalom, in the — it had already moved from Cambridge to Somerville. It was where it is now. And the *havurah* did it for us. We had no money. I can remember we had, what, seventy-five dollars?

MK: I think I had sixty. Yeah, that's all we had. We didn't have any money.

SK: And everybody made food for us. The people in Dorton made the curtains. "The people in Dorton" — the *women* in Dorton made the curtains.

JG: The curtains for what?

SK: The curtains for the building. Havurat Shalom did not have curtains at the time on the windows. [*laughs*] So I guess older people were coming, grownups were coming. We were going to have curtains.

JG: Where did the wedding take place?

SK: It took place in the main room. I don't know if they still *daven* there, but it's in the first *Jewish Catalog*. There's a room with pillows. That's where we got married. Everett Gendler brought in a candelabra with real candles that we hung in that room. It was all done by candlelight. And we had — each of us had two people. You had your sister —

MK: And Joanne.

SK: And Joanne, carrying candles. And I had my brother and my friend Howard, with candles.

JG: What were you wearing?

MK: I had a white dress. My mother sewed, so she made me a dress, and I didn't want a veil, but she said, "Oh, you should have a veil," so she made me a little veil and I wore it.

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SK: The ketubah was —

JG: What did you wear?

SK: Oh, I wore a blue suit — I still have the tie, a Sagittarian tie — and my kittel, which I still have and I still wear at Yom Kippur and Pesach. There was a big debate, I remember, with Max about the kittel. I wanted to have a reading from (01:27:00) Rosenzweig on how the kittel was like putting your fist up to God. That it was saying, I'm going to die, but I'm going to enjoy myself before I die. And Max I don't think liked that very much, and he had this suggestion of having a coat and taking it off with the kittel. But I wore the kittel. And was anything else we had a debate? Two rings — you wanted two rings.

MK: I did.

SK: I didn't because it wasn't traditional. We had quite a battle over that one.

JG: Do you remember what you said? Did you say — you used the traditional formation, I'm sure.

SK: Harei at *mekudeshet li*.

JG: What did you say?

MK: I don't remember.

SK: You said nothing.

MK: I said nothing? I guess that's why I don't remember.

SK: And there was no discussion of me walking around her. I mean, for us, we were reading some anthropologist. It was like she was giving her genitalia to me, so that's —
[laughs]

MK: Yeah well, egalitarianism was quite a ways away, I think, for the *havurah*, and for my background. It really hadn't hit the college I was at very much.

SK: But Mary's folks came in, which I think was something. And my mom and dad did. [laughs] I'm not sure if it's important for this history, but it's a great story: after the wedding, during the meal, my mom said to Mary's mom, "This must be very difficult for you, with her converting," and then my mom said, "Maybe one of my children will

convert to Catholicism and then we'll be equal." [laughs] It was so much my mother, trying to be really sweet and just not being. The night — we got married on a Saturday night, and we had a Shabbos dinner at my — it was my apartment; it became our apartment. I was totally in white. That was the thing.

MK: That's right, you used to have that white shirt you would wear for Shabbos, with embroidery, like on the front, like a Mexican peasant-y look. (01:30:00)

SK: That was later. That night it was just white shirt, white pants. And Mary's folks came over, and at one point you heard my father say to your father, "You know the price of kosher chickens in Buffalo has been going down!" — [laughs] as if Jim Kelliher would be interested in that!

MK: My father had a very polite but puzzled look on his face. [laughs] I think it was really kind of culturally overwhelming for my parents.

SK: But there was a feeling at that wedding — I don't know if anybody else would tell you this too, but it really was a community. It was actually a time when the Dorton people and the non-Dorton people really came together. It was wonderful, wonderful dancing. The floor of the *havurah* supposedly was about ready to crash down. They stopped the dancing because I guess Art and some people went downstairs and saw that it was going to fall down. The musicians were all just one of my friends and then people in the *havurah*. I think your folks — we have a picture with all non-Jewish people dancing, your family.

JG: It sounds like it was a very significant event in the life of the *havurah*, the beginnings of the *havurah*. Many people have mentioned it actually as a significant event.

SK: Yeah, Art was the consummate congregational rabbi. And I think — if he sees this, I don't mean this at all, Art, as a put-down! — I think it's a real credit to this brilliant teacher. But at that moment, my sister didn't get there on time and my father was just going nuts with it, and Art just talked to him and talked him down in such a sweet way, calming everything down. He was really playing the role of getting us all together.

MK: And he was very kind to my parents too. He did his best to make what was a very uncomfortable situation for them comfortable. He really tried to make them feel good.

JG: So let's delve into some of the key components of the *havurah*, both in terms of the expressed ideal but also in terms of the lived experiences for members of the community. Many people point to community as the essence, the heart, of what the *havurah* endeavor

was about. (01:33:00) Stef, you became a member just a month or two after the *havurah* began. How would you describe the community at that point, in terms of who was there, what kinds of backgrounds they were bringing?

SK: It was the whole spectrum. I mean, you had people like Steve Zweibaum, who were not — he was from a family of Holocaust survivors, but did not have much of a knowledge background, and I really don't believe much of an observance background before he came. And then you had people like Joey, who had grown up in Queens in an observant household; Barry Holtz, who was from a strong Conservative background in KI [Kehillath Israel], in Brookline — Joe Lukinsky (01:34:14) had had a big effect on his development; you had Art, who daily was on a journey of where to go spiritually. While I think I was very observant, my language skills were abysmal. I never really — I had been to Hebrew school, but I really couldn't tackle with texts very well. They actually asked — well, what you're supposed to do is be — since this was a seminary, it was *Havurat Shalom Community Seminary*, I was supposed to — I was *required* to take a Hebrew course in tutoring. And I was tutored once a week by someone in Cambridge, using Moshe Greenberg's Hebrew book. So there was this spectrum of observance, a spectrum of knowledge. Where we would kind of come together would be — [*laughs*] three things jump out. One is, there would be a communal meal once a week. (01:36:00) And we had these tables, which Zalman had come up with the idea of, which had both long legs and short legs, so that when we had our meals, we'd put the short legs on them and we'd sit on pillows around the tables and we'd eat. And that was once a week, and it was a very warm feeling. And then Shabbos morning, and the third was meetings. And I think that was kind of the antithesis of the meals, in that they would go on for a long, long time, and I — I never was at a kibbutz meeting, but I think it may have had some of the indicia of that. There'd be contentious issues, especially when it came to whether or not to admit new people. I mean, the *havurah* was a closed community. People could come for Shabbos morning. They could come for Tu B'Shvat seder, but to be part of the community, you had to be voted in, and those were contentious.

JG: Contentious because? How did it work in terms of who would get — what did it take for someone *not* to be admitted?

SK: Oh it was very — there were people who were not admitted, and it was — honestly, I think probably like a fraternity. It was very much — there was one guy, [*laughs*] who shows up in pictures of the wedding, who — he interviewed. Everybody was really up for him, and then he went, I think, to a retreat with us, and he got on people's nerves a lot, and that was it. We did not accept the guy. And then, this was in March of '69, so this was before we were married — there was a major decision to be made on whether to expand the membership of our *havurah* or keep it small. And I was in the "keep it small"

category, (01:39:00) because I thought that — in my vision was that this should be some sort of alternative community. I think we talked about income sharing. I think we talked about joint childrearing. We had no children, we had no income, so it was all very theoretical, but there was a sense that we would be very much part of each other's lives in a communal sense.

JG: Over a long period of time.

SK: Over a long period of time, yeah. I mean, while it was a seminary, it was also going to be a community that we would stick together. It's odd. At that time, you didn't think — at least I didn't think about, you know, what was I going to do ten years from now? There was a sense — David Roskies and I have talked about this — that this was a utopian adventure, that we were going to change things in a revolutionary way. Not politically, for most of them, but this wasn't going to be just the usual Jewish community.

JG: So what was the ideal notion of community, to the extent that you can articulate it?

SK: It's all over the place. I'm going to fast-forward a little bit: I don't know if you've seen these, but in the early 1970s, there were these position papers that people wrote. Have you seen them?

JG: We haven't seen them but many people have mentioned them.

SK: I have them. I'm sure lots of people in the *havurah* have them under lock and key. And it goes — it's the gamut. There were people like me that —

JG: Go back and say why there were position papers. Where did that come from?

