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Oral History Interview with Carol and Peter Schulhof  
Brooklyn Heights Synagogue oral histories, 2011.005.006  
Interview conducted by Sady Sullivan on March 31, 2010  
at the Brooklyn Historical Society

SULLIVAN: So we're starting. OK. So, those are good about right where they are, but--

C. SCHULHOF: Where we're sitting?

SULLIVAN: Yep.

C. SCHULHOF: Or should I pull forward?

SULLIVAN: Nope, nope, you're good.

C. SCHULHOF: No.

P. SCHULHOF: OK.

C. SCHULHOF: OK.

SULLIVAN: So could you--, count to five.

C. SCHULHOF: One, two, three, four, five.

SULLIVAN: Great, and--

P. SCHULHOF: One, two, three, four five.

SULLIVAN: Great, so-- [inaudible] did that. Good. OK. Good. So today is March 31st, 2010. I am Sady Sullivan with the Brooklyn Historical Society. This interview is for the Brooklyn Heights Synagogue Oral History Project on the occasion of its 50th anniversary. And so if you would introduce yourself to the recording.

C. SCHULHOF: Right, my name is Carol Schulhof [laughter], and I was born in Brooklyn in 1937. We lived in what is now Bedford-Stuyvesant on Stuyvesant Avenue, and I grew up on Eastern Parkway opposite the Brooklyn Museum, and moved to Brooklyn Heights in 1963 with my husband, Peter.

P. SCHULHOF: And I'm Peter Schulhof, and I guess you want some biography, so I was born in Prague, Czechoslovakia, at that time, and came to the United States towards the end of 1948 from China, and we married in 1961. I was in the army for a year and a

half, and we settled in Brooklyn Heights in 1963.

SULLIVAN: Mmm. And so, for--, for the archive, what's your date of birth?

C. SCHULHOF: [date redacted for privacy] 37.

P. SCHULHOF: [date redacted for privacy], 1937.

SULLIVAN: Great. And so can you tell me a little bit about your parents?

C. SCHULHOF: My father was a pharmacist. He had a pharmacy on the corner of Stuyvesant and DeKalb. He must have taken it over somewhere in the 1920's, and he said he was astonished that the gentlemen he bought the store from had actually been in that spot for twenty years, or twenty-five, he said, so that brought the pharmacy back to 1895, and--

SULLIVAN: Wow!

C. SCHULHOF: [laughter] Yes, and then he stayed there until probably the mid '70s, when crime and the neighborhood was-- was pretty bad, and my mother said "One more robbery, and we're leaving," and that's what happened. So they, they closed the store, and sadly, this wonderful old pharmacy was burned to the ground, probably about a year later.

SULLIVAN: Wow!

C. SCHULHOF: So that was sad. We have a few artifacts. These wonderful old apothecary jars, dating from the 19th century for sure, and unfortunately all the wonderful cabinets and so on in the store went in the fire.

SULLIVAN: And the--the fire was in the '70s?

C. SCHULHOF: It was in the '70s, yep. I passed the spot, and there's completely new construction, and it's very hard to see that there was anything that resembled a retail store there at all.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: My mother was also--was-- my father was born in what is now Belarus and came to the United States in 1908. He was born in 1905. My mother was born in 1906 in Brooklyn, and she grew up in what's now Ridgewood--

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: Sort of on the borderline between Queens and Brooklyn.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: Family, neighborhoods, small homes, and we've gone back to look, and she found houses that she had lived in, which was quite amazing, and you know, people remembered. The owner before, who was the one who her parents sold the house to, so it's a very stable, was a very stable neighborhood. I don't know more recently about that--

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: And she was a housewife. She was very interested in singing and dancing and actually sang on early radio here in the city. And they used to rib her, because she came from Brooklyn, and they would say "Is it raining in Brooklyn?"

SULLIVAN: [laughter]

C. SCHULHOF: "You have your galoshes on."

SULLIVAN: [laughter]

C. SCHULHOF: Things [laughter] Things like that.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm. And so did you know your grandparents?

C. SCHULHOF: I knew my grandmother, and she was born in southern Germany in the 1870's and came to New York. She claimed to see the Brooklyn Bridge open, but I don't think she made it; the dates don't jibe, so she must have, you know, taken a walk across the Brooklyn Bridge in its early years, but not when the Brooklyn Bridge opened, and she met her husband here. He was also from Germany, and he owned a butcher store out in Ridgewood in Brooklyn, and that was at the time a neighborhood that was very German, not Jewish, and she remembers that she and her sister were the only Jewish children in the school at that time.

SULLIVAN: Oh wow!

C. SCHULHOF: Mmm. [pause] And she also remembers the streets were not paved out there.

SULLIVAN: Oh, in Ridgewood?

C. SCHULHOF: Yeah.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: The horse traffic. The streets were unpaved [laughter]. The horse manure drying in the sun--

SULLIVAN: [laughter]

C. SCHULHOF: She said it was, you know-- She also remembers the open trolley cars, and she and her sister were very naughty girls, and they lived in the middle of the block and made a big mud pie, and as the open trolley cars came by, and the people wearing all their summer whites, they would throw mud balls at the trolley cars, because they knew the trolley cars couldn't stop [laughter] 'til the end of the block. I can't picture my mother and my aunt doing this, but they claim they did. [laughter]. Ohh--

P. SCHULHOF: People change. [laughter]

SULLIVAN: And tell me about your parents.

