

Oral History Interview

with

A. J. GRANOFF

Kansas City lawyer and longtime friend of both Harry S. Truman and Edward Jacobson.

Kansas City, Missouri
April 9 and August 27, 1969

by J. R. Fuchs, Harry S. Truman Library

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FUCHS: Mr. Granoff, I wonder if you would mind starting this interview by giving us a little of your background, where you were born, where you have lived and your education, and anything else that you think might be pertinent to researchers who are interested in knowing who this interviewee is.

GRANOFF: I was born on February 22, 1896, in the Province of Kiev, Russia, one of three children, the oldest. My father, a tradesman, deserted the Russian army, my guess is around 1898 or

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'99, something like that. He hitchhiked clear across to the English Channel, and then got over to England and eventually became "ballast" on the Battleship St. Louis and landed in New York. It was then easier to get into the United States than today, I assure you. He had no trade, but got a job in a sweatshop on the East Side of New York City. He never could articulate how he got the pennies and the nickels to bring over this family, his wife and three children, and we arrived here on Labor Day, 1904. I caught sight of him from the ship--they wouldn't let us off on that day, Labor Day, until the next day. He moved us into a dilapidated tenant house on Monroe Street in New York City. There he remained about a year, developed lung trouble and moved his little family to Palmerton, Pennsylvania, where he became a peddler with an old dilapidated horse and wagon, to try to make a living; in a way he never could make

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a living, poor man.

I entered the public schools immediately, I spoke Russian fluently--I don't know a word of it today--and Yiddish, but I learned English very quickly. He then moved us from Palmerton to

Allentown, Pennsylvania, and continued his peddling. To cut a long story short, I graduated from the Allentown High School in 1914.

Meanwhile, while working on a fruits and vegetable counter in a butcher shop, I learned how to cut meat, and I became a meatcutter, a butcher. By the way, some of the clients I have had probably still think I'm a butcher. Anyway, I became a butcher and I worked my way through college in that capacity. In Lawrence, Kansas, where I went to law school . . .

FUCHS: What college did you go to?

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GRANOFF: I went to Muhlenberg College for a year and a half, in Allentown, but I never got my undergraduate degree. I did get my LL.B. from K.U. Law School.

FUCHS: How did you happen to go to K.U.?

GRANOFF: Because it was the most convenient.

FUCHS: When did you move to Kansas City?

GRANOFF: Oh, I forgot to say, in 1915.

FUCHS: That was with your family?

GRANOFF: My father came first and then he brought us here in 1915 and we have lived here since then, with the exception of close to three years when I practiced law and cut meat in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

FUCHS: How were you able to gain admittance to K.U. Law School without a college degree?

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GRANOFF: In those days you didn't need one. Anybody could get in those days. It was different times in those days.

FUCHS: Was that a three-year course?

GRANOFF: It was a three-year course.

FUCHS: And upon graduation you went to Tulsa?

GRANOFF: I went to Oklahoma as a tutor of three or four classmates, who paid my way there, to take the examinations. I went with them.

FUCHS: State examinations, you say?

GRANOFF: State bar examinations. While there I decided to take the examination, too. It was no effort for me, pardon my immodesty, but I didn't need a tutor.

FUCHS: Had you already passed the bar of Missouri?

GRANOFF: No, I took that much later, by motion.

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I stayed there almost three years, and the only thing I can show for it is the beautiful girl who decided to marry me, and she lived in Tulsa. You've met her already. She's not as beautiful today as she was then. You can tell her that.

FUCHS: Neither are we.

GRANOFF: At any rate, I finally left there because my father and my mother were almost literally starving and I had to quit Tulsa and come here. I got myself a little office and tried to make a living, but at the same time I cut meat at 6th and Walnut Streets, and in those days it paid very well, you know.

FUCHS: What market was that?

GRANOFF: It was Kansas City Market, between 5th and 6th on Walnut, on the West side of the street, owned by Hickman Brothers.

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FUCHS: Where was your law office?

GRANOFF: In the Scarritt Building. I had rented a desk with George K. Brasher, who is now gone. I couldn't make a living, and got myself a job with a law firm known then as Achtenberg and Rosenberg, for one hundred dollars a month, and I worked seven days and seven nights a week, which Mr. Rosenberg will confirm. He's still alive. I was with them for quite a while.

FUCHS: What year was that, about?

GRANOFF: Oh, let me think. I'd say 1924 or 1925. I became associated with this man-- Phineas Rosenberg withdrew from the firm, and Mr. Achtenberg asked me to become a member of the firm. A big deal. The firm became Achtenberg, Fredman and Granoff. And my draw was increased from one hundred to one hundred and twenty-five dollars a month.

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That was my partnership.

Later on, Mr. Fredman and I withdrew and organized what was known then as Fredman and Granoff Law Firm. That was an unfortunate venture for me. Mr. Fredman turned out to be dishonest and it cost me plenty of money. I had to pay creditors for his defalcations, but it's unimportant. I then went out for myself and stayed that way until I had to retire six years ago because of ill health.

While in school, I participated in debate and oratory. It's hard to believe to hear me talk now, but I turned out to be what they said was the number one orator of K.U. in 1920. I represented the university in the association then known as the "Big Eight," and came out second as a speaker and debater.

I then developed a fairly good practice. By accident I became known as an expert in bankruptcy, an allegation I never have denied.

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I used to laugh about being an expert, but the lawyers and the courts made me an expert, and I handled many hundreds of cases, mostly from other law firms and assignments from the courts. Later on, thanks to then Senator Truman, I was appointed as a public member of the War Labor Board, Ninth Region, eight or nine states. It was quite a job and I eventually was the chairman succeeding Bill Wirtz, who went to Washington, and I succeeded him as chairman of the region. You know, Secretary of Labor.

FUCHS: Yes.

GRANOFF: A fine gentleman, by the way. And after the agency was dissolved, subsequent to the end of the war, the parties made me an arbitrator. So for the next fifteen or sixteen years, until I was disabled, I was quite a notorious labor arbitrator in this general

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region, a number of states. I heard hundreds of cases, some of them small, some of them large. One lasted some sixty days in St. Louis, involving millions of dollars. I used to love that work. It didn't pay very much, but I sold myself the idea that I was contributing something to industrial peace. I loved the work. I was just called for a case about a month or so ago, but I told them I couldn't handle it. My vision is bad and so on; but I enjoyed that, so I became a labor expert, too, an allegation which I would not deny. But a lot of my work at the bar, a good portion of it, was trial work, mostly for other law firms, highly complicated, technical cases, no criminal cases, all civil. I would try these cases for other law firms, and was well compensated. I appeared, I think, only once in a state court in twenty-five years, just once. All my work was in Federal

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Court, sometimes by and through the bankruptcy courts, sometimes, of course, from the District court, to begin with.