SK: In many ways, where we would be going as a community was where Art thought that we should be — that we were at a turning point, a pivotal point. And some time, this was after our wedding but in early '70 — and this has to do, I think, with Dorton and with the push for communal living by some people, that, you know, what should we be? — and Art — I believe it was Art — (01:42:00) said that we should be writing position papers and having basically parlor meetings at his house to discuss where we should be going.

JG: So at his house and not at the *havurah*.

SK: Now that's interesting. Yes, at least the one that I went to was at his apartment. It was not at the *havurah*.

JG: That seems symbolically important.

SK: I have no idea why. I mean, maybe it was just the night that I went to one, but I think that most of them took place there. It was so much that Art was convening it, that this was part of — in many ways, it was a struggle of where he wanted to go. He once told me that one of the big influences for the *havurah* was Dan Berrigan. And he met with Dan, and Dan Berrigan said, “Why don’t you have a Catholic Workers movement in Judaism like we do in Catholicism?”

JG: This is the meeting that took place at Heschel’s seminar, at JTS?

SK: I believe so. And that was a big influence. And I think at my first interview, he said something like, “We would like you because you’re someone who could be involved in more political activity.” Jim Kugel, who already was a member, was head of the Jewish Peace Fellowship in Boston — he was a conscientious objector at the time; he *later* became a resister — Jim was involved with anti-war activities and with draft counseling, but most people were not. So there was that part of Art’s vision that I loved. The other part, and I think it’s a part I know very little about, but it was spiritual quest and the use of drugs in that spiritual quest. And I never was — and I don’t say this in a puritanical way, it was just something I wasn’t interested in. But the use of psychedelic drugs in terms of the spiritual adventure, and that — going back to my initial interview — (01:45:00) that internal sense of quest, I think was part of the community vision. And then you add to that when the Dorton people were admitted and became part of it. The Dorton people very much wanted to have the communal living together and support. So you had these three —

JG: I think we need to talk for a minute about the beginnings of Dorton, because you mentioned it several times, and we need to discuss when did Dorton start to form, and what was it?

SK: That meeting in March, in 1969 — the big struggle was, we’re going to get a lot of people, accept a lot of people, or we’re going to stay small.

JG: Small at the time was what?

SK: About twenty, I think. I mean, I could go through the names but I think it was about twenty people, maybe a little less. And we were talking about — I don’t know if it was doubling, but it was adding a lot of people. I had done my own lobbying. I remember that I thought Joey Reimer would vote for it, and Art had talked to Joey. And I felt betrayed.

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And I was alone. When it came to the vote, a number of the people voted — recused themselves, didn't vote, because they were leaving. Eddie was leaving —

JG: Already? This was at the end of the first year?

SK: Eddie left to become Hillel director at Champaign (01:47:06) in '69.

JG: This is at the end of the first year, not even quite the end of the year.

SK: That's right. Zalman was leaving, Buzzy. I'm almost sure Buzzy and Mona left after the first year. So there were people that were going to be leaving, and the idea that Art had at that March '69 meeting was that we were going to be a big tent. And we'd have some of the communal people, and we'd have some of the — I'll call it the spiritual quest people.

JG: What did "communal people" mean?

SK: "Communal people" meant — and these were the people that ended up in Dorton — Steve and Sue Genden, (01:48:00) Jeff and Terri Sokol, Kathleen Martindale, and Charles Cohen. Was there anybody else?

MK: No, they were the ones that lived at Dorton.

SK: That's right. And so they wanted to — none of them had very good Jewish knowledge or background, but they wanted to live communally and establish a Jewish communal home. Then there were people that were what I'll call more mainstream, that wanted to get graduate degrees. Some of them wanted to have divinity deferments. Jim Sleeper, Steve Mitchell, Hillel Levine, and George Savran, Richie Siegel —

JG: They were there part-time because they were graduate students.

SK: They were graduate students. And that was what, from the time that I got there, I was concerned about. I'm not going to question their motives, because I think everyone wanted to be part of the community, but it was a way of being in graduate school and having a divinity deferment for some folks. So at that meeting, it was decided that we were going to take all these people. I left the meeting halfway — this is a whole other story that really isn't important to this history. I got on a Greyhound bus and went to Bangor, Maine, to have my own period to process what had happened. I was very upset by what had happened.

JG: Because?

SK: Because I wanted this to be — I thought that with a lot of people that it would be a nice little group, a nice little community, but not a community that was seeking to bring about change. Actually, David Roskies was accepted, was one of the people accepted as well. It was this variety of people that were certainly concerned about alternative Jewish thought, but whether to change (01:51:00) the way that we would live as families, as a community, or the way that we would have an effect politically, was not that important to these folks.

MK: Well also, as I recall, one of your concerns was that you came expecting to get *smicha*, that the full-time focus would be on Jewish texts leading to some kind of *smicha*, right? That if people were in graduate programs, that wouldn't be the focus. I don't know, was that —?

SK: I think that was some of it. Maybe I'm not remembering all, but there was a sense that this was not going to be — this was going to be basically a nice community for *davening*, but nothing more. There wasn't going to be any impact.

JG: I wanted to ask you about the idea of the *brit*, the covenant. Tell us where that came from and what happened with it.

SK: Some time at a retreat, and this was very early on — it could have been in December '68, at a Hanukkah retreat — I met late on a Friday night with Art, and I said, "This isn't what I signed up for. I wanted something more intense." And he was — he responded by saying that he was very excited about it, that he agreed with it, and that he would draw something up. I felt quite good. I had just come, so it was kind of odd that this was happening, but I felt at that time let down.

JG: So early on?

SK: So early on. This was probably a lot of my own *mishegas*, I was probably never happy with anything, but it was a relief. And he then drafted, which you probably have, (01:54:00) the *brit*. And we were going to have a meeting to discuss the *brit*, and this, I think, was before the beginning of March; it was probably February of '69. And I think that says a lot about my relationship with the *havurah*, I don't remember talking to many people about it, or people wanting to talk to me about it — about the *brit*. Actually, I don't even think it had been distributed yet, but the whole concept of *brit*, I think, was in the air, and there was going to be a meeting on a morning, probably February, sometime in February '69, and Art was going to run the meeting. And the morning of the meeting, I

get there and Art is leaving. He's been called on jury duty, and he's not going to be there for it, and he wants me to lead the meeting. And I should have been smart enough at the time to know this was not going to happen.

JG: Why not? What do you mean?

SK: Here I am, this young guy who's just come into the *havurah*. Now, at that time, boy, I just was there. What we had were six-month coordinators, who would coordinate just the logistics for the minyan, and I was asked to do that, right off the bat. And I don't think it's like the junior member of the Supreme Court being asked to vote first. I think it was — there was a lot of respect for the ideas I was bringing in. So I was already, you know, in some sort of leadership role. But people really didn't know me well, and a lot of these people were five, six years older than I was, and were already married, and had professional professions that they were going into. And the meeting was a disaster. I remember I asked that we read it aloud, the *brit* aloud, to begin with. I remember asking Eddie, and Eddie refused. And then I asked Buzzy, and Buzzy refused. I can still see myself sitting on the floor at this — there was this wall that we weren't going to be involved with this. And what people said, and I think that this was genuine as could be, that they weren't signing up for this kind of intensity. That it was — (01:57:00) they wanted to be able to decide — they wanted a community, they wanted to feel a certain intimacy, but they didn't want to feel *that* close. The idea in the *brit* was that there would be people who would have the *brit* hanging in their houses to show their commitment.

JG: This was modeled on — there was precedent for this in Jewish history, historical precedence.

SK: Right, and that was part of it. This was going to be a very — a sign of a commitment of these people together. But there could be other people in the *havurah* that were not part of the *brit*.

JG: So it wasn't obligatory that one sign this.

SK: No. But my memory is that there were a lot of voices saying no. Now there may have been voices for it, but I don't think there were strong voices.

JG: Was this the first-time people were seeing the *brit*, or had it been circulated?

SK: I don't think it had been circulated. I'm almost certain it hadn't been, although — although Art must have shown it to me, so I can't be sure. But I think that there would

have been more discussion of it beforehand. I think people had a sense of where Art was going. I certainly felt let down by Art.

JG: Let down by Art in what way?