P. SCHULHOF: OK, my father was born in 1903, and he was born in a small town east of Prague called Český Brod. He went to school in Prague mostly although there was a small Jewish community in Český Brod; it was very small and I'm not sure exactly at what age, but quite early, maybe in his early teens, he was sent off to Prague to go to school. And he eventually got a degree in electrical engineering, and that's what he was doing in Czech-- what is now the Czech Republic. He was a partner in a firm in Prague, started as a coal mining engineer northeast of Prague near the Polish border, which is where he met mother, who was actually born in Hungary in Kaposvár in 1909, and she-- her mother had passed away when she was very young, four, and so she sort of got shuttled around a little bit. My maternal grandfather remarried, and my mother ended up in Poland with an uncle, and she was in her early twenties when she met my father at some kind of a function because where he was working was very near the Polish border, and she was just on the other side, and they got married, and moved to Prague, where he became a partner of this firm, and I was born, as I mentioned before,

in 1937, and Hitler's army moved into Prague quite early in 1939, and it took until 1940 for my mother to persuade my father to leave, which we were able to do by leaving everything, and the only place we could go was China, and so that's where we ended up in Shanghai for about nine months, and then in northern China, my father got a position as an engineer with a Swiss firm, and in 1948 the communist army was moving down from the north, and it was clear that there was no room for Caucasians or Europeans, anyone but Chinese to continue living there, so we were fortunate to get visas to the United States, having been on a list to do so for quite a while, and my uncle, my father's brother had been living here in the United States since 1940, so he was helpful in that regard, and we arrived here in November of 1948.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm. So you-- Do you remember living in China as a--

P. SCHULHOF: Oh yes, because I was almost twelve, eleven-and-a-half when we left, so I do have very vivid memories.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm, and I'm just curious. Was the-- What was the languages that were spoken for you?

P. SCHULHOF: Well, I guess this might be of interest, given the purpose of this interview.

SULLIVAN: Mmm-hmm.

P. SCHULHOF: I went to-- the city that we lived in was Tianjin. It was called TienTsin at that time, but the Chinese pronunciation is Tianjin, and there was a relatively large Russian-Jewish population there, people who had immigrated from Siberia, Harbin for business purposes, I guess, originally, and then established themselves there, and had been there for quite a while. My father got this job with the Swiss firm in Tianjin, and so we sort of fit in to that-- to that community, and I went to the Tianjin Jewish school--

SULLIVAN: Oh.

P. SCHULHOF: Where the primary language was English, in answer to your question.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: But of course, we spoke Czech at home, and there was Chinese in the street, and my-- and German was a very universal language at that time for Central

Europeans.

C. SCHOLHOF: And Russian.

P. SCHULHOF: And then I picked up Russian, because everybody around me spoke Russian.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: Fact is that couple of the courses at school were given by teachers who only spoke Russian, so I had no choice [laughter]. So anyhow, but the primary language was English, and if everything had gone smoothly without the communist takeover, the track was for me to finish high school there and then take an exam, and hopefully go to either Cambridge or Stanford. That seemed to be the track, I, for many, for, for a number of people in that school.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: And that never happened, of course, so--

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: I went to school here.

SULLIVAN: And so when you, when your family came to the states, was it New York that you were--

P. SCHULHOF: Yes, my Uncle lived here. By that time, he had moved to a suburb, but we came to New York and lived in Inwood, in the Inwood section of Manhattan.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: From the end of '48 through 1955. My father got a position upstate away in Middletown, New York about 75 miles northwest of New York City, and I went off to college, so they lived in Middletown for the rest of their lives, actually which was quite long. My dad passed away about three years, he was over 101.

SULLIVAN: Wow! [laughter]

P. SCHULHOF: And, my mom passed away about, --

C. SCHULHOF: It'll be two years.

P. SCHULHOF: Two years ago now, and she was ninety-eight. So, they-- but they lived the



rest of their lives in Middle-- They lived in Middletown longer by far than anywhere else, even though they m-- had moved quite a bit around.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm. And then how did you two meet?

C. SCHULHOF: Ah. Because he didn't go to Stanford; he went to Cornell, and so did I [laughter], and that's how we met. [laughter].

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: Yeah, we met, h--

C. SCHULHOF: The great equalizer--

P. SCHULHOF: I guess it was like--

C. SCHULHOF: Our sophomore year?

P. SCHULHOF: Sophomore or junior year--

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: --which would have made it about 1958, and we got married very shortly after grad-- I-I graduated. My course was a five-year engineering course. Carol graduated and got her master's degree, while, well, you were here by that--

C. SCHULHOF: Right.

P. SCHULHOF: And then we were--

C. SCHULHOF: So we got married in '61.

SULLIVAN: What were you studying?

C. SCHULHOF: The course was in child study, child development or family study, and I eventually went back and got a degree in elementary education, and that was the career that I followed for the rest of my life, teaching, and then I became the head of the lower school at Packer [Collegiate Institute].

SULLIVAN: Oh cool.

C. SCHULHOF: So, yeah, so-- it was always that age range of children.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm. And what kind of engineering d--

P. SCHULHOF: Well, I was an electrical engineer following my father's footsteps because I got a big shove in that direction from him [laughter], and I never-- I practiced

engineering maybe for the first five years or so of my career, but then I got into management; I was working primarily for utilities, both facilities located as far as the service areas are concerned in the Midwest headquarters here in New York for some historical reason, and-- and also with Con Edison, and I-- in between, I had worked for a consulting company. So it was engineering-oriented but most of my career was in management.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm. And so, why, when you two were married in 1961, where were you living?

C. SCHULHOF: We were immediately went to Augusta, Georgia--

SULLIVAN: Oh.

C. SCHULHOF: --because Peter was in ac-- taken onto active duty in the army.

P. SCHULHOF: I was in the ROTC program at Cornell. Everybody figured on getting drafted at that point.

C. SCHULHOF: Well, they knew they would get drafted.

P. SCHULHOF: Yeah.

C. SCHULHOF: Mmhmm.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: So I went through the ROTC program. As a result, I became an officer, and immediately after we got married, was-- was sent off to Augusta, Georgia, Fort Gordon, and it was meant to be for six months, but ended up being a year-and-a-half because both the Berlin and the Cuban crisis occurred while I was there.

SULLIVAN: Oh.

P. SCHULHOF: So, when the Cuban crisis hit, I was-- My duffel bag was literally packed, ready to go. Fortunately, n-nothing happened.

C. SCHULHOF: You had a .45.

P. SCHULHOF: Yes.

C. SCHULHOF: Mmhmm, they issued a .45 and off [laughter]

P. SCHULHOF: I was scary. [laughter]

C. SCHULHOF: Yeah. We were quite amused; we'd been watching some-- tapes of the-- well not tapes, DVD's of *Mad Men* [TV series]--

SULLIVAN: Oh yeah.

