

ORAL HISTORY T-0097
INTERVIEW WITH RABBI ROBERT JACOBS
INTERVIEWED BY RANDY GOLDMAN AND LES POLANSKI
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Today is April 1, this is Randy Goldman. With me is Les Polansky. As a part of the Oral history Program at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, I have with me today. Rabbi Robert Jacobs. Rabbi Jacobs is the present director of the B'nai Brith Hillel Foundation.

GOLDMAN: Will you please start now. Rabbi Jacobs, by giving us some biographical information of yourself?

JACOBS: Such as day of birth?

GOLDMAN: Day of birth, where you were born...

JACOBS: June 16, 1908, in Syracuse, New York.

GOLDMAN: Now, what I'm very interested in, at this point, is your early education: high school and college, and basically what led up to your decision to enter the rabbinate.

JACOBS: High school. Central High School, Syracuse, New York and Syracuse University from which I graduated in 1929. In my second year I decided to become a physician and began shifting into all science courses. At that point, however, my eyes gave out and it was impossible for me to do work, for example, on histology, the study of slides, of tissues. It was, therefore, impossible for me to continue on with any hope of ever finishing the course. I went to my second love which was adult education, which at that time, in the 1920's and early 30's was just coming into its own. High schools were, for example, closed at night and it seemed to the new school of adult educators that the physical facilities should be open throughout the evenings. And, so, adult education already had a place to meet. I went into that with the result that I shifted from all science to, uh, the whole teaching profession. However, I got deeply interested both in English literature and in philosophy in addition to education on an adult educational level, and shifted in my junior year from adult education into philosophy, psychology, and uh, English Lit. When I graduated I had exactly the same number of grade points in philosophy, psychology, and English Literature. I graduated as an English lit major. However, in the interim the question was, "How do you use such esoteric things as psychology, philosophy, and English Lit. to make a living?" At that time there came to the city of St. Louis, Dr. Stephen S. Wise, Stephen Samuel Wise, who was in his, uh, second year of graduating rabbis. Rabbis in a new school which he called the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York City. A man if he went to Hebrew Union College, at that time, would receive a rubber stamp of a Reform rabbi. If he went to Yeshivah University he would receive the rubber stamp of Orthodox rabbi. If he went to Jewish Theological Seminary he would receive the rubber stamp of Conservative rabbi. The JIR, as it was called,

Jewish Institute of Religion, was based upon the assumption that no young man, thinking of the rabbinate, knew enough for a final choice. And that he should first study and make up his mind. And the theory was that he would be exposed to Orthodoxy, Conservative, and reform men, all of them men of superior scholarship, and then make up his own mind.

GOLDMAN: Was this Rabbi Wise related to Issac Mayer Wise?

JACOBS: None whatsoever, although, they spelled their names the same. This man has come from Hungary. Issac Mayer Wise from Germany. Although, both were the stalwarts of the Reform movement. I was intrigued by the idea of constant search before decision.

GOLDMAN: Prior to this prior to the meeting of Rabbi Wise, what was your Jewish background? What was the Jewish in your family? These sorts of things.

JACOBS: Okay, first let me conclude this and then we go back in the family second. Okay? The conclusion was that I shifted very dramatically in my junior year to rabbinical training and for the first time became intensely interested in Hebrew language. First, as a grammar which I studied very, very carefully in my junior year and finished only at the end of my senior year. And second, in reading collateral works in English. All related to a new determination to enter the rabbinate where it would not be predetermined as to what I would do. And, in the fall of 1929 I entered the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York City for rabbinical training. All with the understanding that I would still not make up my mind until I had, until the decision was inside of me and was made, so to speak.

GOLDMAN: I understand.

JACOBS: Now, as to my home background, my grandparents, uh, were Family all born in America. So that I am now a third or fourth generation ground Jew which in itself is an unusual thing.

GOLDMAN: That's very unusual.