SK: That somehow, he could have gotten out of jury duty that day, or at least told me about what was going on, or at least put it off to another day. He, I think, might have been able to get it accepted. Yeah, I don't think there's any doubt, he could have. And I think what happened was, probably a month later, with this meeting — I shouldn't be talking for him — the sense I got was that he had decided it would be better for the community to have different subgroups, some that were more intense and some that were not. (02:00:00) So we then accepted a large number of people.

JG: So what was the ending of this meeting about the *brit*?

SK: The end of the meeting was that we weren't going to do it.

JG: So there was a rejection of it.

SK: Yes, there was a rejection of it. You know, it's odd. I must have talked to Art about it. I have no memory of it. It was — I mean, it's a document that historically, I think, is important to the *havurah*, but I think it's important because it was not accepted. Now if it would have been accepted, what would have happened I have no idea. I mean, there were some people, Noam Kornfeld, *alay ha-shalom*, who was at Chicago when I was at Chicago and Max had gotten there — I think he wanted something more intense. I think that Jim Kugel did.

JG: Did you have a model? Did these people have a model in your mind? Kibbutzim, monasteries, various other models of small intentional communities?

SK: I think Art did. And Kathy certainly did. Kathy was very interested in monastic communities. I don't think so; you know, if I was to think of anything it was the communes I knew about in Chicago. Certainly some of the people in Dorton had it — the communes in California, Terri and Jeff probably did. But it was more modern. We didn't go back to — yeah, at least in my head, I didn't go back to traditional models.

JG: So in the aftermath of that meeting, what happened?

SK: We accepted all the people. I was considering leaving the *havurah*.

JG: So there were around forty people, going into the second year.

SK: That's right. Going into the second year, we had this — I think you came to this retreat, I'm not sure. We had a retreat at the religious center, Packard Manse, in June.

MK: I don't think I did. I think I stayed home for that.

SK: Yes, and we had lots of different learning sessions. And then there was one night that (02:03:00) was given over to social action. And that night, I don't know why we did it this way, but Art said we were going to eat like in a monastery, in silence. [laughs] For social action. I'm not exactly what it was about, but that was it! That's what we did. And then after it, we went out and I had this idea that we needed a social action project. And that project was going to be a drop-in center for high school kids who were unaffiliated Jews — well, just any teenagers — in Brookline, Massachusetts.

JG: Why Brookline?

SK: I think it was because it had a large Jewish community, and there were kids that were searching for things. I'm not sure that it had much to do with contacts in Brookline, but in many ways, at least in its original idea of it, it was connecting with expertise that people had. We were going to do a meditation workshop, a candle-making workshop, draft-counseling. It was — the idea I had was this is the way we could have people in the *havurah* be involved with something outside the *havurah*.

JG: And were people in the *havurah* actually teaching some of them, or teaching at some of the synagogues in Brookline? They had connections.

SK: They were, yeah. Barry was from Brookline. A lot of them were doing Hebrew school stints there, in Lexington. In some ways there was something natural about it, but our client base was kids that had no affiliation. And in retrospect, it actually, for a few of them, I think, was very important. But it was — I was going to live in Brookline, because I was going to live in the community where I was doing this work, and that's why I moved from Somerville in August of '69 to Brookline Village. (02:06:00) And then there was this — we had to find a place, a venue. The original venue we had was in Coolidge Corner, and kids did come in! They did. Actually, I was kind of surprised. I'm not so sure that I thought it would happen. And then kids would come in and they'd bring friends in. So there were nights at the drop-in center where we'd have ten, fifteen kids there.

JG: Where was it? What was the space?

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SK: It was in an office building. What happened was that Art forgot to sign the lease. So eventually, after I don't know, four or five months, the landlord, who was actually one of Nader's Raiders, this great liberal lawyer, his father owned the building. And he came in, and he said, "You haven't signed the lease. Other people in this building said they smell pot coming from the drop-in center" — there was no pot, at least to my knowledge, in the drop-in center — "so you've got to get out." And kicked us out. We then moved closer to Brookline Village, to a storefront.

JG: Right on Harvard Street.

SK: No, it was on Brook Street, right off — it was near Aspinwall, off of Harvard Avenue. Right?

MK: Yeah.

SK: I think it was an old grocery store that we went into. And while we had this idea that there'd be this candle-making workshop and meditation and all that — maybe once or twice we did. And I think that there were people in the *havurah* that came down, but they didn't really know what to do when they got there, because there was no curriculum. Kids would just come in and talk, they would — there was some meditation that went on. I had absolutely no training as a social worker, but they wanted to just talk to me about what was going on in their lives. And one of them, I ended up to be the best man at his wedding — Jonathan Greenberg, (02:09:00) son of an Orthodox rabbi — was totally disillusioned with anything Jewish, and was into Eastern religion, and he really wanted to be there. And I remember once — this was after we were married — he brought a whole group of kids to our apartment for a meditation session at night, and then in the morning he did some meditation while we *davened*. I think it was a Shabbos morning when we *davened*, or maybe I put *tefillin* on, but it was two religious events going on at the same time. And this — for him, it had a big effect. For some of the kids, who were from very dysfunctional homes, they liked to be there. The November '69 march, a group of kids came down, and the parents allowed them to come down because I was going to be their chaperone or whatever! [*laughs*] I remember the October 15, '69 march. It was — what did we call it? October 15th, when people — it was an anti-war day, and people would leave school, and I remember leading a group —

MK: A moratorium day.

SK: Moratorium day, yes. People would leave Brookline High, and we went with them. I think for a few of the kids, and Jonathan, it certainly did — Jonathan Greenberg, it was an important place to be. In terms of social action for the *havurah*, it wasn't.

JG: Was this a collective decision on the part of the *havurah*, to do this?

SK: Well, it was but — after this monastic silence dinner, we went outside. I think, maybe I had the idea that we have a bonfire, a campfire. That around the campfire [laughs] this is funny — I read some Dietrich Bonhoeffer and then talked about having a drop-in center! [laughs] And it was — they were guilted into it. They wanted, okay, Stef, you want something. You can have it. Some of the people in Dorton did participate, did come down and help. (02:12:00) But I think most of the non-Dorton people, maybe a few of them came down once or twice.

JG: Was it mainly you?

SK: It was mainly me. It was me. And the next year — probably you know that there was Danforth (02:12:27) money that went into the *havurah*. Art was going to put in a proposal for a second year, or renewal of funding for the *havurah*. And in it, he was going to include the drop-in center. That was going to be a big draw, and I said no, that it's really not a *havurah* thing. You can't include it.

JG: So it became almost your personal social activism.

SK: It did. That's it.

JG: Mary, were you involved in it?

MK: Yeah, I was — trying to think, I guess when I was there, when I came out finally, the kids were still coming over once in a while. But I don't remember.

SK: You remember with Charlie Manning (02:13:21) —

MK: Oh Charlie, right. I was there when you were getting the second site ready, you know, getting it ready to be used. But I don't really — I think by the time I really moved out there, I think that you'd lost that space too, right? How long did you have that space?

SK: No, we had that space for a long while, until we left the Havurah, until May, June, of '70.

MK: Okay, because I came out in January.

JG: You never really talked about the beginnings of Dorton and what Dorton was.

SK: So these three families — Steve and Sue Genden, Jeff and Terri Sokol, and Charles Cohen and Kathleen Martindale — had been accepted to the *havurah*, that contentious March meeting. And they were the folks that really wanted something communal. I think it's good to talk about each of them and where they were at. Steve was a graduate of University of Chicago. He had studied psychology and was very interested in Eastern religion. (02:15:00) And he and Sue had married right before coming to the *havurah*. Susan — what was her area?

MK: Well, she opened a graphic design business, but I don't — she was kind of artsy. I don't remember what her college major was, but she was very artistically inclined.