C. SCHULHOF: Back in the '60s, and they have the whole Cuban Missile Crisis there.

Everyone in the office is, you know, listening and getting very worried about what will happen, and of course, we were right in the middle of it.

P. SCHULHOF: I don't even remember TV flickering so much as it did.

C. SCHULHOF: No, I [inaudible] [laughter], but I do remember being a scary time.

SULLIVAN: Mm hmm.

C. SCHULHOF: Yeah, and also the other interesting aspect of living there was that was pre-integrated South; that was Jim Crow South.

SULLIVAN: Right.

C. SCHULHOF: So this was the last of the segregated er--era. I came there and had my license to teach in New York State, and of course, the requirements in Georgia were a lot less stringent, so I immediately got my Georgia license. They were very happy to have me in the school system, but all of the army wives who were interested in teaching were, sat down in this room where the superintendent of schools told us, "Ladies, you're from the North. You have your ways of doing things; we have our ways of doing things, and as long as you're guests in our house and do things the way we do it, we'll all be happy together."

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: And it was clearly a threat-- [laughter]

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: --that you better do what we do. It was a totally integra-- totally segregated school. All white kids and white teachers--

P. SCHULHOF: Out in the countryside.

C. SCHULHOF: Out in the countryside. The te- the custodian was an African-American man.

P. SCHULHOF: They wouldn't call him that at the time.

C. SCHULHOF: No, he was Nigra, and he and the only integrated thing I ever saw in the South was the chain gang that came to school one day to repair the plumbing, and--

P. SCHULHOF: And the-- and the army post.

C. SCHULHOF: Yes, and the army post, of course because that was that was government. United States government property. And Peter had a friend on the post, an African-American fellow, who came from Mississippi, and or Alabama. I don't remember. Mobile.

P. SCHULHOF: Mobile.

C. SCHULHOF: Ala- Alabama, and he wanted-- we invited him to come to our house, and he said he didn't want any trouble. Was there a back staircase he could come up?

SULLIVAN: Mm.

C. SCHULHOF: And he just, you know, we insisted it would be all right if he came up through the lobby and up the elevators, and he wouldn't do it. He had been so accustomed to keeping things from, you know, boiling over, and-- and that was the time of the lunch counter sit-ins, and so forth, so it was, --

P. SCHULHOF: Well, it was [inaudible] after, yeah.

C. SCHULHOF: Yeah, it was, you know, from a-- from an [inaudible]

P. SCHULHOF: Four, four public bathrooms anywhere you went-- ladies, gentlemen, men and women.

C. SCHULHOF: And you were, you were supposed to know. You nobody had a sign, and there'd be two waiting rooms in the railroad station, and you just had to know.

P. SCHULHOF: And two sets of water fountains.

C. SCHULHOF: Yep. And in the courtroom, we had to go to court over some small fender-bender, and we sat down on the emptier side, and the court proceedings stopped because we had sat down on the African-American side, and we- they waited. They didn't say a word, and we just had to look around and come to realize that [laughter] we'd done something we shouldn't have done--

SULLIVAN: Ah.

C. SCHULHOF: --and picked ourselves up and walked to the other side, so it was just a very-- kind of a weird situation. The streets were not paved in the Black neighborhoods.

P. SCHULHOF: But they were in the White.

C. SCHULHOF: Oh yes.

P. SCHULHOF: Anyhow--

C. SCHULHOF: Anyway, that- that's an interesting time.

P. SCHULHOF: We may be getting a little off track here.

C. SCHULHOF: Right.

SULLIVAN: Yeah, but that's really, it's [inaudible]

C. SCHULHOF: It is interesting. It is interesting, I'm [inaudible]

SULLIVAN: What about being Jewish there?

C. SCHULHOF: There were two synagogues.

P. SCHULHOF: At least! [laughter]

C. SCHULHOF: At least. At least, and I remember we tried both, one was-- they were very religious people who wouldn't had-- had to walk to the synagogue, and the other was a ref--

P. SCHULHOF: On Sabbath.

C. SCHULHOF: Yeah, on the Sabbath, yeah, and the other was a more Reform congregation, but we weren't there really long enough to get terribly involved in either one. Do you remember?

P. SCHULHOF: No, they were quite welcoming, though.

C. SCHULHOF: Yes.

P. SCHULHOF: I mean, they knew we were in the ar--, you know, I was in the army, and they were very-- very nice.

C. SCHULHOF: Very gracious, yeah.

P. SCHULHOF: But we went to some services during holidays, and so on, but we weren't-- w-- we really didn't have the time to get too involved-- nor w-- We weren't there long

enough, number one, and number two, we were just [inaudible] both quite busy.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: But we had, you know, some activity there. As I say, they were quite welcoming.

SULLIVAN: Mmmm.

C. SCHULHOF: And then you'll probably wonder how we ended up in Brooklyn Heights.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: I had a college roommate whose parents lived on Willow Street. They bought a brownstone back in, maybe the early '40s, maybe the late '30s, and she invited me to come for now ha-, this is having grown up in Brooklyn, been here all my life, my mother also really knew very little about Brooklyn Heights, and she invited me for dinner, and we took a walk around the neighborhood, and when Peter got his first job, it was with a company that had offices at Two Broadway, and I said I know where we have to live. You know, it'll be one subway stop away, and that's--

P. SCHULHOF: Yeah, it was a nice neighborhood.

C. SCHULHOF: And very nice neighborhood. Although very small, very limited. The nice neighborhood petered out somewhere around State Street, and the North Heights, you know, and through Montague and up to State Street, and after that, Atlantic Avenue was a little dicey, and you certainly didn't want to go across Atlantic Avenue. [laughter] There was nothing over there. [laughter]

P. SCHULHOF: So it seemed.

C. SCHULHOF: So it seemed. Right. Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: So we ended up, our first home was on Columbia Heights.