JACOBS: Yea, my grandfather was born in New York. My grandmother's side, she was born in a place called Mohawk, New York, which was a little Indian village. How it got there I never learned. But, they did instead of staying in New York City. And my grandfather in Syracuse, New York was the president of an Orthodox synagogue. So that from early days my life was filled with the verbal stimuli of what's happening at the shul. Who the rabbi was and how they got along. And the problem of getting along with the rabbi was always talked about in our home. My father and my mother, however, very quickly got through with Orthodoxy in that they could not accept the rigid regimen of ritual. Although our home was a totally Kosher home, never-the-less, many of our best friends were people who, uh, could not under any circumstances be Orthodox. Food was a special problem, which (turn it off please).

GOLDMAN: ...talking about the, your family and the Jewish...

JACOBS: The decision then was made at an early level that we would not be Orthodox Jews but would be Traditional Jews. And so my parents shifted from the Orthodox synagogue to the new Conservative synagogue in Syracuse. Actually it was an old Orthodox synagogue but

with the coming of a new rabbi it was determined that he would not from an Orthodox seminary but from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

GOLDMAN: Can I break in here for a second? I understand that Conservative Judaism often times differs in the extent of ritual and sometimes it leans more towards the Reform or more toward the Orthodox. I understand the Conservative on the East coast is perhaps more Orthodox than Conservative in the Midwest. I don't know if it's true, but this is what I'm told. This Conservative synagogue, to what extent was it, did it lean more toward the Orthodox or more toward the Reform? In its, let's say its services?

JACOBS: Initially this was an Orthodox synagogue. The question was who should be the new rabbi and they liked the man from the Jewish Theological Seminary and under his leadership it became "Conservative." Although, in its ritual there was the Orthodox prayer book that was used. Although, in the philosophy or attitude toward ritual, it was as Orthodox as could be, there was literally no change except in the name and the fact that the rabbi now came from the so called Conservative stronghold, JTS, Jewish Theological Seminary. Your question and your assumption are both inaccurate. Namely, that the East Coast or the West Coast is so different. I know Conservative synagogues that are very close to Orthodoxy in the same city. So, that there's almost no pattern. Randy. For example, the synagogue that we belong to today has a men and women's choir. And no women are in an Orthodox synagogue's choir. But, they are in that.

GOLDMAN: Which synagogue?

JACOBS: It's called Adath Yeshurun, Adath Yeshurun: A-d-a-t-h Y-e-s-h-u-r-u-n. The big change was that men and women would sit together. And that made it Conservative.

GOLDMAN: I see.

JACOBS: Other than that there was no shift from Orthodoxy. We Conservative can talk for a long time on the variations within the Conservative movement.

GOLDMAN: I'm sure we can.

JACOBS: Take a look at what you're saying and what I'm supporting. That there are variations within the Conservative movement. We call it the Centrist group, the Rightist, and the Leftists within the Conservative. And I'm sure you can say the same about Orthodoxy and Reform. So we have at least nine variations if you look at the denominational system in American Jewry.

GOLDMAN: I guess that helps lead to the old joke that if you have five Jews in a room you have six opinions, or seven.

JACOBS: It used to be two and three opinions.

GOLDMAN: That's progress. I see this is your background. You made the decision to enter the rabbinate and you went to the, not to enter the rabbinate, to go to the Jewish, uh, the JIR.

JACOBS: Right, Jewish Institute of Religion. Now if you'll notice the diplomas here -

Hebrew Union College. Underneath it is Jewish Institute of Religion. Because in 1948 the two schools amalgamated.

GOLDMAN: Oh, in 1948?

JACOBS: In 1948. The JIR became part of HUC and the only identity that is there is in the name. We used to call it, not only a merge, but a submerger. But at any rate now you see from my doctoral diploma, the 'd', it's not an earned doctorate, that by then there had been, there was simply a different school. And, the, there is a New York school, and that's now the old JIR building. All its facilities, faculty were taken in. There's now a Los Angeles school and there's now a Jerusalem school. It's a four school institution.

GOLDMAN: When were you ordained as a rabbi?