SK: And they were very much — while they wanted communal living, they also wanted to have a certain — wanted a religious community where they could be involved in a spiritual quest. Terri and Jeff were yuppies from California. I believe they had been involved with Carlebach, and as they were at the *havurah*, they became much, much more observant. And then Charles has a Ph.D. in physics, and Kathleen eventually got a Ph.D. in English literature. Really sharp people that were, again, were involved with spiritual issues, but like the Gendens, in terms of the psychological ramifications of it. So they came — I'm not sure how they came together, but when they came, they decided to rent this house. And the house was kitty-corner from the *havurah*. I'm not sure exactly how they came together in this house, but they — what brought them together was they were new to the *havurah*, they had some common interest in more communal, and I think the whole Eastern religion spiritual quest was important to them. And from the beginning — actually, the name “Dorton,” I have heard, came from Zalman, who said that “Dorton” in Yiddish means “over there,” (02:18:00) and that other people in the *havurah* would talk about them as “being over there.” And from the beginning, they were “over there.” And I think they felt very much the feeling — none of them were very aggressive politically. I can remember Steve and I having big arguments in which Steve would say that basically politics doesn't matter, that the world's crappy, that that's what it is. [laughs] But I think because these people wanted something different from a graduate degree in Jewish studies, I was attracted to them. And so was Jim Kugel, and Noam, who was also not getting a degree, was interested. So we would hang out over there, and I think from the beginning there was a feeling that somehow they had been sold a bill of goods about what the *havurah* was, maybe a little bit like what I felt — that they felt that the *havurah* was going to be more than that.

JG: Did Dorton exist when you came into the *havurah*? At what point did this all begin?

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SK: No, this all began in the fall of '69. Because they were accepted to the *havurah* in March, at that meeting, and then they came that summer, late that summer, and moved into the house together.

JG: So they were part of Year Two, essentially, the Year Two class.

SK: That's it. And they — I mean, at least I came from a background in which I, in terms of prayer, in terms of observance, it was a part of me. For all of them — Kathleen was a convert, and the rest of them really hadn't had much of a family background, so they felt even more distance, I think. (02:21:00) They could not lead *davening*, they — it's not that I think people looked down on them, but they looked at them as "other," hence the name "Dorton." And some time in the fall, because all of our Hebrew knowledge was very limited, we began to have what was called the *beit midrash*, which was every morning. We would get together and we would study our *Shemot* with Rashi, and people in the *havurah* who had knowledge would come and would learn with us, would teach us — and that included Joel Rosenberg, and Michael Swirsky, and Art. And then, sometime, I think it was in January of '70, Michael Paley joined us. Michael was a student at Brookline High, and I don't know how he got the permission to do it, but knowing Michael, he was able to do it! He was able to get the administration to agree that he could learn with us. So he would pick me up in Brookline Village and then we would drive together out to Dorton — at that time, it was Dorton where we were studying — and he would join the discussion. Part of the discussion, after we did some learning, would be grousing about the *havurah* and where it was at, and that it wasn't what we wanted it to be. And sometime, and I'm not exactly sure when — Michael Paley actually has a diary, a journal, of his time in Dorton, which it might be interesting to look at — some time in January, February of '70, we moved from the *havurah* to Dorton, (02:24:00) and that's where we would do our learning and our grousing.

JG: Say that again? Sometime in —

SK: January, February of '70. Now this wasn't much after our marriage. We began meeting at Dorton for the *beit midrashes*.

JG: Prior to that it had been —

SK: — at the *havurah*, yes. And we continued our learning, but it became much more — Michael read me some passages from the journal. It was like "Stef came back from a *havurah* meeting last night and he said that this happened at that meeting and then we discussed what we were going to do!" He was the anthropologist for what we were doing.

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JG: Was he part of the meetings at that point?

SK: No, Michael was not in the *havurah* yet. He was hanging around.

JG: He was this junior fellow-traveler, so to speak.

SK: That's it. This high school kid —

JG: — who was still in his senior year.

SK: Yes, who was with us. And then about —

JG: Let me ask another question, though. Were the members of Dorton participating in the *havurah*, with the meetings and meals and all of that at that point?

SK: Yeah, I think so. But they were becoming more and more disenchanted. I mean, maybe this is my own false memory, but I always felt like I was still there, maybe because I had been there basically from the beginning, and in many ways, I felt connected to some people. I think they never — it was rare that they felt much intimacy with the folks in the *havurah*. The wedding, as I said, was a time when both groups came together, and I know that people in Dorton did some of the cooking. But it's a turning point, at the wedding, because right after that things started to fall apart very quickly.

JG: What efforts were members of the *havurah* making, if any, to try and truly integrate these new members? These were people whom they accepted into the *havurah* in the second year.

SK: I'm not sure. (02:27:00) I'm sure that people were invited over for Shabbos dinners. On the other hand, it was like the three couples were one couple.

JG: In terms of the way people —

SK: — in how they looked at them, yeah. Jeff, at that time, was becoming more and more observant and Orthodox, in his practice. He went from Havurat Shalom to Lakewood, New Jersey and became part of the Haredi community. And I mean, quite honestly, I think all of the three couples in Dorton — the men were very concerned about the draft, and that was one of the reasons why they were there. I'm not saying that *was* the reason they were there, but that that kind of kept them there. What happened after they left the *havurah*, Charles had a very low number for the lottery, the draft lottery, and so he went to Canada. He moved to Canada. And Sue and Steve, I think Steve had a high number.

He went off to — I think the lottery was in December of '69, so people knew where they stood, and he went off, they went off to the Bay Area. After some time, and this was probably around the time we moved our daily *beit midrash* to Dorton, was when Art had the idea of having these position papers and these meetings. And by that point, some of the people in Dorton, I think, had had it. And one of the position papers, which I'll have scanned, was from Kathleen, and I think that this said a lot about it. "This is the *havurah* monster. He/she spews forth words which no one takes seriously anymore. Intense, authentic, radical, sensitive, committed, experimental. I'm not writing a protocol" — I guess we called them protocols — "because I'm pretty certain not to be here next year. This is one thing I'm fairly sure of. Love and trust cannot be legislated. People who cannot look into each other's eyes (02:30:00) are not likely to be sharing anything important, whether it be time, space, roller-skating, or making cholent. Kathleen." And then there's this ugly-looking bird that's spewing. [*sigh*] I think that says it. Now there are a lot of others of these protocols. People can peruse and see what other people had to say, but most of the — I guess I call them the mainstream *havurah*, the non-Dorton people, the mainstream were much — were talking about how important it is to be part of the community, but not a communal space, not a commune.

JG: I want to dig a little bit deeper into this question of the ideal of openness, which we're referring to here. As an intentional community, the *havurah*, as I understand it, was striving for an ideal of openness, that is, an ability to share with and be open with essentially all of the other members. And yet, in a piece in *Response* that was written at the end of the first year, '69, one member described the *havurah* as, quote, "wracked by conflict between individuality and commonality," that this was a common struggle that people were feeling. This was also largely a male community, it was mainly men, and girlfriends and wives, in a few places.

SK: It was *only* men. When we voted people in, for the first year going into the second year, we only voted on men and then the women would come along. Noam came with a girlfriend, Debbie Wolin, *alay ha-shalom*, to Havurat Shalom, and Debbie, when Noam broke up with Debbie, Debbie stayed on. But it kind of — this no-women's land, I mean she would go to dinners, but I can never remember her being at a meeting.

MK: Did wives and the women come to the meetings, because I can never remember being in a meeting?

SK: You know, that's the weird thing, because I can remember Mona being in a meeting.

JG: You *do* remember.

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SK: I do remember Mona being in a meeting. (02:33:00) So, now whether they voted, I don't know. The vocal voices were the men.

MK: I don't remember ever going to a meeting. I mean, I just think I wasn't there at the time you were having meetings. But — were there meetings? I guess there must have been one, but I don't remember going in January before we left.

JG: The meetings were every week.

SK: Yes.

MK: Oh no, I don't think I went to any of them.

JG: Wednesday, a communal meal, and then meetings.

MK: No, I don't remember going to one. I mean, maybe I'm just not remembering, but I don't remember it.

SK: The only meetings I remember toward the end, besides these parlor meetings to discuss where the *havurah* should go, we would discuss who to elect to come in, who to accept. And that really brought out this tension of how close we could be. I remember in one of the meetings, and in some ways I think this kind of encapsulated the feelings of some people, is that Jimmy Sleeper (02:34:36) yelled out, "Purity is bunk!" And so it was this ideal, which no one — which a lot of people thought couldn't be done. And then there were those of us who at least would spout the ideal.

JG: Mary, much of your educational experience, your experience in general, had been in all-female schools and environments. What was it like for you to be in this intensely male environment?

MK: Well, you know, I think my limited contact — my contact was so limited, it would be sporadically that I would come in and see Stef, and everything was so new to me, that it kind of — I don't think I really noticed that it was all male. Because usually when I was there, the girlfriends and the wives would be around. So it didn't really register, I think. And then I was just there for a very short time before we left, and I guess it didn't make much of an impression, because if I was there at all, I don't remember it. I remember going there on Shabbos. I may not have gone to the Wednesday things. (02:36:00) Probably didn't.