P. SCHULHOF: And in this, in a one bedroom apartment.

C. SCHULHOF: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: Very nice apartment.

C. SCHULHOF: Yep. And a very nice part of the Heights, so and I would say significant

changes in that part of the Heights from then until today? No, the Jehovah's Witnesses had already established their headquarters.

P. SCHULHOF: Hmmm, that was quite a while before.

C. SCHULHOF: The buildings that were going to be torn down were torn down. The biggest change was where we live now. We're at 75 Henry Street, which is part of Cadman development, and those, when we first moved here, were all br- small brownstone tenement-type buildings along Henry and along what was then known as Fulton Street. It wasn't Cadman Plaza West--

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: --and those buildings were torn down in an urban renewal effort in the '60s, and I guess everything was demolished, because our building was built in '68.

P. SCHULHOF: Well, it- it's sort of a triangular, sort of triangular area between what is now Cadman Plaza West and Henry Street.

C. SCHULHOF: Henry Street. North-bounded by Clark and south by Middagh.

P. SCHULHOF: No, the other way around.

C. SCHULHOF: Yeah, south by [inaudible]

P. SCHULHOF: Ehh, north h, was, was Middagh--

C. SCHULHOF: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: --and south was Clark Street.

C. SCHULHOF: Mmhmm.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: And you know, there was apparently quite a bit of controversy about that, because some of the buildings were relatively historical in that our building, which is 75 Henry Street is physically located on what was at one time Walt Whitman's place where he published--

SULLIVAN: Oh.

C. SCHULHOF: *Leaves of Grass*.

P. SCHULHOF: *Leaves of Grass*.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: And so that was of historical interest, of course, and then there may have been other buildings as well, but apparently they were all in, you know, bad disrepair--

C. SCHULHOF: And there was a very big-- antique trade there, and when those buildings were torn down, they all went over to Atlantic Avenue, where now you have the antique stores along Atlantic Avenue--

SULLIVAN: Oh yeah.

C. SCHULHOF: --but that's where they started out, along Fulton. The trolley tracks were still in. The street was cobblestone, , what's now Cadman Plaza West, still cobblestone, and it was even when we moved in 1968 to 75 Henry, and then they came and we moved all the cobblestones, took up the trolley tracks, and now I understand they're talking about putting in trolleys again to take people down to the new waterfront park.

SULLIVAN: Oh yeah.

C. SCHULHOF: Yeah. Unfortunately [laughter], the cobblestones and the trolley tracks are gone.

P. SCHULHOF: Yep. Those cobblestones, I think, were imported from Italy, perhaps.

C. SCHULHOF: No, Belgium, I think.

P. SCHULHOF: Belgium. You're right. Right, Belgium.

C. SCHULHOF: They was, yeah, they were Belgium, Belgium blocks, they called it.

SULLIVAN: Oh.

C. SCHULHOF: Yeah. I don't know where they ended up.

P. SCHULHOF: And, we- we were two professional people. Carol was teaching at the time; I was practicing engineering, when we first moved to Brooklyn Heights, and then despite being relatively comfortable, we-- housing was an issue, and this was an opportunity to get relatively affordable housing, but still in the neighborhood that we came to love, so we moved in when it first opened in 1968.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm

P. SCHULHOF: And we've lived there ever since. Not in the same apartment, but we lived in



the same--

C. SCHULHOF: The same building--

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: So it's been a long run.

SULLIVAN: And how did you first come to know about Brooklyn Heights Synagogue?

C. SCHULHOF: Well, I guess when we got here, we wanted to affiliate with some Jewish congregation, and there was nothing else in the Heights. And, the-- absolutely nothing. The Kane Street Synagogue [236 Kane St, Brooklyn] was there, but that was a good ways away over in Cobble Hill, and at the time, as I have said, it was not a neighborhood you just went to, because there was nothing there to go to for, you know, for that, and besides, it was a conservative gr- congregation, and we had been married in a reformed synagogue. I was brought up at Union Temple on [17] Eastern Parkway, which was a Reform congregation, although your background was more Conservative.

P. SCHULHOF: Conservative. Yeah, the, the synagogues that I grew up being part of were all Conservative. In China, it was quite Conservative.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: And we went back there, by the way, what is it now?

C. SCHULHOF: Two years ago.

P. SCHULHOF: Three, I think years ago, back to the city where that I spent about eight years in, and the synagogue still stands, but not being used as such. Anyhow, so that was conservative, as was the first congregation my parents joined in Inwood. And then also the congregation in Middletown was a Conservative one, although I just came there from time to time since I was away. So that was my background, but we sort of decided that the more reformed approach was what we would be both comfortable with.

C. SCHULHOF: Well, also, that was the group that was form- formed here in the neighborhood.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: At least that's what we had heard.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: And I'm not sure how we knew--

P. SCHULHOF: It was barely, barely beginning, I think, because--

C. SCHULHOF: Yeah.

P. SCHULHOF: I think they started in '61, and we arrived in '63, so shortly thereafter we were looking around, and came to understand that this congregation existed, so we joined up, and-- and you maybe remember better than I, Carol, where they were located when we first joined up.

C. SCHULHOF: Yeah, it seemed to me that the first place we went to services was at what was called then the Spencer Memorial Church.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm

C. SCHULHOF: I don't know if you've heard that from anyone else.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: You have. And it is now a cooperative apartment house. It's at the corner of Clinton and Remsen, and I don't remember being there very long, do you?

P. SCHULHOF: No.

C. SCHULHOF: And I do remember--

P. SCHULHOF: Sort of bounced around quite a bit.

C. SCHULHOF: Right. I do remember there was some controversy, and I'm not sure if you'll hear this from anyone else; it's possible, but you know, but I-I think there were two ministers in the congregation, and one was very happy to have the Jewish congregation, and the other minister was not so happy about it, and I think that's why we didn't stay very long.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: And, the high holiday services I remember at the Bossert Hotel, and I- That was for a number of years, I think, and we entered from the back. There was a door on, that must also be Remsen Street, and there was a big auditorium hall, and so forth. I

also remember going to services at the Grace Church parish house. Now whether that was regular services or just the high holidays.