JACOBS: 1933. That's the English degree up there. See, as of the fourth day of June, nineteen hundred and thirty three. See at the bottom line there, the insignia. It's the same thing in Hebrew over here.

GOLDMAN: I see. Okay, besides catching your fancy, as you were studying, as you were studying I'm sure you were coming to more of a firm understanding of Judaism perhaps, or why you were in the rabbinate. Had you already, had you made plans when you knew you were going to become a rabbi, had you decided if you were going to have a congregation, if you were going to be a chaplain, or if you were going to go into B'nai Brith Hillel, at the time? Or did this come later on, this decision?

JACOBS: During my first and second year there was simply an intensive search. I not only did my regular class work but I did very much more in an attempt to find myself as presumably a leader, a Jewish leader, or a leader of the Jewish community. And toward the end of my second year I became convinced that I had to have under my belt an actual personal experience in living as a Jew in what I see, saw as the outstanding historic event, or epic, of the nineteen hundreds. Namely the new birth of a Jewish commonwealth in, what was then called Palestine. So I approached Dr. Stephen Wise, who then approached the faculty, who then denied my request for one year in Palestine on my own. And, uh, I simply told them I had to go. That whether I became a rabbi or not was secondary to my own personal search for myself. Did you want to break in?

POLANSKY: Yea, I want to break in because something that I studied that was brought up. That HUC that the JIR, when first established in New York, was different from the HUC in Cincinnati because it was a Zionist slant. Now you said that they, that they refused to let you go to Israel.

JACOBS: Yes, I see what seem it's a contradiction. Right, I under...I'm glad you brought that up. Yes, there was a very sharp distinction between the leadership of HUC and the leadership of JIR. One of the greatest American Jewish personalities, both on a political as well as on an ethical and moral social ethical and moral level was Stephen S. Wise. He led the fight against Jimmy Walker in his campaign to be mayor of New York. He teamed up with a man named John Haines Holmes, who fought the Tammany political machine. He is the one who fought and won the federal child and labor legislation where twelve years of age a child was being

exploited. He's the man who led this in the United States of America. So, you now know that a man of such stature would brook no stopping if he had what he called a great historic idea. And that was Zionism. In contrast to his leadership, at HUC now, there was a man named Professor Julian Morgenstern, who had taken the mantle of leadership from the early presidents of Hebrew Union College and who was a non-Zionist. In some cases it was believed he was an anti-Zionist. And remember in the 1920's and 30's it was the anti-Zionist's philosophy that was still very, very strong. The old 1885 Pittsburg Platform of Reform Judaism was the classical expression of what is called Reform. And it was not only none it was anti-Zionist. Such phrases as, "Washington is my Jerusalem," "America is my Israel." These were common and these were abhorrent to Stephen S. Wise, who was one of the foremost American Zionist. I have personal anecdotes that I will be delighted to tell you about Wise and myself and Zionism in its early days. That I can expatiate on and some of this is fun. But, the fact is that here's, he was the Zionist leader and the man at the head of our school and he said no to me. And you think this is contradiction. Why would he say no? The answer is an academic one from the point of view of academic quality. In order to have a rabbi come out after four or five years of study he had to pass courses. And how in the world would I, going off into the wilds of a place called Palestine, with all of its primitive kibbutzs, which was just burgeoning then, with all of its undeveloped area, study? How could it be expected that I would study? So, they parenttally said no. It's nice of you to be interested. And said, "Wise to me. My boy, it's great that you want to go....He didn't use the word great."

GOLDMAN: But...

JACOBS: "...but, no, first you study. You become a rabbi if you will," because he knew of my inner strong und drung, my inner stress and strain, "then make up, then go where you want to, but don't break into your education." Do you understand?

POLANSKY: Right yes.

JACOBS: Okay, however, I won. I won out in this sense. I said okay. I'll take up the challenge. I'll pass the examinations a year from now. If you will give me the course of study, instead of studying it in English, I'll study it in Hebrew. And, I'll get private teachers in "Palestine" and pass the examines at the end of the year. So, I did.