SK: I'm sure there was always a meeting on Wednesday night.

JG: Sometimes there were talks and things like that.

SK: Yep.

JG: But there was a weekly meal.

SK: There was a weekly meal, yes.

MK: But I think my knowledge, my Judaic knowledge was so limited, I don't think I would have felt like — like nobody wanted to listen to my voice, because I don't think I would have felt like I had much to add, probably.

JG: It's interesting, in the context of this discussion of otherness, how you felt as a new Jew.

MK: Yeah, I think everything was just so new to me that these other things didn't really register.

SK: There is one — I hesitate telling this story, because I only have fragments of it, but I think it's important. The first year, there was a member and his wife, and they had a kid. They were the only people who had a kid. And they didn't live in Cambridge or nearby. And he didn't come that often, and my memory is that he was kicked out of the *havurah* and lost his draft deferment. Now, what's important to me with my memory of that, at least, is that there was a sense that he wasn't involved enough, but that we would — that we would not continue to have a relationship with him is odd.

JG: In your letter to Mary that you sent me, you discussed these feelings of alienation that you were feeling even in the first months there, and you used the term “spiritual masturbation” to describe what I understood to be the self-absorption of members with their own spiritual experiences, at the expense of active engagement with the world around them. Was that one of your primary critiques as you were getting into the *havurah* experience?

SK: It is, although to this day, the spiritual intensity of some of the experiences there are still with me. (02:39:00) But there was a sense of people still spending too much time looking at their own *kishkes*. There was Zalman — this was before I came, but it was there when I was there — took a Tupperware container and put Christmas lights in it and engraved onto the Tupperware top — he put “Yod He Vav He.” And people would sit

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there, looking at the lights going off and on, colored lights, of Yod He Vav He. That was a lot of kind of, “Aaaaaaah, we’re having some kind of spiritual high.”

JG: Another example that you gave that struck me, I have to say, in the letter was a description of a lab that was part of one of Zalman’s classes. Tell us about that. What were these labs, and if you remember this story about meditating as a tree?

SK: Yeah — can I refresh my recollection? [*looks at the letter*]

JG: Right in the middle, you see, where there’s a quote there.

SK: Okay, yeah. Zalman would have us try to mediate in different ways. One day, actually Shabbos morning, he said that we should have a *davening* where we were all nude.

JG: Nude?

SK: Nude. And see what that’s like in terms of vulnerability. This instance, a lab in *tefilah*, was that we were a tree, and think of ourselves as a tree. What would a tree be like?

JG: A connection with *Tu B’Shvat* I think. (02:41:35)

SK: Yes. And as I was doing it, I was thinking about the students that at that time were being expelled from the University of Chicago for draft protest. I was thinking about the people in Vietnam, the people dying in Biafra, and I — this is Stef Krieger, the contrarian — (02:42:00) there’s a part of me, I think, that wanted to get into the tree business, and I couldn’t. And I was thinking about what else we could be doing. I mean, when it came to the inner life, I don’t think there was anything that, at that time, for me, could have been more impressive, more exceptional, than what we were attempting to do. At the same time, the outer world — in some ways, it was like Brookline Light and Power, that they were doing it for guilt. The November ’69 march was an odd thing, because talking to some people now who were involved in it, it was such an important event. But at the time, to get people to go to it —

JG: The Mobilization.

SK: The Mobilization, in 1969 — to get people to go was very difficult! And once we were there, we were staying at the Reform Judaism Social Action Center, which was near Dupont Circle, and the police were gassing a lot of people at night. And I get a sense of

just real fear from a lot of the *havurah* people there. [laughs] For me, on the other hand, it was like we've got to fight for this. But some of them came! Actually I can remember two people from Dorton came down. So once at a *havurah* anniversary, Art turned to me and he said, "Well, there were other people that were involved in social activism," and I think, for Art, that was really important, that there were. Certainly Jim and his work with the Jewish Peace Fellowship was. But I think in Art's mind, it was so important that we not just be doing the inner stuff. But we never quite, at least in my estimation, had the kind of balance he wanted.

JG: How would you describe the role of *tefilah*, where it stood in the priorities of the community and how it related to your experience of prayer in other settings, like in the Upstairs Minyan at the University of Chicago?

SK: Well, in terms of (02:45:00) the difference of U of C and Upstairs Minyan and the *havurah*, it took it to another level. The Upstairs Minyan, you know, there was poetry. We were experimenting. There was a lot of creativity in what we were doing at Havurat Shalom.

JG: What stands out for you?

SK: The moment that stands out is the *neilah* 1969, in which I was standing almost right next to Art, and he was leading — he was very involved with *tefilah*, and it's rare in my life that I've ever had a spiritual moment like that. I was really — I was moving. It was extremely intense. Shabbos morning *davening* was good! There were some wonderful *daveners*. Larry Laufman, I still use some of the melodies that Larry did. Larry — just an upbeat guy from Texas, who really brought a lot of joy to it. Art taught me an enormous amount; Zalman, the first year. And what I liked about it, compared to the kind of *davening* that I'm involved with now, was that in some ways it was no-holds-barred — that we could do a Latin-American mass for *Musaf*. It wasn't like we were second-guessing. I mean, there were definitely flaws and we definitely made mistakes, but it wasn't like we were dwelling on the mistakes. You know, when you ask the question, there was very little discussion about what did we do right, and what did we do wrong. It was very authentic, very organic. We just did it.

JG: Seems like it was very experimental — if something worked, it worked. If it didn't work, people moved on.

SK: That's it, that's it.

JG: Without undue criticism, so to speak, because the ethos (02:28:00) was one of experimenting with innovative approaches and innovative materials.

SK: It was. When we read the Torah, we put the Torah on a pillow on the floor and unrolled it. And I remember one older person who came from the outside, and he said, “How dare you put the Torah down on the ground!” And it was Zalman who said, “We’re bringing it to the people.” And then it was — at least, I don’t remember any discussion, oh, should we put it up, should we put it down. We did it!

JG: Can you talk about the impact of Zalman on the style of *davening* and in general?

SK: He really — I took a class with him, and it’s funny, I don’t even remember what it was. It was on — one of the readings was *You Never Promised Me a Rose Garden* — was that the name of the book?

MK: Yeah.

SK: Okay, kind of psychology and religion, but that wasn’t — it was a good class. But in terms of *tefilah*, he really had an effect.

JG: Had you ever experienced the use of *niggun* in the way that it happened at the *havurah*?

SK: No, I think that perhaps we had done a little bit at the Upstairs Minyan, and why I’m saying that is we had this big binder of additional prayers and poems at the Upstairs Minyan. One of them was “*Yedid Nefesh*,” the traditional melody — has a *niggun* at the end. So I think we had done a little. Nothing like the *havurah*.

JG: What was it like at the *havurah*?

SK: It wasn’t like hours of just doing the *niggun* over and over. But we would be on those pillows and we would be closing our eyes and we would be chanting it, and the best part of it for me was listening to other people’s voices. And in some ways, you kind of resonate with other folks, and I’m sure that was taught to us by Zalman — taught in the sense that it was modeled for us by Zalman. And he would always have a creative idea, including *davening* nude — which we never did, for the record. (02:51:00) But he was always searching for how we could increase our spiritual experience. We started in an — this was some time in the winter of ’69 — we started a daily service, that probably nobody knows about except for Art and me, because most of the time Art and I were the only ones there. I can remember schlepping in the Boston snow to the *havurah* and being

there with him. And his idea for the *davening* was really neat. It was, each day of the week, you would do one small section of the *tefilah*, so that by the end of the week you did the whole thing. But you would really intensely focus on this one part. I mean, this was not Zalman, this was Art, but it had a Zalman-esque quality to it.

JG: Many people have described the services at the *havurah* as neo-hasidic. Would you agree with that? What kind of elements from the Jewish mystical tradition were there?

SK: The *niggun*, the almost meditative sense of trying to elevate the soul. We used a *nusach* — a *nusach sefard*, but Askenaz *nusach*, *Sefard* siddur, so that's kind of hasidic. In terms of the *nusach*, we played with it. So I'm not so sure a traditional hasid would like that.