In the meantime, of course, I married, and I have two wonderful children, and I'm grateful that my poor poverty-stricken father, who never could explain where he got the pennies--thankful for being in America, a fact which my children, I'm afraid, do not appreciate as much as I do. I don't know, sir, if that's enough of my background or not. I might say this: It sounds immodest. Although I never got an undergraduate degree, a college degree, I studied constantly: sociology, economics, history, philosophy. I had a veritable library around the bed. And I like to boast that I've given myself any number of degrees in these subjects, degrees I would not have had time to obtain if I had stayed in school. Again, I'm supposed to be somewhat

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of a scholar, also an allegation that I do not deny. Now that's the situation. I never was interested in politics, and, only to raise a few dollars for a man by the name of Harry S. Truman when he was running for office, outside of that, I never was interested in politics. I did agree to make speeches the first year, about 1924-25, but I didn't like it, and I gave it up. I never was active in politics excepting to solicit funds, Eddie Jacobson and I, for a man named Truman, little pennies and nickels, it wasn't too much, but it raised a little money. That is my background.

Oh, I have been active in the community. I have held some very high offices. I organized, as chairman of the committee, the Kansas City Jewish Federation and Council, and was its chairman for over a year. That's the most powerful of the local Jewish organizations today. It's all philanthropic, you understand, to raise

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money.

I went through almost every chair, high and low, of the B'nai B'rith.

FUCHS: When did you first become associated with B'nai B'rith?

GRANOFF: My guess is at this moment, about 1924. I'm sort of notorious in B'nai B'rith. I'm now a life member of the Hillel Foundation Commission of the Supreme (International) Lodge of B'nai B'rith. There are very few, there are just about five or six life members and I am one of them.

FUCHS: Just what is the Hillel Foundation, for the benefit of the users of this transcript?

GRANOFF: The Hillel Foundation was organized some forty years ago to try to bring a semblance of relationship between Judaism and the Jewish boys and girls attending our universities. It now is functioning in 273 campuses: United

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States, Canada and Britain. It employs approximately two hundred rabbis full-time, and some forty or fifty part-time rabbis who supervise the activities of these kids on the university campuses, religiously, sociologically, and to keep them interested in their religion. Although we do our best, it's an unfortunately discouraging effort. The same thing is true with the Newman Clubs of the Catholics. They have the same problem. Kids are not today interested in such things. Now, that's it. I've held other high offices in B'nai B'rith.

FUCHS: We discussed in our preliminary conversations that B'nai B'rith entered into the story of the creation of Israel, and we also mentioned that Hillel was part of B'nai B'rith. Just what is B'nai B'rith?

GRANOFF: Well, B'nai B'rith is a brotherhood. B'nai B'rith means "sons of the Covenant."

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It is a brotherhood, functioning over the years on philanthropic fronts. It has since spread its activities on political fronts, like the Anti-Defamation League, you may have heard, that is also a B'nai B'rith agency, just like Hillel is. It is to protect civil rights, not only Jews, but everybody. It also functions by training youngsters, manual training. B'nai B'rith tries to promote religion, social activities, patriotism, and has a membership now of approximately three hundred thousand men and women.

FUCHS: Has B'nai B'rith taken a stand, a policy stand on Zionism?

GRANOFF: That's an excellent question. To begin with, no. To begin with, they were so-called neutral. Why? Because a good many of their members were reformed Jews, many of whom, in the early years, were violently opposed to Zionism, on the theory, which I never believed

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in, that it split their citizenship, half American, half Zionist. And it's only since the creation of the State, that to be a Zionist is no longer unpopular today among most Jews. And yet a lot of people belonging to the Reform Temple, a lot of people still are lukewarm.

FUCHS: Are you speaking of your own experience in the Temple in Kansas City?

GRANOFF: No, no, generally.

FUCHS: As a general term.

GRANOFF: Yes.

FUCHS: Well, now, several men, such as Frank Goldman, who I believe was president at the time we're mainly interested in, of B'nai B'rith, and Maurice Bisgyer, were, it would seem to me, in my limited reading, rather pro-Zionist to quite

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a degree.

GRANOFF: That's right. But at first they had to sort of cover it up, but they then became openly zealous.

FUCHS: This was their own personal feelings.

GRANOFF: Their feelings were pro-Zionist, but it was because of the large membership of German Jews, Reformed Jews--and of course, Hitler decimated the German Jews, so you had left only the Eastern Jew. I sometimes wonder that if Hitler had failed to kill 6,000,000 Jews--a lot of them, of course were German Jews--as to whether or not they would have succeeded in stopping the establishment of Israel. They were very strongly opposed to it. I might say to you, while I'm at it, that one year I joined the Zionists, got a card and gave them five dollars for their annual dues; Eddie Jacobson

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never did join.

FUCHS: What year would that have been?

GRANOFF: I'm talking about 1923, 1924 or 1925. I attended one meeting. The gentlemen were so fanatical--there's no use going into detail--so fanatical that to me it offended me, my sense of fairness, my sense of love for my country, that I quit. I never had a damn thing to do with them. And Eddie and I were non-Zionists, we were not anti-Zionists, if you know what I mean, but neither Eddie nor I were Zionists. And to be a Zionist in the days we started talking to the President is another story. It was like waving a red flag in front of him, because they abused him terribly, frightfully. They tried to contact us all the time, but we wouldn't speak to them, none of them.

FUCHS: When did you first become acquainted with

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Eddie Jacobson?

GRANOFF: I think I said it must have been in the early thirties, or the middle thirties would be more accurate, when he stopped at my house on Edgevale Road to pick up my son to take him to Sunday School. Now how he got to do it, whether Mildred--she doesn't remember--but that's when I first met him, more or less casually, and then paid no particular attention to him until he moved across the street, his office, 916 Walnut Street. And we used to, on, say, Saturday afternoons, he and two friends and we'd play gin rummy for pennies.

FUCHS: In his office?

GRANOFF: His and Mr. White's and Mr. Gershon's office.

FUCHS: Were they all in the same suite?

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GRANOFF: They had two sets of offices.

FUCHS: They were selling . . .

GRANOFF: . . . he was selling shirts and pajamas, and Harry White was selling roof material, and Gershon was selling notions of some kind.

FUCHS: I see. When did you first become acquainted with Mr. Truman?

GRANOFF: I met Mr. Truman, I'd say, within a month after that barbershop at the Title Building opened up in May 1924.

FUCHS: That was Frank Spina's?

GRANOFF: Frank Spina was the barber. I came down one day for a haircut. We had the office upstairs, just moved over there. I had just started with Achtenberg and Rosenberg, just began my tenure with them. I went downstairs and this poor little Italian fellow, about five

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feet tall, standing back of his chair doing nothing, and I took a seat there, and that's how I met Frank Spina. This was in 1924--that's forty-four, forty-five years ago.

FUCHS: Did he introduce you to Mr. Truman?

GRANOFF: Well, I wouldn't say he introduced us. Then one day, while I was coming in or going out, a man by the name of Truman walked in, whether we were introduced or not, I don't know. But we started talking. And we would see each other in the barbershop, or on the street then. At first it was very, very casual.

FUCHS: Do you know what he was doing at that time?

GRANOFF: I've forgotten his title, but I do know this, he was working for the county. He doesn't remember, I checked it with him. I think he was making \$230 a month; but he had some kind of a minor job in the county and Jim

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Pendergast, who fought with him in the war, got him this job. Jim was a nephew, you see, of Tom. But our acquaintance was very, very casual for several years. I hadn't met or heard of Eddie Jacobson for ten years.

FUCHS: Well, now the facts were that Mr. Truman, of course, was elected Eastern County Judge in 1922 and served in 1923 and 1924.