P. SCHULHOF: No, that was the high holidays.

C. SCHULHOF: You think so?

P. SCHULHOF: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: Very long, skinny room. Do you remember that?

P. SCHULHOF: Yes. Yes.

C. SCHULHOF: Yep.

SULLIVAN: Where's the Grace church?

C. SCHULHOF: Grace Church is on Grace Court, and the corner of-

P. SCHULHOF: Is it Joralemon?

C. SCHULHOF: Hicks.

SULLIVAN: Oh.

C. SCHULHOF: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: Gra-, yeah Grace Court and Hicks, right.

C. SCHULHOF: Yes, and Hicks. Right. And-- and then of course, it was a big deal when the congregation got into the present building, and--

P. SCHULHOF: Well, there wasn't a present building first.

C. SCHULHOF: No, the former building, also on Remsen Street. I'm just looking for something here.

P. SCHULHOF: I am trying to remember the name of the first Rabbi that I recall.

C. SCHULHOF: Yeah, Rab- Michael Gelber [1965 Rabbi S. Michael Gelber]

P. SCHULHOF: Gelber was his name, yeah, and he was like part-time.

C. SCHULHOF: Yes, because our first fulltime rabbi was Rick Jacobs but Michael Gelber was the rabbi, I do remember, and that was with, somehow associated with the Spencer Memorial Church--

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: And, in '74, we went into the building at Remsen Street, 117 Remsen Street, and the rabbi we remember from there was Albert 'Al' Lowenberg [1975 Rabbi Albert J. Lowenberg], and I also remember his wife quite well. Her name was Ruth, and she was a teacher in the religious school, and our kids--well my son, particularly--adored her. In- probably started in 1976, when he was six years old, and she was his teacher, so that I remember as being, he liked that very much. Our daughter was bat-mitzvahed at 117 Remsen Street, and I have all these things here to remind me of dates and so forth, and that was May 12th, 1979.

SULLIVAN: Ah.

C. SCHULHOF: Yeah.

SULLIVAN: So when were your children born?

C. SCHULHOF: Julia was born 1966 and Paul in 1970, and I found a little Synagogue bulletin from that-- that occasion, and I thought it was just, you know, interesting to see that that was the rabbi was Albert J. Lowenberg and assisted by Cantor David Weissman. Now I don't know if these things have any interest to you for Xeroxing--

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: Or

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: Um.

SULLIVAN: Possibly. I know that-- that I read a bunch of the, there are some archived copies of-

C. SCHULHOF: There are. Mmhmm.

SULLIVAN: Yeah, I don't remember.

C. SCHULHOF: Ok. Yeah. And, so that was, you know, the-- that was her. By the time our son was bar-mitzvahed in 1983, it was Rabbi Rick Jacobs, and he adored Rabbi Rick, and his- both of them, the - cerem- services were at the Synagogue, and in Julia's case, the Synagogue was relatively new in '79.

P. SCHULHOF: The building wasn't.

C. SCHULHOF: The building was old. The facility was not particularly of capable, for instance, of having a party.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: So we went offsite, you know, for a luncheon, but by the time our son was bar-mitzvahed in '83, the, the party was held at the Synagogue. There was a space downstairs. I was interested in looking at the pictures of the Synagogue in 1983. We still had chairs on the main floor, and--

P. SCHULHOF: Not pews.

C. SCHULHOF: N-not pews, and my husband doesn't remember this, but I do. One summer-- some member of the congregation was up in New England, and there was a church that was deconsecrated, and they were selling off the pews from the church.

SULLIVAN: Oh.

C. SCHULHOF: And [laughter] the, um, this congregant, I guess, must have felt that this would be wonderful in the Synagogue, and was generous enough to buy it and send it back to Brooklyn, and I believe the new, the synagogue that took over, the-- from the Brooklyn Heights Synagogue.

P. SCHULHOF: Oh.

C. SCHULHOF: I don't know, what- whatever they--

P. SCHULHOF: At 117.

C. SCHULHOF: 117. Still has those pews. Good old beautiful oak from some church in New England, and I'm not sure who that person was, but maybe you'll come across them in your--

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: In your memories. And, can't say, when do you think we started going to the Plymouth Church [75 Hicks Street] for high holidays. Must have been back in the 80's.

P. SCHULHOF: [inaudible] I'm not sure exactly which year.

C. SCHULHOF: But that certainly is, was--

P. SCHULHOF: Because there are so many more people who attend those, and they do, they

have regular services during the year that, they couldn't be accommodated at the Synagogue.

C. SCHULHOF: But of course, the congregation has grown tremendously since the-- these early days, and the numbers of children who, are being bar- and bat-mitvahed are, you know, three times as many as they used to be, so--

P. SCHULHOF: Some multiple.

C. SCHULHOF: Some multiple, anyway [laughter]. It certainly seemed as though we had no issue with, choosing dates, and so forth. There weren't just that many kids there. Classes, if I remember correctly, were small. There were maybe 12, 13 kids at the most in their age cohort, and I know that there are huge amounts, numbers of kids, today. And they also didn't start going until they were six years old. There was no preschool and no activities for very young children, so.

P. SCHULHOF: Much more formal at this point, not-- not super formal, but much more formal than it was when our kids were young and growing up, and--

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm. Can you tell me more about that, that early community when you first started going there in the '60s?

P. SCHULHOF: My recollection was that-- first of all, there's a small group numbering probably less than a hundred, and there tend to be-- they tended to be older, I think. We were--

C. SCHULHOF: Well, yeah, there we were, we were the kids--

P. SCHULHOF: We were among the young- youngsters.

C. SCHULHOF: You know, who were arrived, and--

P. SCHULHOF: No, but we weren't kids. We were in our twenties [laughter].

C. SCHULHOF: We were. We were [inaudible], right, and our and-- and numbers of our friends, joined too, some of our good friends.

P. SCHULHOF: Oh yeah. Unfortunately for us, they, many of them have moved away from the city. They're all over the country.