GOLDMAN: So you went to Palestine.

JACOBS: I went to Palestine for a year.

GOLDMAN: This is 1948-1949?

JACOBS: No, it's 1931 to 1932. And there I lived in Haifa for eight months where I studied intensively under private tutelage. I studied Midrash and Talmud and American Jewish history, I had to take in English. And at that time we studied Graetz's which was used, standard history reading in those days. I studied it all in Hebrew instead of English. I studied Dubnov's, History of the Jewish Community of Russia and Poland, all in Hebrew. I studied his, his books on Chasidut (sect of Judaism) which were among the first to come out. This is long before Gershom Shalom, long before Martin Buber's works on Chasidism came out. I

knew no German, except high school German, so I studied everything in Hebrew. And then I lived on Kibbutzim (collective farm settlements). For a month and a half I studied at the Hebrew University. And my rabbinical thesis was the result of my work at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. In those days on Mr. Scopus. We've now recovered it of course. It was (A.D.) Gordon, the labor-philosopher, A.D. Gordon, whose works I helped to translate. And I'm one of the first who presented him to the American Jewish public, my translations and so on. So, I did get to Palestine. I was there in the 1931 census when a 174,000 Jews were counted by the British government. So, I'm one of them.

GOLDMAN: So, from your experience in, in Palestine...It's hard to say Palestine because it's Israel.

JACOBS: Yea it's hard.

GOLDMAN: What did you finally come to in your inner, inner struggle with yourself and what you were going to do?

JACOBS: It was there I made up my mind to become a rabbi. It was there, in Palestine, that I made up my mind that Reform Judaism had to become officially Zionist. And, that congregations, as congregations ought to have official links with whatever was happening in Palestine. And, that the new era, and I would help create it in, in the American Jewish community, would be one of a very close link with Israel. And, my own rabbinate would not be in Israel, or Palestine, but in, in America. Now, I would be one of those many voices now to come up that would produce that relationship. And that I would train myself and I made the determination then that I would enter the rabbinate. But, I would do it without labels. If possible I would try to escape the stereotype which is implied in a label: Orthodox, Conservative, Reform. And so, when I went back to America I passed my examinations, given to me by the profs, who, incidentally, had agreed to do it. If I would pass examines they, then, said okay. And, so there were a lot of people watching me when I got back. If I would pass the examine it would be a kind of precedent. So, I was really the first American rabbi, who during the years of his rabbinical training, actually went to Palestine.

GOLDMAN: Of course, now the HUC sends all their first year students there.

JACOBS: Now it's official and so JTS (Jewish Theological Seminary)

GOLDMAN: JTS, yes. Okay, you went back to America. I understand now you're a Reconstructionist rabbi. Would you explain what it means, how you got into the Reconstructionist Movement and we'll take it from there.

JACOBS: Alright, fine. Reconstructionism is dramatically expressed by a brand new definition of Judaism. It is in one sentence as follows. "Judaism is the evolving religious civilization of the Jewish People with its center in Eretz Yisroel." (land of Israel) That's the definition. So, you don't speak about Judaism as a religion. You speak about it as a civilization. It's only in an adjectival manner that you think of the religious aspect of a civilization. And, since civilization has many components, language, art, land and all types of what we would call cultural phenomena, or variables, religion is only one of them. But, makes its distinctive coloration of this entity called Jewish civilization.

GOLDMAN:: I see.