JG: Neo-hasidic.

SK: Yeah, with big letters for “neo.” I think that it wasn't just saying the words. It was trying to move somewhere. Interesting, I don't believe we ever had Torah discussions like we did in the Upstairs Minyan, although we would have people do some learning during the *tefilah*.

JG: What was the difference between the two different places?

SK: Much more cerebral at the University of Chicago. (02:54:00) And I think that was a reflection of Danny, Danny Leifer. In terms of *tefilah*, it was — while we would experiment, we would definitely critique what we were doing, and the readings were much more didactic than we had at Havurat Shalom.

JG: In terms of the words, of saying the words, what do you recall about whether the pronunciation was Ashkenazi or Sephardic?

SK: It was Sefard. I believe.

JG: Sefardic?

SK: It was Sefardic. I had come from an Ashkenaz home, and only when I got to Buffalo did I start learning Sefardic pronunciation. But I don't remember anybody — I guess David Roskies would have, but by then I'm not so sure how much he — what his knowledge of the *tefilah* was. So I think it was mostly Sefardic.

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JG: In terms of women's roles in public worship — we were talking earlier about women's roles in the community more generally — but in terms of public worship, what do you remember about that?

SK: Not at all, not at all. I don't remember women leading at all. I do remember, [*laughs*] I had asked Esther Ticktin to do an aliyah, and I asked and she turned me down.

JG: That was at the Upstairs Minyan.

SK: Yeah. And I asked Kathy Green, and Kathy Green refused at Havurat Shalom. And I remember talking to her about it later, and she was really going through some struggles about what her role should be.

JG: What about people like Mona or Gail Reimer?

SK: Gail was not in it at the time. Merle Feld I don't think ever led anything. I mean the great Merle story, which you may have heard, is that once at a retreat — and this would have been in early '69 — the women always did the dishes, the women always got the food out. And it was the end of a meal, and Merle took Joey Riemer and me by our shoulders (02:37:00) and dragged us into the kitchen and said, "You do the dishes." [*laughs*] So that's a side of what was going on! You want to say something, Mary?

MK: I was just wondering, were women called to the Torah? Did they get a vote?

SK: I believe — you and I were called for a joint aliyah when we got married — the *aufruf*.

MK: The *aufruf*, yeah.

SK: And I believe women could be called.

JG: But were they?

MK: On Shabbos morning, were they? Do you remember?

SK: I think — I'm almost sure they were, but I can't —

JG: Do you recall any women wearing a tallis?

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SK: No, not at all. Now at the Upstairs Minyan, I think maybe one or two did. *Tefillin*, absolutely not.

JG: How about being counted in a minyan?

SK: I think we did count them.

JG: People have described, I believe, a moment at a retreat, where someone needs to say kaddish and there were nine men, and I forget which woman, said, What about counting me? And there was a decision made to count her.

SK: That would have been after I was there. Maybe we had enough men there. I don't remember.

JG: Were you or other people — men in particular — in the *havurah* aware of the stirrings of Jewish feminism, which truly became more of an actual thing with the founding of Ezrat Nashim, which was a year later or so.

SK: I was, because of my Reconstructionist background. That I approached Esther, that I approached Kathy, was very much that. But I didn't see, in terms of just the roles of being — in terms of being accepted, women being accepted with men, a couple being accepted to the *havurah*, I don't think I even thought about it. On the other hand, that the Reconstructionist seminary was taking women starting in '68, I believe, was — I thought of it as positive. (03:00:00) But I didn't in any way say, "Why don't we reach out to women, to have women be members of the *havurah*?"

JG: Art Green described this very early period as a "pre-feminist moment."

SK: [*sighs*] I agree and I disagree. Where I disagree is that it could have been. We were experimenting with *tefilah*, we were experimenting in so many other ways, and this one, we didn't. And you know, look at — Mordecai Kaplan's daughter had a bat mitzvah in the 1920s!

JG: Twenty-two, I believe.

SK: Yes! That women were leading *davening* at the Upstairs Minyan.

JG: And I believe Rabbi Ben-Zion Gold was pushing for a much more egalitarian approach and practice down the road, at Harvard. That became the Worship & Study Minyan.

SK: I think it's that this was not an issue that we were concerned about. And I do think this may come across in a way that I don't mean it, but I'll explain it. I think there was a homoerotic sense at the *havurah*. I think there was a sense of these men together in a communal setting. I'm not saying that there were openly gay men that were having inter-relationships. There's nothing wrong with that, but I don't think — that wasn't — but I think that there was something. I think it's similar to a yeshiva. That we liked to be together, with our own gender, and I don't think we thought about the — well Merle brought it to Joey and my attention, but we didn't think about the roles of women.

JG: Did that change things? Merle's action, in terms of the non-communal worship part of the *havurah*?

SK: I don't think so. I mean, she picked on two of the most kind of powerless folks in the minyan. Nah, I don't remember, ever, men and women coming together in the kitchen.
(03:03:00)

JG: Although men cooked!

SK: Yes. But I mean, just in terms of the grunt work of doing dishes.

JG: In addition to the creation of a spiritual community, certainly an intrinsic part of the *havurah*'s concept was the role of study and learning. How would you describe the learning model at Havurat Shalom?

SK: It too was very creative. It too was approaching texts from a different perspective. On the other hand, having come from the University of Chicago, the text study, for someone like me who was not knowledgeable in Hebrew, was not at a very intense level. Now I think those folk who did have good Hebrew knowledge, Art would do some wonderful study of Hasidut with them. But I took a course with Eddie, Eddie Feld, on Sukkot. Great readings — readings that I actually still use for Sukkos. I took a course in *tefilah* with Burt Jacobson, and there's stuff that I learned there that was great. But it wasn't on a level that you would expect from a graduate school.

JG: Intellectually?

SK: Intellectually, maybe, but it wasn't the intensity. In other words, we'd meet once a week — I studied *Devarim* with Buzzy — and we read some essays that — there's an essay by Moshe Greenberg on sanctuaries that I think about often. And they were great readings, but it wasn't like, okay, read a hundred pages this week and we're going to go

through the text word by word and look at the philology and all the rest. It was certainly beyond an adult education course, but it wasn't something that — (03:06:00) I think I recognized pretty early on this wasn't going to be a place where I was going to get the kind of text study that would be what I'd get in a seminary.

JG: How did the teaching style of the *havurah* compare to your experiences in other Jewish learning environments — like classes with Max Ticktin?

SK: I think it was probably about the level of Max and Danny, but you know, that was kind of an extracurricular at the University of Chicago. It wasn't — odd, we didn't do any *hevruva*. I'm not sure about the Talmud class, because I was going to take it and I didn't take it — with Goldblatt, what's his name, Michael, was it? But I cannot remember, except for the *beit midrash*, kind of going through a very intense text study with commentary.

JG: What was the text study like at the *beit midrash*?

SK: It was — [*sighs*] I mean, the teachers would come in and out. So we would read a line in Hebrew, and then we would translate it for whoever was there, and then they would discuss the translation, and we would go to the Rashi on a particular verse in *Shemot*. It wasn't — it's probably something that eighth and ninth-graders were doing in yeshiva — even something fifth and sixth-graders were doing in yeshiva.

JG: Was this a widespread feeling? I know that at the end of the first year, Art Green wrote a letter to the community calling the academics at the *havurah*, quote, “most serious failure.”

SK: I think so. But see, so many of those people were taking courses at Brandeis or at Harvard. You know, that was the academic, and then this would be the — the *havurah* was some extra Jewish learning. (03:09:00)

JG: Was it ever for you a serious Jewish seminary?

SK: Never. Never. And some of it's me. I could have demanded it and maybe someone would have given it to me, but I don't think people had the time for it.

JG: To come back to social activism for a minute, the Six Day War had happened, as we said, at the end of your junior year. How would you describe your relationship to Israel and the role Zionism played in your own Jewish identity at the time you were involved with Havurat Shalom?

SK: Very little. And I'm not sure that it did for many people in the *havurah*. But as I said in the questionnaire to you, when I was a kid my mom has this book called *They Are Human Too* about Palestinian refugees. And she showed it to me, and she said, "Remember these people as well as our people," and that affected me. I think that I felt an attachment to Israel through college and at the *havurah*, but I never had an urge to go there at the time. And I remember very little discussion about politically what was going on there — this was pre-Breira. I mean, when Breira began, I was supportive of it. I was not involved with it at all. But I can't remember, even for something like Tu B'shvat, that we would spend much time talking about Israel.