C. SCHULHOF: And, and, there's, right, there's one couple who you might be interested in

reaching out to. They no longer are members of the Synagogue. They've affiliated with the Kane Street synagogue. Their names are Ron and Marion Stein, and they live on Douglas Street now, and I can even give you their phone number: [redacted for privacy] and Marion said she would be very happy to speak with you, and I think she remembers more than I do.

P. SCHULHOF: Maybe.

C. SCHULHOF: She got very active with the religious school committee. She felt the education was not rigorous enough and told the rabbi that she thought that there should be, you know, a more rigorous Jewish education, and I think they agreed [laughter], and she would-- she was helping out, so they might be interesting for you to, --

P. SCHULHOF: To reach out to.

C. SCHULHOF: Yeah.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm. When did they switch over to Kane Street?

C. SCHULHOF: Hmmm.

P. SCHULHOF: It's a while now. I'm not sure, but it probably around--

C. SCHULHOF: Had to be 20 years ago.

P. SCHULHOF: 20 years ago.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: Yeah, I think that, the-- they tended to get more involved and more strict in their religious observance, and I don't think after a while that the-- that the Brooklyn Heights Synagogue met their needs, and-- so they, they changed, and at this point, I think they're much more committed than we are, for instance, so--

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: Yeah, but they'd be very happy to see what they can fill in for you.

SULLIVAN: Great, thank you.

C. SCHULHOF: Mmhmm.

SULLIVAN: What did, how did Brooklyn Heights Synagogue compare to what you had

grown up with at Union?

C. SCHULHOF: Oh my goodness! Well, Union Temple was enormous, and it was one of those very austere congregations, and the Reform movement, I don't know if you know this, it grew out of a movement in Germany, and frankly, by the time I remember the services at the-- at the Union Temple, the rabbi did not wear a yarmulke. He wore robes that looked pretty much like a protestant minister. I think everything was in English. There was an organ playing. I think you would be hard-pressed, if you walked in to figure out really what was, you know, going on. I think that what happened with the reform movement is that it went very far into being so assimilated that it almost, you know, went over the edge of, well, is this still a Jewish service? And, so that's what I remember. We did not have bar- and bat-mitzvahs. We were confirmed when we were 15, and My-, I guess my brother did. My brother had a bar-mitzvah, but the girls were not bat-mitzvahed; they were confirmed, and so it was very heavy on stories and, the Bible, but very little Hebrew, and I still can't find my way around, the way my husband can, and my kids with Hebrew.

P. SCHULHOF: The rabbi who married us at Union Temple was asked by my father, had to be asked to wear a yarmulke--

C. SCHULHOF: Would he wear a yarmulke, and he said "Oh sure, you know, if that's what your family would like." You know, but, --

P. SCHULHOF: So--

C. SCHULHOF: It was a very different experience. And the Brooklyn Heights Synagogue has always been a very liberal congregation, and women started taking lead roles early on. I think we remember most of the cantors were women, and-- and women were called, up to the bema, and they participated in the reading from the Torah, and all these kinds of things. I don't think and women started being presidents of the congregation, and, it was always extremely liberal, and I do know that my husband's family's congregation, it wasn't until very, very recently that women were-- were coming up to read from the Torah, for instance, and we also had a woman rabbi at one



point, so, you know, that was--

P. SCHULHOF: Oh yeah.

C. SCHULHOF: Remember her?

P. SCHULHOF: Sure.

C. SCHULHOF: So that was, certainly very different than--

P. SCHULHOF: That's changed quite a bit generally, but especially that time, this was quite we felt more comfortable with this than we did in other places, as a family.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm. What about was at that time. What about yarmulkes and tallit at Brooklyn Heights?

P. SCHULHOF: It was all by choice, and some people wore them, and some people did not.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: It was fine.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: Yep. And also, it was definitely a place that was welcoming to families of mixed marriages.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: And the children were always welcome in the religious school, even if it wasn't the mother who was Jewish, if it was the father who was Jewish. And that was, you know, definitely the case, although I know for a fact that the rabbis wouldn't marry a mixed couple, a mixed marriage couple.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: But they would, you know, accept the children.

P. SCHULHOF: Yeah, Jewish tradition, you-- you may know all this, but Jewish tradition is based on the fa- on the situation, is geared to the woman as far as that's concerned. If the woman is Jewish, the children are Jewish, by definition.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: But not the other way around. But that's not the way this Synagogue approached things.

C. SCHULHOF: Or many synagogues--

P. SCHULHOF: Yeah.

C. SCHULHOF: Feel that one parent, I would say the biggest change came when Rick Jacobs became the rabbi. He was a fulltime rabbi, and he started doing much more in terms of community outreach.

P. SCHULHOF: Right.

C. SCHULHOF: And, that was--

P. SCHULHOF: It was not only services at the Synagogue and religious school at the Synagogue. It was a broadening of the role of the congregation, and I think that's been carried forward since then.

C. SCHULHOF: Oh, definitely, yeah.

SULLIVAN: So what kind of things did he start or bring in?

C. SCHULHOF: Well, I'm not sure. The homeless shelter, I think, was his idea because I know that came--

P. SCHULHOF: Yeah.

C. SCHULHOF: Yeah, in '82, right before he came, but that was, you know, that was carried forward--

P. SCHULHOF: He also reached out to other religious organizations. There was a--

C. SCHULHOF: Oh, interfaith service

P. SCHULHOF: Interfaith, kind of, you know meetings and activities. I don't remember the specific organizations that he--

C. SCHULHOF: That he was involved with?

P. SCHULHOF: Involved with. He also was an artist--

C. SCHULHOF: He was a dancer.

P. SCHULHOF: Dancer. Well, that's an artist [laughter], and sort of included that as part of his services sometimes and brought in cantors who played the guitar music. It became quite important.

C. SCHULHOF: Very charismatic guy [inaudible] [laughter].

P. SCHULHOF: He, as far as we're concerned, unfortunately, got himself a much bigger position with the-- with the congregation in Westchester that was much more-- much bigger at the time, and still is, I'm sure.

C. SCHULHOF: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: Quite affluent and, I'm sure he's done well.

SULLIVAN: So you would have liked for him to stay?