GRANOFF: Then, I say he was a county judge, of course, but I don't remember that.

FUCHS: Well, I'm interested, because in the period 1925 and 1926 when he ran again for Presiding Judge, he was out of county government and I wondered if he had been in one of those interim jobs.

GRANOFF: I don't remember that. Our acquaintance to begin with was extremely casual.

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FUCHS: How did it develop over the years? Was there a certain amount of relationship other than in the barbershop?

GRANOFF: Hardly any. I didn't handle any political cases.

FUCHS: Did you ever belong to a political club, a ward club?

GRANOFF: Never did, never did. What was the question that you asked?

FUCHS: How your relationship developed over the years?

GRANOFF: It developed later when I became acquainted with Eddie. Eddie once or twice or three times invited me to his house, or some of his friends to their house, to play poker. I remember that two or three of those poker players became very fast friends, and Truman was one of them. Caskie Collet became another, and got pretty

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well acquainted across the table--and Al Ridge.

FUCHS: You don't recall ever being in Mr. Truman's haberdashery when he and Eddie Jacobson were there?

GRANOFF: No, no, I don't.

FUCHS: Do you recall anyone else who played poker with you, you and Mr. Truman?

GRANOFF: Oh, sure. Well, his brother "Doc," amongst the others, Hy Vile, Earl Trainin, about seven or eight of us.

FUCHS: These games were generally at Eddie's?

GRANOFF: Generally, when I was invited, they were at Eddie's.

FUCHS: Where did he live then?

GRANOFF: Near Oak Street. I've forgotten the number.

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FUCHS: Was it on Oak Street?

GRANOFF: No, it was a side street. That's when I got really acquainted with him, not ever dreaming that he would ever be Senator, Vice President, or President, in those days. I never had thought of it, of course. He was a lot of fun, a lot of fun. And these things developed. We used to sit next to each other and talk about things, and I seemed to have made an impression on him, don't ask me why.

FUCHS: Were Jewish affairs, specifically Zionism, ever discussed?

GRANOFF: Never. Never. Nothing, not even politics, unless generally. I'm supposed to dislike, and I do dislike risqué stories, I don't like them. I never told them and I don't dare tell them. Truman would participate in trying to embarrass me by telling some off-color story, and then claimed that I blushed. Maybe I did. Even in the White House, many times, he and Eddie would get into these dirty stories, and then

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roar with laughter when they claimed that I was blushing. There was no deep conversation of any kind. Those two men were quite good judges, Caskie Collet, and Al Ridge. But nothing of any depth was discussed even when we would stop for a half an hour to have a bite to eat. Just small talk.

FUCHS: What were your impressions of him as a poker player?

GRANOFF: He was a good poker player, and I never was, by the way. I think I told you that--maybe I didn't--if held sit next to me, held lean over and look at my cards and say, "I got you beat already."

FUCHS: Did he like to drink?

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GRANOFF: Yes, and he did have pinkish color in his cheeks, but never drank to the extent to where he would be in any way offensive. Never. He knew his limits. The limit was then--he could drink.

FUCHS: How did your relationship with Eddie Jacobson develop over the period?

GRANOFF: Well, I told you we got started by playing gin rummy, but the real start was when he bought, I've forgotten the year, when he decided to buy that store. I represented him. Later on, he got mad at me because I wouldn't charge him anything. It wasn't much work at all. It was a simple matter. He more than paid me back, you know, suits and shirts and socks and pajamas and what have you. And we got to know each other pretty well, pretty well. Then he would come in with little legal matters after he bought the store. It didn't amount to anything

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and I would always take care of him. I never sent him a bill. He sent me all of these other things, and never sent me a bill. We were very, very close. We would talk about our families and things of that kind. But we never discussed Jewish questions or anything of that kind. We'd see each other maybe once a week for lunch at Bretton's or some other place--it wasn't known as Bretton's then, it was known by some other name. Until I had that call from Washington, which I told you about.

FUCHS: This call came in what month and year?

GRANOFF: To the best I know now, I may have a record of it, but it came in, I would say, around in June of 1947. May or June, my guess now is that it was June, 1947, from Maurice Bisgyer, who started talking, and Frank was on another extension. Maurice was executive vice-president and Frank was president. I had served under

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them and we knew each other very, very well, almost intimately.

FUCHS: Did you hold office at that time in this area?

GRANOFF: Yes, I did, some commission or something . . .

FUCHS: . . . of B'nai B'rith?

GRANOFF: Yes. I was called on frequently on their problems in this area, and I was most active, not only locally but nationally, in B'nai B'rith. He called up and we started, "How are you," and so on. He said, "Frank is on another line. Do you know a man by the name of Jacobs?" He said everything excepting "Jacobson." "A man by the name of Jacobs, Jacobstein, or something like that, who is supposed to be a very close friend of President Truman?"

I said, "Yes, you mean a man named Eddie Jacobson."

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Well, at that time it was too early for the partition business, but he wanted to discuss with him the matter of the hundred thousand refugees, the refugee problem, to persuade Britain to lift up the bars and let these poor refugees go in.

I said, "I'll talk to him and let you know."

I called up Eddie and he said, "Sure I'll talk to him. He, like Truman, cussed a blue streak. Every word was a damn or a hell or something else. "I don't know what in the hell I can do, but sure I'll meet him." He passed it off as if it was nothing.

I made the appointment and Frank and Maurice came to Kansas City, and I had these two gentlemen meet. Once in a while he talked to me about going to see Truman, but he couldn't get anywhere. He could with Truman, but Truman couldn't get anywhere with Britain, you

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see, on this refugee problem. And gradually, of course we fell into this partition business.

FUCHS: Now, Bisgyer and Goldman were both New Yorkers?

GRANOFF: No, Goldman was a Massachusetts man, that town close to Boston, I've forgotten, I'll get it for you later.

FUCHS: Lowell?

GRANOFF: Lowell, yes. And Bisgyer originated in New York.

FUCHS: They called you from New York?

GRANOFF: No, this was in Washington, because the home office of B'nai B'rith was in Washington.

FUCHS: Now, how had Eddie Jacobson come to their attention, do you know?

GRANOFF: I guess I know, but I can't tell you right this minute. I'm sure they told us but I
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can't remember.

FUCHS: Now, when you met in Kansas City, do you have a recollection of the meeting?

GRANOFF: Oh, I was with them the several hours they were here, then they flew back. Eddie agreed to see Truman, and did, of course. And he continued to see him, and then of course, gradually came to the partition business.

FUCHS: Do you remember when he first saw Mr. Truman about the refugee problem?

GRANOFF: I would imagine within a week thereafter.

FUCHS: Did he go to Washington?

GRANOFF: Yes, and he couldn't afford to, really, in those days, and he went at his own expense. And I went at my own expense.

FUCHS: Did you go with him on that first visit?

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GRANOFF: No, sir. I had nothing to do with the refugee problem. He didn't ask me and I certainly didn't volunteer and I had no activity except to discuss with him, to orient him to the problem. Of course, he knew next to nothing about it, you see. He hardly read the newspaper about it, he didn't know the refugee problems until they were mentioned to him. I would then brief him on things, you see.

FUCHS: It wasn't at this time, though, he took what has been termed a rather intense course in Jewish history?