JG: So let's talk about what you've called here "the expulsion," or the expulsion of Dorton from the *havurah*. So you were members, from what I'm understanding, from December of '68 for about a year and a half, to the spring, late spring of '70.

SK: Yeah.

JG: So what happened?

SK: As part of all this protocol, these papers, I think that some of us felt, in the Dorton people and others, that this was not the place of us if we wanted an intense community. (03:12:00) And then, kind of a bizarre [*laughs*] issue came up for us, which was the country versus the city. This had nothing to do with Havurat Shalom, but the people in Dorton — Noam and Ruby Kornfeld, and Jim Kugel — was anybody else in this discussion? But it was, can we help the world best by being in the country as farmers, you know, living off the land, or city activism? You know where we ended up. We were with the city activists. Noam and Ruby ended up moving to Dracut, Massachusetts, to supposedly start a farm. But what we had were these long discussions — this was the outgrowth of the midrash grousing — of what we were going to do with our lives now that we were going to be leaving the *havurah*?

JG: Was that a foregone conclusion?

SK: I think it was. I think early in 1970 there was a sense we should go. And there's — I had heard this — this is all hearsay, but that someone had told Art Green, you just have to purge these people. And I shouldn't be in the business of trying to psychoanalyze Art, but it's kind of like purge that part of himself as well. Because there was a connection that he felt with us, and that was one of the reasons that he wanted the *havurah* to begin. But it wasn't working. I think at one point he said he felt like we were stabbing in the back all

the time. So I don't believe that the Dorton people came to these meetings. I came to one, was very despondent after it.

JG: These were community meetings?

SK: We were discussing all these position papers. And I think the way Art did it was there would be only a certain number of people at each of these sessions. And so, at that point, we thought, we're going. (03:15:00) I think it wasn't a — in no way was it a public pronouncement, we are leaving, or you should go, but I think it was like a marriage that wasn't working. And the Dorton people left, and Noam and Ruby went up to Dracut to start a farm and then to travel the world for many years to come, and then Mary and I — Mary already had a job. I decided to get a job as a storyteller. That was it — I'll be honest with you, I felt a great deal of bitterness. I had very little contact with anybody from the *havurah* until very recently, when the twenty-fifth — was it the twenty-fifth?

MK: I don't remember.

SK: No, it was the thirty-fifth anniversary of the *havurah* came up. We were invited to the reunion, and I said to Mary, "Let's go." And she was —

MK: I was shocked. I said, "Wow, you've been upset with the *havurah* for all these years. Why do you want to go?"

SK: And I went, and as I went, as we got closer and closer, I said to myself, "Oh, this is the worst thing that ever could have happened." And I just had a wonderful time, just a terrific time. And some of it is that these are people I knew at a very important part of my life. This will be strange to say, but they like me! *[laughs]* At one point, after one of the sessions at the anniversary where the — we said "young folk," people who joined the *havurah* ten, fifteen years later — spoke, Buzzy Fishman came up to me, gave me a hug, and said, "They don't understand, do they? They don't understand." I don't know what it is they don't understand, but it was like we had been through something together. And as bitter as I might have felt, and in some ways still feel, (03:18:00) we got something. I got a lot out of it.

JG: Before we go on to what you got out of it, at what point did you abandon your idea of becoming a rabbi, and how, if at all, did you experience in the *havurah* affect that decision?

SK: Greatly. The one time that for any length of time I did not put on *tefillin* every day was at Havurat Shalom, probably for two or three months. And I'm not sure why. Maybe

it was because I felt like I was doing stuff with my Jewish life, but I don't think it was that. I think it was that other people weren't doing it. I had a talk with Max Ticktin during this time, in which I — there's that line in *Pirke Avot*, how to use the Torah as a spade [see addendum] — and I wanted to know how he had made decisions in his life to reconcile himself with that. I think that's what I was struggling with, that the more I thought of being a professional Jew, the more that I thought of being a part of the Jewish community, the less I felt like being a rabbi! That I wanted to be — that I didn't want to be in this very parochial, close community. And that I can say I am so happy with, because I think that not having my day-in and day-out life being my Jewish life — although it is! [laughs] The *tefillin*, doing *Daf Yomi* at night, is really what consumes me. But I love to be around non-Jews, to be doing stuff that is not directly involved with Jewish study. And I think that's what I learned in the *havurah*.

JG: In the end, you decided to become a lawyer. How did you make that decision? Why a lawyer?

SK: For the two years after I left the *havurah* — let's see, I left in '70, and at that point I had to get a job, and I got a job as a storyteller, a children's librarian at a library in Roxbury, Massachusetts. And I don't know what Roxbury is like now, but it was a low-income black neighborhood.

JG: It still is. (03:21:00)

SK: And kids would come in and I would tell stories every day, to them. And I loved it. And then Mary and I, I think, thought, we have to grow up. [laughs]

MK: Reality does set in!

SK: And what are we going to do? And I flirted for a bit with being a doctor, although I don't have much of a science background that I would have had to have. And then we got involved with a rent strike in our building in Brookline Village. And I started to see, because of the lousy representation we got from our lawyer in that case, what lawyers could do, and I wanted to be a lawyer for poor people. So I think there was a sense that I can do something good in the world as a lawyer. I never thought of going off to corporate law or anything like that.

JG: You've spent your legal career representing low-income individuals and organizations, and then teaching that kind of law.

SK: Yeah, I've loved that. And I think I never would have been able to survive in a Jewish community. First of all, I think I couldn't have stood just being around Jews, but beyond that, my feelings about Israel — it's good what I did.

JG: While you were in the *havurah*, one of the issues you grappled with was whether Judaism provided effective models for your political activism. And as we've been discussing, you critiqued the *havurah* community for not being committed to social justice work. So how do you see those issues now, both looking back and in terms of your life today, and the interface, if any, between your Judaism and the kind of work you do and the social activism you're involved in?

SK: That was the one thing about that letter that really struck me. God, I had some insight back then! I don't think — I don't have a view of Judaism of Michael Lerner. I don't think that underlying this all is a left-wing agenda, a progressive agenda. (03:24:00) You can find texts — Mary has said this, because our son and I are doing *Daf Yomi* and we're in our fourth year, and there are pages, there are *dafs*, which Mary says have the *trifecta*. It's xenophobic, it's misogynist, and it's homophobic, all on the same page. Our tradition is replete with that, and to say that we're anything different from that — obviously, there are other good components that are much better. But to say that that's all we are is the better parts, I think is just wrong. And so what I liked of what I said back then, is that I think that what I can bring from it, what it can inspire me to do, is the things that I do in my life that I think have some sort of effect. But I would say they're inspired by my Jewish life, but I can't say chapter and verse where it comes from. And Danny once taught me that, while in Isaiah it says, "Beat your swords into ploughshares," there's a verse in Joel that says, "You should beat your ploughshares into swords." We have both of those in our tradition. As Danny said, the one that has resonated the most is Isaiah, but still, Joel's there. So for me, what it has done is it's given me a story by which I can do my work. It's given me some meaning. Whether it gives that same meaning to everybody else, I'm sure it doesn't.

JG: So in the years since your involvement in Havurat Shalom, you've both continued to be involved with *havurot* in various places where you've lived. What did you take from your experience at Havurat Shalom, despite all the things that you were contending with, that continued to shape your Jewish life over the years?

MK: Well, I don't know. I think in each of the *havurot* that we belonged to there was a participatory sense, and an informality in the *davening*, and actually in the *havurot* a real sense of community, I think, in each of them.

JG: Maybe you want to mention some of the particular *havurot*. (03:27:00)

SK: When I was in law school and Mary was in grad school, we were part of a *havurah* kind of minyan at the University of Illinois. Eddie Feld was the rabbi for the first year, and then we moved to Chicago in '75. We became involved — we created, at a synagogue in Rogers Park, Minyan Sheni [see addendum]. And there was this rabbi at that shul that was terrific. It was a dying congregation.

MK: Yeah.

SK: And we just came and he said, why don't you and this other couple, why don't we start our own minyan? [*laughs*] We met in what was the youth lounge at the shul, which was not used anymore. And we really built a nice little minyan, and then we did some study together. And then, in Dallas —

MK: Well, we also then moved to Oak Park, in the Chicago area, and we wound up — I guess we joined the local synagogue for a while, and that didn't go well.