JACOBS: It's also evolving, so for me. Orthodoxy, which having built within itself a, an evolutionary possibility, had and still has a kind of rigidity that thwarts the progress into modern life of the Jewish spirit and the Jewish way of life. Halakah (Jewish law), to me, no longer means "walking." Halakah, literally in Hebrew, means walking, going, progressing, way of life, path, the way to go. That's what the word, Halakah means literally. But, I saw it then and I see it now as no pathway at all. There are screamingly horrendous Jewish problems, especially with women that have no solution, although, there is a built in opportunity to shift. It has not been used and there has been such a resistance to change that I can't wait in my lifetime and I cannot diminish myself, I think, by imbedded in an ORTHODOX WAY OF LIFE. That was my decision and that's why I could not ever become an Orthodox rabbi. On the other hand I also could not accept hefkarat, which means a "nothing less," a total un-rigid framework almost an unstructured way of Jewish life. For me Judaism still retains its need for guidance by scholarly generals of the army. And it would seem to me there is a need there for, for a program, a systematic approach to Jewish life. If one leaves it alone to be left to the chance winds that blow without any control, that means that what faced the original founders of Reform in Germany, will confront us and it's true it's true in America. Namely, that Judaism is simply a reactor to events and never determines on its own what its own stand will be. So, Reform Judaism, to me, was basically right, but inherently programless at that time. It's changed. In my day we've seen the Columbus Platform of 1935. In my day we've seen the very, very strong Zionist orientation of the younger men in the rabbinate all the way through. And the very latest thing about the younger men is their intense, belongingness to the whole state of Israel, both religiously and culturally.

GOLDMAN: Wouldn't this mean that you would go to Conservative Judaism, then?

JACOBS: No, I did not have enough of a Talmudic training at JIR to be acceptable and I could not do any more studying. In 1933, when I became a rabbi, I got married two and a half to three months before being ordained. It was also in the lowest ebb of the depression, which began in 1939. In '33' there was a bank holiday, Roosevelt came into the picture, and they were selling apples on the street corner for, to make a living, and I became a vacuum cleaner salesman, not a rabbi, because there were just no rabbinic positions open. Under such economic circumstances I could not continue to study to be acceptable to the rabbinic assembly. And, I never have been able to from then to now. I think there's only one rabbi in America who's a member of both the Hebrew Union, of the Central Conference of American Rabbis and the Rabbinical Assembly, the Conservative, and that's Rabbi, uh, Dr. Stephen S. Schwartzchild of St. Louis, Washington University. The only one rabbi who has both memberships. And that took some doing too. But, he had a very strong talmudic background from Germany. And that's different from the way I started. I didn't know aleph from bet ever since Bar Mitzvah. And, if I hadn't intensively boned away at it in my junior year in college I would not know, nor if I hadn't gone to Israel and learned Hebrew as my second language I would never have had a solid Hebrew foundation. But, I got it. Never-the-less, it wasn't solid enough to warrant a relationship with Jewish Theological Seminary. I was satisfied with my training and immediately became a kind of a Reform rabbi with a difference.

GOLDMAN: Okay, at this point, then, how, what was the process rabbi or entered the

Reconstructionist movement?

JACOBS: Ever since my college days I was focusing upon humanist Judaism, non-supernaturalistic approach to religion. There was a man of the Pacific Coast. I remember his name now, Herman Lissauer by name, a graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary, who had organized the Jewish Humanist Association. And there until the day of his death he was the "rabbi" of this. And, I followed his career and his writings with great interest and never could totally accept a supernaturalist view of life. Nor can I today. So that whatever I learned is Jewish tradition, I learned as an external phenomenon rather than as directly related to my own personal intellectual development. Until, in 1934, the year after I graduated, there came the volume called, *Judaism as a Civilization*, by Mordecai M. Kaplan.

And that changed my life. I now had an intellectual address. And, it gave me a sense of being a part of belonging to a movement that was valid and it seemed to fit in with my preconception of Judaism. And, I read every word that he ever wrote and in that year I became a Reconstructionist rabbi. Wrote him, developed in my first congregation a program based upon Reconstructionist thinking. For example, there was two other congregations in Hoboken, New Jersey. I was the rabbi of the Reform congregation there. There was a Conservative and an Orthodox there. And, I insisted that the three rabbis get together immediately and develop interlacing relationships so that what we had was complete communication. If not daily at least two times a week between the three rabbis the Orthodox rabbi eventually left and the Orthodox congregation simply dissipated and changed belonged, its members belonged to the Conservative or the Reform congregations in Hoboken. That the two rabbis, one was rabbi, one was Rabbi Aaron Kamerling, who went into Hillel immediately from Hoboken, New Jersey, went up to Toronto, Canada and was in Hillel for thirty years, and just got out two years ago.