GRANOFF: No, he never took an intense course in Jewish history. I don't think he did. He did it the easy way. I would go with him a lot of times, you see.

FUCHS: He didn't become at this time in '47

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strongly committed to [Chaim] Weizmann's policies and Zionism?

GRANOFF: Well, Weizmann was never mentioned. Weizmann never came into the picture until almost a year later, you see.

FUCHS: Yes. Well, now what is the next recollection that you have of you and Mr. Jacobson becoming involved in negotiations with the President, clear recollection?

GRANOFF: Well, the clear recollection is, and I can't pinpoint the exact date, is when the idea of implementing a Jewish state came to the fore, became intensely interesting, intensely interesting. And Jacobson took hold right away.

FUCHS: Was this prior to the resolution of November 29, 1947?

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GRANOFF: Oh, Lord, yes. It had to be. Oh, yes. It started almost at the very beginning. No, when it came to the resolution, it started to appear in the United Nations around in, I'd say--I'd

have to look--in August 1947. And then, of course, it grew and grew. Of course, Russia was for it strong. I have often wondered how much that one factor influenced us, influenced Truman. Russia, from the very beginning to the end, was very strong for the Jewish state, and there's a reason. Of course, its motives, it's only a guess, one, that they would get a foothold in that area, I'm sure. It's just a guess, of course.

FUCHS: Your thinking is that Truman felt that he had to trump their cards?

GRANOFF: No, it's a funny thing. I discussed with Eddie this Russian factor, but as I sit here,

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I cannot recall as I sit here, a single instance when I was present, which was many times, when Russia was ever mentioned, by either Jacobson, Truman, or myself. I do not recall, excepting that Eddie and I, more than once thought about it and talked about it, but we never mentioned it to the President.

FUCHS: Could you hazard a guess as to how many times Mr. Jacobson or you and Mr. Jacobson went back prior to the March, 1948 . . .

GRANOFF: You mean, prior to November?

FUCHS: Well, I was thinking from the period, say, when the U.N. Special Committee on Palestine came out in favor of partition, up to the time that Mr. Jacobson went back to influence Mr. Truman to see Weizmann to recognize Israel?

GRANOFF: Most of my visits with Eddie, excepting on three or four occasions, thereafter, like

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that testimonial dinner that I told you about, were prior to November 29. I always remember that a few days later, and when Eddie and I got together that Saturday afternoon when the news came out, we both couldn't restrain our tears, when the partition resolution passed by a vote of 33 to 13. I remember that it was a day or two later, I told you, that he was very much emotionally aroused. He called up, and that story is in that article, he calls up, Eddie, and he said, "I got a brainstorm."

"What's on your mind?"

He said, "We have bothered the President so many times, don't you think we ought to go there right now to Washington and say only, 'Mr. President, thank you and God bless you.'"

I said, "Do you call that a brainstorm? That's an inspiration."

And we two poor guys dug into our little bank accounts and went there. We were ushered

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in and stayed quite a while. The article says we didn't but we stayed quite a while. And we came here once in our lives not as asking you for anything. Just to say thank you and God bless you."

FUCHS: Now, this was after the recognition?

GRANOFF: No, no, after the partition.

FUCHS: After the resolution was passed.

GRANOFF: Yes, I'll tell you the date offhand. It was December 8th. It happened to be Eddie's twenty-eighth wedding anniversary. We got in there and he said, "Sit down, you bastards, sit down." That's the way he talked. And those two buddies started talking about each other. And I think they forgot that I was even there, trying to relive and all of a sudden Eddie said, "Harry, where was I twenty-eight years ago today?"

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He looked up, thought for a minute or so, and to quote him directly, "Twenty-eight, 1919, why, you and I were on 12th and Baltimore Streets losing our asses in that store."

The President of the United States.

He said, "No, indeed not. I got hitched that night."

"My God," he says, "I got hitched in June of that same year.

And they said, it was a bitterly cold night, and they started to tell the story how Truman went over to Eddie and they were going to kidnap Bluma. The wedding was at his father's house, Eddie's father's house, and they were going to kidnap Bluma. "I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll go downtown, get my car. " Don't forget, this is 1919. No heater and the cars were not equipped with any closed doors, there was just canvas, you know. He went down--and he described the bitterness--of that cold night—

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he went by streetcar downtown from 43rd and Prospect to the garage downtown, eventually came back and took him and Bluma over with his sis and a couple of other friends to the station on the way to St. Louis, to the station in Independence. They got there. You should hear them describe this. It was a red bellied stove. They were frozen to death, Truman, Eddie and Bluma. They turned their behinds--he used another term--to thaw out and when the train stopped the conductor said, "Oh, you're the newlyweds. There's a big crowd out there that's looking for you, at Kansas City." And they went into detail about that night. It was interesting. They didn't know I was even there.

FUCHS: This was in his Oval Office in the White House?

GRANOFF: Yes.

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FUCHS: Did you always see him in the Oval Room, in his regular presidential office?

GRANOFF: Yes, always there.

FUCHS: Who did you usually see when you went to the White House, what other individuals?

GRANOFF: Outside of Matt and some secretaries who knew us, we didn't know them, nobody else.

FUCHS: Did you feel that Matt Connelly was an influence on these matters with Mr. Truman?

GRANOFF: Let me answer it this way. The answer is no. And once in a while, without any reason whatsoever, we were afraid that maybe he was anti, because of the Vatican position on partition. But we had no reason. We never discussed it with him at all. Many times we would sit down and greet each other, and Matt would go around the President's desk and start to arrange some papers, we always thought hoping

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against hope that held catch a phrase as to why we were there. And after a minute or two passed, the President would say, "That's all right, we'll fix that up later on." And he'd leave. I don't know. I don't think he would have had, call it "nerve," to try to influence the President on this matter. I don't think so.

FUCHS: Were there ever any other individuals present such as Dean Acheson, Under Secretary of State?

GRANOFF: We thought that Dean Acheson was in our favor, but he was never at our conference, not a single man.

FUCHS: Did you say you did see him?

GRANOFF: No.

FUCHS: You never did see him.

GRANOFF: We saw him. Met him in town or somewhere and say hello and that was all.

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FUCHS: What about Dave Niles, did you have any conferences with him?

GRANOFF: Yes, I told you that on occasions, but not always, we would call up Dave. He would meet us in the room, or in some restaurant, some obscure restaurant in the corner, and try to get from David whatever information he had to work on. We felt that he was helpful. He was more discouraging than encouraging.

FUCHS: Was he a Zionist?

GRANOFF: Yes--well, I shouldn't say that. I don't know. He was certainly pro-creation of the State. Now, whether as a Zionist, I don't know.

FUCHS: Are you familiar with Max Lowenthal?

GRANOFF: Met him just casually, no. Very casually.

FUCHS: You don't know of any part or influence

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he played?

GRANOFF: No, I don't.

FUCHS: What about Loy Henderson of the State Department?

GRANOFF: Don't know him.

FUCHS: Did you meet Clark Clifford on any occasion?

GRANOFF: Never.

FUCHS: Do you recall the gist of any of your conversations with Mr. Truman, prior to the resolution?

GRANOFF: Oh, Lord, yes, of course.

FUCHS: Would you care to relate some of that?

GRANOFF: Yes.