SK: We were kicked out. [*both laugh*]

MK: That's another story. But a group of young families started another *havurah*-like minyan, and that lasted for, I don't know, twenty-five years, apparently — well after we left.

SK: And then when we got to Dallas we helped to start an alternative minyan at a very large synagogue there, the largest Conservative synagogue in Dallas, Shearith Israel. And the rabbis there were great. And I mean, for many of those minyans, it was really *tefilah*, but especially in Rogers Park and in Oak Park.

MK: In Oak Park, we were very close personally with everyone.

SK: The kids would play together on Shabbos afternoon.

JG: And now that you're back in New York?

SK: Strange thing. When we came back, we moved to Long Island so that I could be closer to work, and we joined a suburban congregation the Jewish Community Center at West Hempstead. And we did some creative programming there. I was — well, I became president of this congregation. (03:30:00) And Mary was president of the Sisterhood. And we started *Tikkun Leil Shavuot*, an all-night study session. We did Tu B'shvat seder. We started a *havurah* program to reach out to unaffiliateds. But it was — I could keep

going through all the great creative things we did, but it was really a suburban congregation. We invited — for the Israel Bond dinner, one year, they were going to honor both of us. And we said we would only agree to that if we could pick the speaker, and we picked Max. Max came in. It was a bit controversial with the hawks. But our son told Max that I sat on the *bimah* every Shabbos as president of the shul, and Max was so disappointed that this was what had become of me. [*both laugh*] We moved to the city and we had an apartment in the city, starting in 2004. We were members of B'nai Jeshurun, but things didn't click at B'nai Jeshurun, although the *davening* is superb. We're now at Minyan M'at, which has a lot of veterans of Havurat Shalom. I'm now the *davening* coordinator and I've tried to re-inspire the *davening*, and the response is fascinating. I had a training session, a workshop, on *davening*, with Jan Uhrbach, who's a wonderful teacher on spiritual *davening*. She recommended, for example, that we do poetry with the *davening*, and the response was so negative. I mean there were some people positive and negative. But it's odd that this is where we've come, because the *davening* at Havurat Shalom was at such a different level than what it is here. But maybe we've all grown.

JG: When you look back at the *havurah's* vision regarding community, and prayer, and social justice, and learning, what do you see as its greatest strengths?

SK: I think its greatest strength — and I think each of us should answer this — but I think it did create a model for other communities. Our son is a member of Lomdim, (03:33:00) which is a *havurah* in Chicago, in which people — in the non-formality of the synagogue, get together and *daven* and can have Shabbos together and can support each other in sad times of their life and rejoice at others. But it's a way of having intentional community, not all communal life like I had envisioned, but a way of supporting, enjoying being together.

MK: Yeah, I think that the idea of trying to create a community, even if it's within a bigger institution, is very powerful. And I think that there was a lot of talk about community in the sixties, and I don't know if it's directly from the *havurah*, but I think that it's something people need and people look for, and that that's something that's important.

JG: So overall, do you think Havurat Shalom actually played a significant role in American Jewish life? This is a question you wanted to answer.

SK: I think in terms of the model for these communities, even within large structures, yes. And that's an accomplishment. I think that, if you look at the intellectual leaders, scholars, in the Jewish community now — Buzzy, Art, Barry, David Roskies, I'm talking

about people when I was there, Steve Mitchell, Jim Kugel, Hillel Levine — that's really powerful stuff. On the other hand, as someone who has my own little academic niche, I know that academic niches are not necessarily that important in the long trajectory of history. So I don't know. I think there are some who have a bit of an inflated view, that from those years there are these great biblical and mystical scholars, (03:36:00) that the *havurah* had this major impact. I don't think its impact is in the academic world. I think it's elsewhere. I do think that Arthur — that he was able to bring all of these people together — is an exceptional human being. Whatever conflicts I have had with him over the years, he is a major force in the last fifty years of Jewish history. The rest of us, I think, don't quite make it, but that's okay. [laughs]

JG: And finally, since leaving Havurat Shalom, you've been active in a variety of social justice organizations and advocacy groups, most recently as an active member of Jewish Voice for Peace, and you've also served on the steering committee of the Academic Council of Open Hillel. During your time at Havurat Shalom, as we've been discussing, you were very frustrated by its lack of commitment to social justice activism, in this Jewish context. So what I'm curious about is, from your perspective today, as you think about social justice activism, political advocacy, the kinds of groups that you've become involved with, and then you think about the spiritual communities in the Jewish community that we've just been discussing, *davening* communities, etc., what do you see? What do you think about the relationship between those kinds of entities?

SK: It's funny you should ask, because we're involved in something now which in many ways is attempting to combine the two, and I hate to say this on a video, but it's Donald Trump that we can thank for it! [laughs] After his election, and the January 21st march in Washington —

JG: In protest.

SK: Oh yes, in protest. We tried to get a hotel room there that we could walk to the march on Shabbos. And we couldn't. They were two thousand dollars a night. So we looked into the New York march, and the New York march was starting very far from here, so it would be difficult to walk. So we — David and Shana Roskies at Thanksgiving, (03:39:00) came up with the idea of having a Shabbos-friendly Upper West Side feeder contingent to the main march. And the idea was that we would try to bring in all the denominations, and especially to bring Orthodox folk into this. You know, BJ and Anshe, there's plenty of social justice stuff going on. But it can be difficult, especially in the modern Orthodox community. And so we started to plan this thing. And Mary and Shana are the ones that really put this thing together and we ended up — we thought

there were going to be three hundred people at the march, there were three thousand — from forty synagogues.

JG: From here?

MK: Some of them were in New Jersey. Some of them were on Long Island. They were from all over, but mostly the Upper West Side.

SK: But they wanted to be part of a Jewish voice. And it was, really, I think the word “amazing” — people overuse it, but it was an amazing morning. And we marched, and at that moment, where the Jewish feeder march met the main march, was a really phenomenal moment. And what we’re doing now is we’re attempting to build from that, to build an Upper West Side Jewish contingent that can feed into other anti-Trump groups, Trump policy groups. And our goal is to do it so that we can bring disparate parts of the Jewish community together. So I’ve been thinking about this: why a Jewish voice? And maybe you have an answer to that. The one that I have is that if we can have this local corps of people that form a community together, that we may be able to have more impact than just being involved with some national organization.

MK: Yeah, and I think a Jewish voice at the table can be powerful in certain situations. So I think that’s an argument for it. But I think on a local level, it’s just personally very satisfying to work with people from different parts of the community that you start to feel connections with because you’ve met them, and to be able to work with them on something that we all think is important. Really community-building. (03:42:00)

JG: Sounds like a different model, though, from what your ideas were for the *havurah* community, way back in your Havurat Shalom days.

SK: It’s very different. We’re not talking about setting up some intimate community. We’re talking about setting up a community for people who may feel alone, especially in Orthodox shuls — and this is what we learned from this — is that they can come out. They can come out of the closet and actually say they are against these policies. To help them out, and then together, have a community. But it’s not — it ain’t Havurat Shalom. It’s just an iteration of where we are now.

JG: Anything else you’d like to add?

MK: I think in terms of community and communes, I think that’s also not something that as one ages, one looks for. [*laughs*] I think that the notions that one has of community when one is younger, like a commune, you know — that changes over time. And what it

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means to raise kids communally, that changes over time. You have certain ideas when you're young.

SK: I have to give it to Max and Esther, that in their forties they became part of — they created a commune around their home, in Hyde Park. It wasn't easy, I talked with Esther about it. But boy, I don't think in my forties I could have done it. So I've got to give it to them.

Well, I want to thank you so much, both of you. It's been really wonderful talking to you. I've learned a great deal, especially, thank you, for everything you've been able to tell us about Dorton and what that meant within the Havurah community, and your reflections on everything it's meant in your own lives and in the larger community. We're very grateful.

SK + MK: Thank you

Addendum

Pg. 10: I said “havurah” but meant “minyan.”

Pg. 11: I said “1967;” should be “1968.”

Pg. 52: I misspoke. I meant to say, “how *not* to use the Torah as a spade.”

Pg. 54: Minyan Sheni — a havurah (second minyan) at Congregation B’nai Zion.