GOLDMAN: To Montreal?

JACOBS: No, Toronto. Montreal, that was McGill, Toronto. At any rate, the point is that I implemented my Reconstructionist thinking from the very first moment. I developed a much different, I developed a three day-a-week Hebrew school, which was unknown among the Reform rabbis in congregations. I developed Sunday school without Hebrew giving us three full hours from nine to twelve, Sunday, for non-Hebrew subjects with Hebrew being a natural for what ever we were studying rather than something than something you learned aleph-bet. But, everybody was forced to go to Hebrew school three times a week in addition to the Sunday school.

GOLDMAN: Oh, it was a requirement.

JACOBS: A requirement.

GOLDMAN: So, not like today in most places.

JACOBS: No, that that was required, I had my board with me. At that time in 1934, I was there for four years 1934 to '38, the president of the congregation had recently been kicked out of Germany. This was the rise of Hitler as you know. And, in this period he, a CPA, had a very strong reaction to Hitler. And he, it reacted, his reaction was a tremendous search for Jewish identity. And, I sold him on Hebrew being the basis of that. And so he sold the

members of the board of our congregation, with me, on a three-day-a-week Hebrew school plus a Sunday school.

GOLDMAN: Just as a matter of interest, what was your salary as a rabbi in the 1930's?

JACOBS: Yea, it was a hundred dollars a month which was twenty five dollars a week. And, in the second year it went up to a hundred and fifteen dollars per month as an increase. My third and fourth years it went back to a hundred dollars a month. Those were terrible days. But, there they were. My wife was a public school teacher and so she earned very much more than I did. Between the two of us we had a salary that was about forty six hundred dollars a year. That was very good income in those days. We could actually afford an apartment in Hoboken, New Jersey, instead of a one room place. So, that, it was solid living. My concern, however, was refining my own skills in my first year out.

GOLDMAN: So between Hoboken, New Jersey, and 1946 you were at other congregations

JACOBS: When I graduated, when I got out of Hoboken I had a yearning to be away from the New York area. It seemed to me to be divisive in my family life. My wife had to work. We saw each other at night or at weekends. And, she used to get up at 6:00 a.m. to make a ferry to her school and she actually worked in over fifty schools in New York City area. First as a substitute teacher and then in three or four as a regular teacher. She, for ten years was a public school teacher. My decision to leave the New York area was based on the fact that I wanted a home life that would be solid. And, instead of two of us working I would work and she would be part of our home. We could also have children at that time. And, this too was terrible important for us. After four years of married life with a, a grinding economic demand so that we would not have children, it was now time to develop our family. And, these two factors, the economic, the family centeredness of our family life, uh, experience, and our hope to have a family, produced a need in us, both of us made the decision, to find a pulpit elsewhere. And, finally we went to Asheville, North Carolina for eight years. And, began the same pattern of what I done there, at Hoboken, too, place there. There I developed a three-day-a-week Hebrew school. There I organized the Jewish Community Center. There I organized a family and children service. By then I became interested in mental health. And, by then I became director of the brand new department, of the local university, that was studying religions. And, I became lecturer at what was called the Asheville Biltmore College. And there I developed radio programming. And, it was a very, very busy very full life.

GOLDMAN: Okay, well I guess that brings us up to the point then of when did you enter the Hillel organization? When did you become a part of it?