FUCHS: I'd like to know how your conversation went.

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GRANOFF: Can't we leave that? It's so important.

FUCHS: Very important. Why don't we discontinue now and I'll come back another day. Would that be the way you'd like to do it?

GRANOFF: O.K. Yes. I don't want to be tired on that question, it's too delicate.

FUCHS: Well, why don't we just stop now.

GRANOFF: I don't think there's too much that I gave you there. I'll say this, again, that the relationship between these two friends was amazing. I cannot visualize even two brothers being as close and affectionate as these two friends were.

FUCHS: Very good.

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Second Oral History Interview with Mr. A. J. Granoff,
Kansas City, Missouri, August 27, 1969. By J. R. Fuchs,
Harry S. Truman Library.

FUCHS: Mr. Granoff, Maurice Bisgyer in his book Challenge and Encounter mentions that there was an observance of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Kansas City lodge of B'nai B'rith and this was in October of 1947 and, as you indicated before, the refugee problem was more or less being pushed by Mr. Truman, so that wasn't a major concern by that time, although it seemed to be a subject of discussion, or speech, at this dinner. What else was Mr. Jacobson and perhaps yourself, and Mr. Goldman, maybe, approaching Mr. Truman about? In other words, by this time were you talking about other matters with Mr. Truman?

GRANOFF: Well, when you talk about October 1947, the matter that was on our minds at that time was the matter of the resolution of partition

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then pending in the United Nations. The refugee problem was hardly mentioned then.

FUCHS: Had you had meetings by this time with Mr. Truman about the partition?

GRANOFF: Oh, yes. Yes. I would say that the first time that I became active on the partition resolution was around in August of 1947. That's a rough date.

FUCHS: Yes.

GRANOFF: I had next to nothing to do with the refugee problem prior to that time, or thereafter. I do not at this moment recall that October dinner. I'm sure I was there, maybe have been the toastmaster, so far as I know; I don't recall it.

FUCHS: I see.

GRANOFF: Don't forget that we talked on the

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telephone frequently, saw each other frequently in Washington, and very little could have been done at this dinner, if anything.

FUCHS: You are speaking of--you saw whom in Washington, Mr. Truman, or are you speaking of Goldman?

GRANOFF: Oh, no. We saw Goldman as a secondary thing. Goldman saw us because they wanted to know what was going on but they gave us no help.

FUCHS: I see.

GRANOFF: And Goldman and Bisgyer, understandably, tried to, oh, publicize their activities far beyond where they should have. And later on both Eddie and I resented both Maurice and Frank's statements to indicate that they really had something vital to do with Truman's decision, which is not so. All they did was

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hang around until we let them know what was happening, and many times we didn't tell them everything, of course. But outside of bringing Eddie into the picture, in the way I described before, they had really nothing as to influence. They would beg Eddie to take them to see the President and have a picture taken and then publicized it in the National Monthly. But that's all.

FUCHS: Could you give me a rough estimate of how many times you and Mr. Jacobson may have seen Mr. Truman prior to the partition resolution of November?

GRANOFF: Together, I would say five, six times, maybe seven. Very expensive to us, but to this you must add separate visits by Jacobson without me, for one reason or another. But I say, five, six, seven, maybe even eight, I don't know.

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FUCHS: You were not financed by B'nai B'rith or . . .

GRANOFF: Nobody. Nobody.

FUCHS: Jewish Agency for Palestine?

GRANOFF: Nobody. Nor was Eddie.

FUCHS: Then it was all done by yourselves.

GRANOFF: By ourselves when we could ill afford it, both of us. We paid our own expenses, transportation, and hotel and what have you, nobody offered to reimburse us and never did.

FUCHS: Did you have any relationship with the Jewish Agency for Palestine in this country?

GRANOFF: No sir. None. Absolutely none.

FUCHS: Well, now how was liaison handled between Mr. Jacobson and yourself and Dr. [Chaim] Weizmann?

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GRANOFF: Well, this happened, of course, in 1948. I had next to nothing to do with it because on February 10th I was operated on, the larynx, and I was in the hospital for weeks and weeks. I did compose a telegram, one or two of them to Truman through Connelly.

FUCHS: Yes.

GRANOFF: And Eddie would see me at the hospital every day practically. I knew, of course, that Goldman contacted Eddie Jacobson when Weizmann failed to get Truman's permission to come to see him, finally. And you know the story, it's been written up.

FUCHS: Yes, I want to go into that later; but I just wondered about whether the approach to Jacobson from Weizmann was always made through Goldman or the White House or . . .

GRANOFF: It was made through Goldman.

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FUCHS: Initially?

GRANOFF: Initially, at one time, and Eddie jumped at the opportunity to have something to do for Weizmann. Of course, he claimed then that he was a great admirer of Weizmann. Now whether that was an emotional exaggeration I don't know. But he jumped at the opportunity of trying to do something that everybody else failed in, namely to get Weizmann into the White House, which he succeeded. And the story is there in detail.

FUCHS: Well, that's what I was wondering. Had you ever heard him mention Weizmann to any extent prior to that?

GRANOFF: Prior to that I never did. I don't think Weizmann's name ever passed our lips before this incident came up, where Weizmann came here and Goldman got in touch with Eddie to try to get him in the White House. I do not

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think that we ever mentioned him.

FUCHS: Of course this is interesting in light of the story that Mr. Jacobson told, that he looked at the statue of Andrew Jackson and then said, "I have had a hero all of my life. "

GRANOFF: That's right. I made fun with Eddie. I'd poke fun at him. I'd say, "How could you talk about Weizmann who you never saw and never thought of, as your greatest hero, in front of the man who should have been your greatest hero, Harry Truman?" I said, "That was dumb." I used to poke fun at him for that. He had that story. That's Eddie's own story and I sort of let him know that I took it with a grain of salt.

FUCHS: In other words . . .

GRANOFF: And he never knew Weizmann was alive

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hardly. Never.

FUCHS: In other words, he said this but he used it merely as a . . .

GRANOFF: As a means of arguing the President to give his consent and I'm sure it's true that the President said, "All right you baldheaded son-of-a-bitch, let him come." It sounds like them, both of them. But I said, "It's stupid, here's a man you hardly ever thought of and he became your hero all of a sudden." We both laughed.

FUCHS: Do you think Mr. Truman might have suspected that there was less than the truth in that?

GRANOFF: Well, it would be a guess. You can't fool Truman very much. I think Truman inwardly laughed about it. I think so. I don't know, of course. But that story's--although it's true, it's more or less fiction.

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He never paid attention to Weizmann. Weizmann was here several times before that. He never bothered to attend the dinner. He didn't know him. And, of course, Weizmann never heard of him, naturally. But that--I'm sure it happened.

FUCHS: Oh, yes.

GRANOFF: And I think his reply, Truman's reply was clever and humane, "All right, you baldheaded son-of-a-bitch, let him come."

FUCHS: How early do you think Mr. Truman might have made up his mind to support partition?

GRANOFF: That is a question that's basic. With all due respect to Truman's statement that interest in the welfare of Jewish people was alive. I say that's a statement he gave me to read you know, in Israel when I dedicated a building, you know. That is the hall, B'nai

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B'rith Hall. You know about three and a half years ago? You know about that?