C. SCHULHOF: Oh yeah, we were, well, everybody was delighted with him, but you know.

P. SCHULHOF: Well, that's not, that's not, that's not to be negative about the people who followed him--

C. SCHULHOF: Right.

P. SCHULHOF: But he was just, unusual.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm. That's interesting to hear, because when-, in reading through some of the archives, there's a letter that he wrote to the congregation that looks like he was saying, you know, "I can be a dancer and/or a rabbi, and I like to intertwine these things, so it sounded like maybe there was some--

C. SCHULHOF: Controversy?

SULLIVAN: Yeah, so, you know--

C. SCHULHOF: [inaudible] There could have been from the older people. There was another rabbi we remember there, a part time rabbi whose name was David Glazer, who also--

P. SCHULHOF: I think he preceded Rick Jacobs.

C. SCHULHOF: Yeah, and he, I think, why do I think he was also a dancer?

P. SCHULHOF: I'm not sure. I think you may be right, but I'm not--

C. SCHULHOF: Yeah.

P. SCHULHOF: At any event--

C. SCHULHOF: [laughter] It was interesting--

P. SCHULHOF: Any change is always difficult for some people, and I think that--

C. SCHULHOF: And Rick at the time was a very young man, and I'm not sure, you know,

whether people accepted him, the older people, but as far as the younger members of the congregation and the kids adored him, so that was very positive. I know he would have liked to have had a much bigger place, and when the congregation was looking around, I know they looked at the church that Packer owned on Clinton Street, and he thought that would have been nifty, but that was not to be.

SULLIVAN: What is it that happened with that, because I see also in the notes, "Checking out the church, checking out the church," and then all of a sudden, it's the new building [laughter].

C. SCHULHOF: Yeah. I think they found out it was going to be too much of a financial commitment. The building itself actually, the church itself doesn't have any plumbing in it.

SULLIVAN: Oh.

C. SCHULHOF: I don't know whether the heating was--

P. SCHULHOF: Didn't.

C. SCHULHOF: Did not!

P. SCHULHOF: Didn't, did not, did not. It certainly has plumbing now.

C. SCHULHOF: And the Pa-, Oh yeah, well now it's being used as part of Packer, and it was completely gutted, and, you know, not completely, but it was certainly--

P. SCHULHOF: Well, it was, If I remember correctly, it was over-- at that time, over a million dollars just to fix the exterior of that church in order to satisfy the code because it was going to fall down.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: Pieces of it were going to fall down, so right off the bat, you had a for what at that time was a very large amount, still is, I guess, a million dollars, but it was, I think it was more than that--

C. SCHULHOF: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: to just do that. And then just had enough good shell, and so it was a, you know, very expensive proposition.

C. SCHULHOF: And I don't think the congregation was large enough to deal with such a commitment and then they found the building on Remsen Street, which I think was more doable in terms of the condition of the building plus the ability of the congregation to pay for it.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: And, yeah, well Packer went through many, many years of trying to find a solution to the church, and that kept coming up until finally someone said, "Well, we need space. We'll use it." Well, now, have you ever been in the new--

SULLIVAN: No, I haven't.

C. SCHULHOF: You should ask--

SULLIVAN: I walk passed it.

C. SCHULHOF: Oh, you should ask to go have a tour. It's quite.

P. SCHULHOF: It's, it's quite [inaudible]

C. SCHULHOF: Quite a--

P. SCHULHOF: What they basically did with that shell is to build inside of it a glass cylinder, a [inaudible]--

C. SCHULHOF: Yeah.

P. SCHULHOF: which has a number of floors, and the church's interior was quite beautiful, and it--

C. SCHULHOF: And it's still there, until--

P. SCHULHOF: And it was fixed up, redone, and now the top floor is very close to the top of the building, so the beams and what have you are not within reach, but very close, and--

SULLIVAN: Oh.

C. SCHULHOF: It's very attractive. It worked out really well.

P. SCHULHOF: Kids love it, because it reminds them of--What's the name of that, --

C. SCHULHOF: Ohh, yeah, Hogwarts [laughter].

SULLIVAN: Yeah, from *Harry Potter*?

C. SCHULHOF: Yeah. [laughter] Right. Yep.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: So, everybody got the solution, and that was way too big of an undertaking, I think.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: So.

P. SCHULHOF: Yeah, and we're still, and still is a relatively small congregation compared to others--

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: so that was, it was dollars and cents that caused that make the decision to be made, I believe.

SULLIVAN: Did you know the founders, the original founders, Belle and Bob Huffman?

C. SCHULHOF: Belle and Rubin Huffman, yes.

SULLIVAN: Rubin, yes.

C. SCHULHOF: Yeah, yes, certainly everybody knew them.

P. SCHULHOF: Yeah, as a matter of fact--

C. SCHULHOF: Unfortunately, poor Belle Hoffman came to my son's Bar-Mitvah in 1983 to present some gift from the Sisterhood, and fell on her way down the aisle and broke her hip.

SULLIVAN: Oh no!

C. SCHULHOF: So yes, "Oh no" is right. For my kids, Belle Huffman lighting the Shabbat candles and saying the blessing was like part of their understanding of what a service should be, and they really missed her when she was gone. So yep, and-- it's interesting this friend I told you about from college whose parents lived on Willow Street. Her parents, Carl and Rose Pickard, P-I-C-K-A-R-D, were original members. Now they were not founding members, but I think they were early members of the Synagogue.

P. SCHULHOF: I don't even remember that.

C. SCHULHOF: You don't remember that? Yep. And my obstetrician, actually, a Doctor

Simon Broady [phonetic]. Do you remember he was a member of the Synagogue? And a lovely man.

P. SCHULHOF: He's probably passed away.

C. SCHULHOF: Oh, long, long ago. He was not a youngster in those days. They've all passed away, but so those people I remember, and of course—um, what's his name-- Ruth Levinson--

P. SCHULHOF: Yeah. Stanley Levinson.

C. SCHULHOF: Stanley Levinson, whose mother, apparently, was--and I don't remember her.

P. SCHULHOF: And, of course, there was Norman Mailer's mother.

C. SCHULHOF: Right.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: [laughter]

C. SCHULHOF: I remember her. Never saw Norman.

P. SCHULHOF: No, I--

C. SCHULHOF: I don't think he ever darkened the door [laughter]. Who else do we remember from the early-- Oh, and then there were the Cohens, Jack and Marion Cohen, who--She just recently passed away. I believe he's still alive.