JACOBS: Yea, in 1945, our son was four years old. It was time to think of where we would have a solid Jewish community, other than the small town of Asheville, North Carolina, which, although we had good teachers, parents mostly, I felt was not adequate for the type of Jewish education I wanted my son to have. And so, that meant to live in a larger community. There were other possibilities than Hillel. Although, in my eight years in Asheville, North Carolina, I became one of the most popular rabbis on what we called the college circuit. Rabbis of Reform congregations were invited up and down all over the America to go to colleges where nobody had ever seen a Jew before, much less a rabbi. And, I went to possibly one hundred and fifty universities in the eight years. And, I was called back time

after time to speak at various campuses. I then realized I had a knack for the college student. I felt, not only relaxed and easy, but eager to help guys, and gals, in college, develop their own Jewish identity, philosophy of life, etc. There was something else also. I was griped by, what seemed to me to be the ineffectiveness of congregational rabbinical leadership. I saw that disintegrating Jewish family. I saw the less-than-effective sennonic educational device. Preaching seemed to be a, ineffectual in changing. And, although I considered myself a good speaker, and I still do, I did not feel that this was the educational device that warranted so much time in developing good solid sennonic material. It didn't, uh, produce a product that was worth the input of time of energy of scholarship of ability to speak. What came out afterwards was people saying, "We liked what you said. Oh, I loved it." And, if I were an actor I suppose this would be the highest accolade. But, if I wanted that person to develop a solid Jewish home, that was not the way to do it, the method. So, the various methodological problems of rabbinical training and rabbinical activity in congregational setting griped me. And, I began searching and reading trying to find other methods, other techniques, by which to affect change. And, at that time I hit upon the topological psychology of Kurt Lewin. And, he changed my life. Because Kurt Lewin's sense of the centrality of the group for effectuating social change. And change in the individual now grabbed me. And, it seemed to me the age, at which change was the greatest, was that age just beyond the family setting, namely the college scene. So, I had a combination, I think, of everything working with me. I had my own personal experience of enjoyment of the college scene. It was good. I had a knack, I felt right that this was the place where I could relate and produce change. And, I have man, many stories about working on college campuses before 1946, which produced this feeling of "I can do it," on the college campus.

GOLDMAN: I was going to ask here, in your experiences, of course, you were speaking on these campuses during World War II, as World War II was progressing. What was the attitude of the Jewish student toward the information coming out of Germany? What was their search for Jewish identity? Today we speak about the revival of the Jewish student, about the renaissance that is taking place on Jewish campus. What were the Jewish students like at that time?

JACOBS: Well, for four years I was a civilian chaplain at Air Force, at Navy, at Coast Guard, and at Army installations. So, I had a chance to see men coming back from the fighting fronts. And, that is not college. It was only when they came back in the late 40's, '45 or '46, that you really had a college, a Jewish college crowd. So, Randy, it's too hard to speak about the college crowd, on campuses. Campuses were training centers for the officers. ROTC was growing like wildfire on American campuses. So, a place like Washington University, for example, had probably a thousand more people than it has today because its, its ROTC program was so great. It was used by the government for this. So, it wasn't the true college students.

GOLDMAN: I understand.

JACOBS: And, yet there is the inevitable age range we call adolescence and there's something genetic, basic, about all adolescence. So, that I could speak to that point. Perhaps at our next interview I could speak about that and also describe what I found in 1946, the college scene, which was immediately after World War II, when I first came.

GOLDMAN: Yes, hopefully in the next interview I would like to go into some of the changes you've noticed in the Jewish student over the years. So we'll take that up later. You entered, you became affiliated with Hillel in 1945.

JACOBS: '46.

GOLDMAN: Was it then that you came to St. Louis?

JACOBS: Yes.

GOLDMAN: As a Hillel director, as a member of the Hillel organization.

JACOBS: Right.

GOLDMAN: Then we get to the real nitty-gritty, and that is, you began the Hillel organization here in St. Louis.

JACOBS: Right.

GOLDMAN: Now, as we spoke before, no matter how long we have we couldn't give enough justice to the topic, there simply isn't enough time. Let's try to make the best of it, though. What were the beginning like? What were your experiences? What were your troubles? What were your successes? What were your experiences in founding the Hillel, here?

JACOBS: Okay, let's go into that at our next interview.

GOLDMAN: Okay. Should we stop here then?

JACOBS: Yes, let's stop here.

GOLDMAN: Thank you very much and we'll set up the time later on.

JACOBS: At this point I want to get back to my wife who is sick.