FUCHS: Yes, I remember reading of it, yes.

GRANOFF: I do not think the President who is busy with many other things as the war was drawing to a close, and other matters that he had to contend with through the years, ever thought of the Middle East, good or bad. I am sure not, and if he was himself he would say so now. One of the things he inherited, as President, was the unsettled Middle East, particularly the question of a home for the Jews which was then only a dream or a prayer-nothing. Now whether that answers your question, I don't know. At first he had to be educated and he educated himself. I think I once told you he had a file in his drawer; studied it, the geography, but he knew next to nothing about Zionism, a Jewish State, a Jewish

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homeland, Balfour Declaration. I think that, up to about August 1947, those terms were Greek terms to Harry S. Truman. He was too busy with other things to even give it a second thought, and the same thing goes for Eddie Jacobson. I do not recall, from the time he and I got acquainted . . .

FUCHS: That's Eddie?

GRANOFF: . . . to the time I got a call from Bisgyer, of ever having discussed Israel, Palestine, Jewish history, the butchery of six million Jews, its historic impact on the world, with Eddie Jacobson. It would be just like having discussed Greece or Babylonia with him. It never occurred to me, or it never occurred to him. We never discussed those things. We would meet frequently, but small talk.

FUCHS: Yes.

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GRANOFF: Shirts, pajamas . . . I want to emphasize that, never did we discuss a Jewish question, Eddie and I. Don't forget Eddie was raised in an Orthodox Jewish home. After he married, he went over to the Reformed side and was a more or less faithful attendant on Friday night's services, and that's all. A card carrying Reformed Jew, so to speak. He took no interest, no magazines, never read nothing. He never went to a lecture, never manifested any interest whatsoever. We used to play gin rummy a couple of hours a Saturday afternoon. Our offices were across the street from--together. We never talked about Jewish affairs or anything, communal affairs. He was a paying member of B'nai B'rith, but that's all; never did attend a lodge meeting, I don't believe, ever. Was inactive, he was not interested.

FUCHS: I see.

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GRANOFF: Now that's the background so far as Eddie is concerned Jewishly.

FUCHS: Well, now if I remember what I read correctly, your phone call, originally, from Bisgyer was in June 1947 and Eddie made at least one trip then primarily in regard to the refugee problem.

GRANOFF: No, I wouldn't say one trip, he probably made several. I don't know.

FUCHS: He made several. Did you make more than one?

GRANOFF: On the refugee program? Oh, no, none at all.

FUCHS: None at all?

GRANOFF: None at all.

FUCHS: You didn't go back with him the first time?

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GRANOFF: No, at no time.

FUCHS: I see.

GRANOFF: Outside when we parted company, Bisgyer, Goldman, Granoff, and Jacobson, we never met again on the subject. I don't think I ever discussed it with him.

FUCHS: Then say from June to the resolution at the end of November in 1947 there was maybe four, four and a half months there, and in that period you say you probably made five to seven trips back. What was the . . .

GRANOFF: On the partition.

FUCHS: Yes, now this was prior to the resolution, but, I say, what did you discuss at those meetings? I mean, Mr. Truman you don't think had yet made up his mind, did he interpose objections to your support of the partition?

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GRANOFF: No. You're a little ahead of the story but I'll go into it a little bit.

FUCHS: Well, if there is something else you would like to take up in that period, I would like you to relate the story as you remember it chronologically, which would be better than my asking you questions.

GRANOFF: Well, as to what was said during those visits when I was there and when I wasn't there, and as Eddie reported them to me, let's go a little later. More of the background I think should be covered in the nature of the personalities of these two men.

It is something that is really hard to describe. The familiarity between those two men when you consider that one of them was the President of the United States, and the other one a poor struggling haberdashery operator, it's amazing. During, before when he was still

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Senator and when he was still--before he went to the Senate, they used to kid each other around, and Eddie used to say some rough things to Truman; but after he became President things changed. Truman's attitude towards Jacobson never changed, he kidded around and so on, but Eddie's respect for Truman almost amounted to awe. For example, every time I would be there with Eddie, he greeted me just affectionately and enthusiastically as he greeted Eddie. Held sit down, I'd say no matter how busy he was or how critical our visit was to us, that is Eddie and me, he would start out wondering: "How is Mildred? How is Loeb? How is Jody?" He would take out a dollar bill and, you know, sign his name and give it to us. How is Bluma, how are the children, by name. He wouldn't seem to be in a hurry and he wanted to have an answer; if the answer wasn't adequate he would

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pump us for more information before we'd break in and tell him what we came for. It never failed, never failed.

FUCHS: Did you have a fifteen minute or a half hour appointment?

GRANOFF: I'd say never as short as fifteen minutes. I'd say closer to a half an hour, maybe a little bit longer, depending.

FUCHS: Yes.

GRANOFF: And I think I told you--this is sort of important emotionally--that almost invariably, maybe with one or two exceptions out of the six or seven visits we made, Eddie and I would have adjoining rooms, connecting doors, that maybe most of those visits we didn't sleep that night, so nervous. We'd sit in a chair, talk, snooze, wake up, and talk again, never hit our beds.

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FUCHS: Is that right?

GRANOFF: And the reason for it, to rationalize now, was that our attitude towards our visits was awe, awe. We didn't go to see our poker playing friend, we didn't go to see an old friend, we went to see the President of the United States. I cannot put that too strongly, and we were scared to death, frightened to death; and we presented Mr. President's what's new and so on. I'm also sure of this--can't prove it--that rarely did President Truman take us into fullest confidence as to the status of the resolution in the United Nations. Not for lack, certainly not for lack of confidence in us, but he felt that perhaps that certain aspects of the situation affecting the United States of America was just like a deity to him, but none of our business. It would be a violation of his trust by taking us into his

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confidence. And we, many times, left here discouraged and frightened. He never would commit himself one way or another, and sometimes his demeanor, grim, tight-lipped, frightened us to death that he would not support it. I would say--I would have to look somewhere into my papers--I would say that we were certain only that he was going to support the resolution, I would say maybe ten or fifteen or twenty days, not even twenty, ten or fifteen days before the 29th.

FUCHS: Was that about the last time you visited him?

GRANOFF: One of those last times, that's right. Dave, what's his name from Boston, I've forgotten, his name's in there, his assistant on minor matters . . .

FUCHS: Noyes or Niles?

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GRANOFF:Niles. Dave Niles. Dave Niles was also present. He did take us into his confidence as far as he could, Dave did, and maybe he took us into his confidence more than he should have, but he did; and we were scared to death that he would not support it. That influence of the State Department and others, even such men as Lehman was against the Jewish State, Senator Lehman. The Jews are now trying to memorialize him. He was a Reformed Jew; anti-Zionists violently, wouldn't support it.

FUCHS: What was his main objection, do you recall, against the Jewish State?

GRANOFF:All I know--none. I got a volume here. It is his statement against a Jewish State but he's in favor of a Jewish Commonwealth. Don't ask me the difference, I don't know.

FUCHS: How did you think George Marshall viewed

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all this?

GRANOFF:Marshall, and while I'm at it I might as well say, if Truman ever stood in awe of a human being, it was George Marshall.

FUCHS: Could you illustrate that?

GRANOFF:I cannot give you an illustration. Just a feeling--just a feeling.

FUCHS: Do you recall . . .

GRANOFF: Once or twice we met Marshall coming out of his office when Eddie and I were going in. He never gave us a look of recognition, just looked at us stoney. We despised him.

FUCHS:Had you met him?

GRANOFF: Just casually, that's all. Just casually passing, that's all.

FUCHS: Do you think he knew who you were and what

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you were there for?

GRANOFF: Oh, yes, I'm sure he did. He knew about Eddie and me, sure. But he would pass us by with a stoney look. He almost wrecked it.

....FUCHS:He almost what?

....GRANOFF: Wrecked it, wrecked the idea.

FUCHS: You think he was very much against the idea?

GRANOFF: Oh, very much, is putting it mildly. Putting it mildly.

FUCHS: How did you become aware of this? Through Mr. Truman's statements or . . .

GRANOFF: Marshall's name was never mentioned, but through Davels statement and one or two others, can't recall for sure, but Dave Niles for example. But he absolutely stood in

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awe of George Marshall; and I think poor Truman would be shocked if he heard me say that, and then when held thought about it he would admit it was true. Now you say the State Department, you really mean George Marshall.

FUCHS: What about Loy Henderson, did he ever come into your conversations, or did you meet him?

GRANOFF: I met him, yes, several times. He's a nonentity. I don't think he was for it, put it that way.

FUCHS: You don't think he was for it.

GRANOFF: Nope, I don't. But Truman would never, outside of cussing the State Department, he never mentioned a figure, a man, a name, that might influence him one way or another you see. Never did. And I say he did not take us in the full confidence of the situation.

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FUCHS: Did you ever see Dean Acheson in the White House during that period?

GRANOFF: Yes, several times. Yes. Never stayed, never. I saw him going in and out.

FUCHS: Did you know him?

GRANOFF: Slightly, slightly. In fact I brought him here to speak later on, I was chairman of a banquet and Truman sent me to Washington; he had already fixed it up and I had to go see Acheson.

FUCHS: It was just your feeling that he was supporting statehood?

GRANOFF: Who, Acheson?

FUCHS: Yes.

GRANOFF: That's it, yes. And I think that feeling is correct.

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FUCHS: Who else did you come in touch with in the White House that we haven't already mentioned in the prior interview?

GRANOFF: Nobody, outside of going in to Connelly and chatting and kidding around and so forth. Nobody.

FUCHS: You think. . .

GRANOFF: They were very careful, that goes for Eddie. Not that being that friendly but that sort of goes back to Truman.

FUCHS: Do you think Connelly was a major influence on Mr. Truman in the matter?

GRANOFF: I really don't know. We suspect that he might have tried, because of the Vatican's attitude, to influence Truman adversely,

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but we have no evidence of any kind of that. None.

FUCHS: For instance it's been felt that Connelly was somewhat of a political advisor, a political man, and the fact that there was an election year do you think he might have favored this because of political reasons?

GRANOFF: I'm talking about in 1947, the year before. The election year never even entered our minds.

FUCHS: You don't think it was in Connelly's mind or in the President's mind?

GRANOFF: No. Don't forget, it was November 1947; the election was in November 1948. I don't think so.

FUCHS: You don't think they were looking that far

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ahead?

GRANOFF: No. I don't. And I do not believe that Truman's agreement to see Weizmann had a damn thing to do with the election scheduled for six months hence. I don't think it had a damned thing to do. He just impulsively wanted to favor poor Eddie, that's all.

FUCHS: Did you know Samuel Rosenman?

GRANOFF: No. I met him socially once or twice but never to discuss anything with him.

FUCHS: What about Oscar Ewing?

GRANOFF: No.

FUCHS: The Federal Security Administrator, who was somewhat of an advisor?

GRANOFF: No. No sir.

FUCHS: Who was Niles dealing with, do you think,

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in regard to the problem?

GRANOFF: Nobody. Nobody I know of. He was a political appointee of Truman's and a very faithful one.

FUCHS: Yes, of course he was.

GRANOFF: He was pro-Jewish State, strongly so; and my recollections is he sought us out as an informer.

FUCHS: Fine.

GRANOFF: It should be mentioned, it's always been significant to me, to illustrate the closeness between these two men, Truman-Jacobson. One thing is that Eddie never needed anybody as an intermediary between him and Truman. If anything, others wanted to use him as an intermediary, but he never. And another thing to illustrate, with the exception

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of a wire which I drafted in my hospital bed to Connelly, to be shown to the President, signed of course by Eddie, Eddie never, either with me or alone, ever asked for an appointment. We came to Washington, first making sure that the President was in Washington, and called the White House, Matt; and he and Matt would go through and throw a cussing spree at each other, jokingly. What the hell are you doing here without his permission, and so on. And we would get an appointment within a few hours. No limitation as to time. And most of these we were ushered in through the back door, so to speak, so that the reporters and photographers wouldn't see us.

FUCHS: Your appointments were all off-the-record?

GRANOFF: Yes, with one or two exceptions. When they were made we saw to it they would be off-the-record. When they were on record we were

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bothered to death when we came back home. The Star would have an article about it somewhere, and they would bother us to death unless it was off-the-record.

FUCHS: Was your feeling that Connelly had orders from the President to at least notify him when you wanted an appointment or to let you have an appointment?

GRANOFF: I never thought of it.

FUCHS: Because as Appointment's Secretary he was awful good at, you know...

GRANOFF: We never asked him before we came. We called him after we arrived in Washington.

FUCHS: Yes.

GRANOFF: I don't think so. I cannot give you the occasion, but on one or two or three occasions Truman would say, "Now never mind

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bothering Matt, but call Rose [who was also Catholic] that you're coming but don't bother Matt," the way he would put it. Now why that is, don't ask me.

FUCHS: Did, to your knowledge, Secretary of the Treasury Snyder play any part?

GRANOFF: Never. No, sir, socially we met him quite a bit through the President. Nice guy. To our knowledge, never. You're the first man to mention Snyder in connection with this subject.

FUCHS: What about Secretary of Defense Forrestal, James Forrestal?

GRANOFF: Well, of course, we know that he was a terrible influence, damn him. Hot tempered with us you understand; we knew that he was violently in it, although the real opponent was, of course, George Marshall. Forrestal--I got a picture, he attended a social affair,

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got a picture with him upstairs--he was an anti-Semite. He was an anti-Semite. Now whether Marshall was or not, I couldn't tell you. He was opposed to the Jewish State, put it that way.

FUCHS: Do you think Dave Niles was dealing with some of the individuals such as Rabbi [Abba H.] Silver and [Dr.] Nahum Goldman and . . .

GRANOFF: He was dealing with these men so long as these dealings did not in any way reflect on the man he idolized, Mr. Truman. I think he dealt with them in order to keep the President informed. And I think many times he took us into his confidence.

FUCHS: Did you have acquaintance with any of these gentlemen, [Rabbi Stephen S.] Wise or . .
GRANOFF: Yes, quite an acquaintance, yes.

FUCHS: They never made approaches to you though?

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GRANOFF: They tried to make appointments with me when Eddie wouldn't see them and I turned them down as well. Oh, yes.

FUCHS: Abraham Feinberg is another personality in the story. Do you have . . .

GRANOFF: Well, I know him quite well and he had very little to do with Israel. He gave a lot of money and Truman appreciated it. He gave a small fortune to support Truman's candidacy in 1948, and raised a lot of money; and Eddie liked him very much; so did I. And when they gave a dinner in his honor, Truman and I were both invited, we were there. I got some pictures they took at the airport, and so on. I knew him very well; but he had next to nothing to do with-- Eddie would never ask anybody to do anything for him as an intermediary for Truman. He wouldn't have thought of it; but Eddie was a real friend of Truman and still is.

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FUCHS: Do you recall anything about boundary discussions, the Negev for instance? Did you go into such things with Mr. Truman?

GRANOFF: Yes, to begin with, yes I did. I soon discovered after my first, maybe my second visit, that he knew next to nothing about Israel, historically, Biblically; so--I think I told you this story before, maybe I didn't-I got myself, still have it someplace here, a beautiful map of Israel, that was Palestine at that time, Palestine--and then whenever I went there, I'd keep it in my pocket.

FUCHS: Now, you're speaking of, Eddie Jacobson knew next to nothing.

GRANOFF: No, Truman.

FUCHS: Truman, oh, I thought Truman.

GRANOFF: Eddie never either. They were both

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equally ignorant. Both of them were. I would take the map, and I remember about the second or third visit to the White House I happened to mention that, when talking about the Negev--when I talked about these things, geographically, historically, Eddie would let me do the talking of course, he was uninformed. I mentioned I said the Negev. And characteristically the President said, "What the hell is that?" So, I'd take out the copy of my map from my pocket, spread it and show it to him. We were there a few weeks later, he knew the Negev, every boundary, every brook, every stream, he knew it. I showed him where Negev was, that's when they tried to take away Negev to begin with. He said, "What in the hell is that?" but he knew afterwards.

Whenever we were there he had the Palestine file, called the Palestine, file that thick.

FUCHS: About a foot thick?

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GRANOFF: About a foot thick, in the right hand drawer, and bring it out and he started--and more than once later he embarrassed me by little facts that--geographic, historic facts--embarrassed me by my ignorance. He had studied, yes. But to begin with he knew next to nothing.

FUCHS: What about Elihu Epstein? Did you have any contact with him?

GRANOFF: No, outside of a meeting once in a while, that's all.

FUCHS: Is there anything more that you could say about the relationship, the comradeship, between Mr. Truman and Eddie Jacobson?

GRANOFF: Well, as I said before, they were most intimate. Two brothers couldn't be so close. They were interested in each other's welfare, financial or otherwise.

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FUCHS: Did you ever hear them discuss the haberdashery?

GRANOFF: Oh, yes, sure. I told you the first ten, fifteen minutes were the family and then the store. And Truman wanted to know how many hats he had left, straw hats or winter hats, or pajamas, winter pajamas, summer pajamas, and he knew the business.

FUCHS: Do you recall anything that might have been said about their earlier business venture together?

GRANOFF: Well, I mentioned that once.

FUCHS: Any other details. People, our researchers, are interested in that early part of his life, and any little detail, there's not too much in writing on it.

GRANOFF: Well, they opened this store, with limited

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capital. At that time, of course, the credit was easy and they started up the store; and then 1920 the market went down and wiped them out. Neither one was experienced in buying and operating a store, and on top of this many of their buddies would come into the store and buy on credit and then lost their jobs and couldn't pay; and they went under in less than two years. But they paid everybody back, even though the statute of limitations had run; and even after Eddie had taken bankruptcy, not Truman, but Eddie had--did you know that?

FUCHS: Yes.

GRANOFF: Not Truman, had taken bankruptcy. They paid everybody. In fact some of them I took care of, as always, and they were very late.

FUCHS: Let's see, you met Truman, now, I've forgotten what year?

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GRANOFF: 1924, I think it was.

FUCHS: 1924, he was a county judge then.

GRANOFF: In a barbershop, yeah.

FUCHS: What was your reaction to his first candidacy in 1934, for the Senate?

GRANOFF: I couldn't believe my eyes or ears, believe it or not. Of course I supported him, raised some money. I couldn't imagine Harry S. Truman as Senator. I couldn't--kept this in my own mind, I didn't say anything. Neither could Eddie. We were astounded--of course Pendergast picked him. And it wasn't long until he started making a record.

FUCHS: Of course his Truman Committee, the Senate Committee to Investigate the National Defense effort wasn't started until right after he was re-elected and went back to the Senate in '41.

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Were you optimistic about his chances for re-election in 1940?

GRANOFF: You mean when he ran against

FUCHS: Maurice Milligan . . .

GRANOFF: Against Milligan and ex-Governor, what's his name?

FUCHS: Stark. Stark in the primary.

GRANOFF: We didn't give him a chance. Neither did Eddie. We expected him to be beaten badly. We scratched for dimes and nickels. But we had no hopes that he would be elected in 1948, but Eddie claims he did. But he didn't--he didn't think he'd be elected.

FUCHS: How did you react to his nomination for the Vice Presidency, did you have occasion to talk to him around that time?

GRANOFF: No. I hadn't seen him for months. His

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name was mentioned, I reacted favorably of course. His opponents were--what's his name, the Secretary of Agriculture, by the name of . . .

FUCHS: Wallace.

GRANOFF: Wallace and somebody else.

FUCHS: Jimmy Byrnes?

GRANOFF: Jim Byrnes. He was for Byrnes by the way.

FUCHS: You weren't in touch with him around that time?

GRANOFF: No.

FUCHS: You don't know of his feelings about it?

GRANOFF: No, I don't. Of course this is true of later on, even after he won the election, he actually appeared he didn't want it. That's

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absolutely true, he didn't want it, scared to death. He knew then, as everybody else did close to Roosevelt, that Roosevelt wouldn't survive. He was frightened. Of course I reacted favorably, naturally.

FUCHS: And you felt by then that he could handle that job?

GRANOFF: I can't say yes or no, I don't know. He did a pretty good job as an investigator in

the Senate; but when Roosevelt died on April 12th, I was scared stiff. The war wasn't yet over you know. I was making a speech at B'nai B'rith and then learned at the time that Roosevelt dropped dead.

FUCHS: Did you have any contacts with Mr. Truman as Senator in any capacity other than . . .

GRANOFF: No. Poker game now and then, no, nothing WHATSOEVER. I had no business with him whatever

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and neither did Eddie. We never asked nothing--when he was County Judge we never asked him for anything of any kind, never approached him. Maybe approached him--I don't recall it--maybe to give a fellow a job or something, but never for ourselves, nothing. More than once he told Eddie and me, "You bastards are the only ones that never tried to embarrass me in any way," which we thought was quite a compliment.

FUCHS: Yeah. Think we might come down to the partition now or . . .

GRANOFF: No. Let me try and make some notes on that. The conversations we had, things like that. Next time, next two or three weeks I'll sit down for half an hour a day and go over it in my mind.

FUCHS: I wish you would do that.

GRANOFF: Because it is very important.

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FUCHS: Well, we might conclude now. You're a little tired. If there's nothing more you think you ought to say about the earlier period.

GRANOFF: No, I don't. I see that you have notes and it makes me ashamed, I should have notes.

FUCHS: I do want to thank you very much.

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