P. SCHULHOF: And then there were very close friends who joined either at the same time, or very soon thereafter. Their names were Ron and Rose Novak, N-O-V-A-K. They live in Wyoming now.

C. SCHULHOF: And then we mentioned the Stein's, who were also early on.

P. SCHULHOF: Yeah, so. We all lived in the same building on Columbia Heights; that's how we got to know each other, and we were all part of that congregation pretty early on. So that's about all I can remember.

C. SCHULHOF: Mm.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm. Who were some, you've mentioned a lot of people, so taking notes on that, are there other sort of key people in your perspective of the Synagogue?

C. SCHULHOF: Well, there were, The Avram family was very active. Still, I think they are.

The parents, and they had four kids, and, --

P. SCHULHOF: But that was later on. I don't know what period you're--

C. SCHULHOF: Yeah. Well the very early period in-- Avrams, and I can't remember what he was doctor. Do you remember?

P. SCHULHOF: What?

C. SCHULHOF: H-His name?

P. SCHULHOF: Mmm, no. We didn't really know them personally very much.

C. SCHULHOF: No, but they were definitely pillars of the Synagogue. I think they gave a lot of money. Who else do we remember that were.

P. SCHULHOF: You know, it depends on how far back you wanna go.

C. SCHULHOF: Mmmm.

P. SCHULHOF: I don't remember too many people beyond the ones we mentioned going back quite a ways.

C. SCHULHOF: That was pretty early on, --

P. SCHULHOF: Yeah, the thing is that I think, to, you know, what we can contribute here that perhaps others can't is some little bits and pieces of the earlier days, even though our memories, perhaps, are not as clear as they, you know, might be, but for the more recent times, I'm sure you have plenty of information from others as well.

C. SCHULHOF: Mmhmm.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm. What about-- you mentioned some interfaith stuff. What about the Synagogue's relationship with other Jewish organizations or institutions in- in Brooklyn and- and national?

P. SCHULHOF: I can't-- I mean, naturally, of course, it's MAZAN [Jewish Response to Hunger] and --

C. SCHULHOF: Well, the Reform Jewish organization--

P. SCHULHOF: Yes, part of--

C. SCHULHOF: We always were. All the way back--



P. SCHULHOF: Yes, part of the formal reform movement organization in the United States, but I don't recall any, you know, like one-to-one kind of-- That doesn't mean it didn't happen--

C. SCHULHOF: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: But we just may not remember them more-- maybe we weren't involved.

SULLIVAN: What about for you transitioning from a Conservative background to a Reform synagogue?

P. SCHULHOF: It took a little getting used to, because there wasn't nearly as much English in, in, in, in the tradition that I was brought up in. As a matter of fact, it was none [laughter]. In the early part of that, it was, if anything it was Russian.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: If there was anything beyond Hebrew as part of the service. But even after we arrived in the United States, the congregation was quite Conservative, and, the, the, the tunes were different, somewhat. Some were sung, some were not. Mostly Hebrew, not so much English, very little English. And here in this congregation, it was quite the way around; it was mostly English with some Hebrew, and as I said, tunes were somewhat different, so it took a little getting used to, but it wasn't like, you know, 180 degrees out of phase or anything.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: So I, I, you know, I got used to it to the point now where I'm not as comfortable going back to the conservative synagogue. It's just a matter of what one gets used to.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm. Was there other people that-- that were from a conservative upbringing that were there?

C. SCHULHOF: Definitely. Yeah.

P. SCHULHOF: Oh yeah, most of the friends we talked about, I think that was the case in every one of them.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: For every one of them.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: You know, it was a matter of-- of not only changing one's perspective, perhaps, but also a practical aspect of it that that was what was here, and-- and there's a great advantage to being able to walk three blocks instead of t, you know, commuting to--

C. SCHULHOF: Well, and, and know the other people will be people from the neighborhood also.

P. SCHULHOF: Yeah, and people who there was some commonality with not just on a religious basis, but generally.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm. Can you elaborate on that a bit? The commonality?

P. SCHULHOF: Well, I guess the starting point is we all live in Brooklyn Heights, so we had a lot in common in that regard, and I guess I may be wrong, but I guess the Heights attracts a certain kind of person with interests that are more common to our interests were.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: I don't-- One can't make that blanket statement, obviously; there's a whole spectrum of different types of people in Brooklyn, there's a general thing. So, you know, they had similar cultural interests, I'm talking beyond the religious aspects of being part of the congregation, and similar ideas about how to bring up children, and so on, so there was. Do you agree?

C. SCHULHOF: I agree. Mmhmm. Yeah. You know, what, what, where you placed your values, where you decided what was important, and what was not, and it was definitely not a group of people who did things because it looked good. You know, that was definitely not the way. And very family-oriented--

P. SCHULHOF: Good points.

C. SCHULHOF: Yeah. And I would say the interesting thing is that all of our friends from those early days in the Synagogue and other people we know-- The divorce rate was

very, very low.

SULLIVAN: Mmmm.

C. SCHULHOF: And, h--

P. SCHULHOF: For whatever reason.

C. SCHULHOF: [laughter] For whatever reason, they're all still together. And, and, you know, and in some cases, haven't moved around very much. Others, rec- more recently, they have, but, you know, it was a pretty stable group of people.

P. SCHULHOF: Yeah, I would say, so from the early '60's until mid-'80's the same core group of friends that we had who belonged to the Synagogue were still in the Heights.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: So it was a good twenty-some years, , and then as they got a little older, and started to think about retirement and so on forth, and [inaudible] perhaps more affluent and were able to afford second homes and so on, they got a little more dispersed.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm. And would your kids all know each other and be doing similar things?

C. SCHULHOF: Oh absolutely, yeah.

P. SCHULHOF: And they still do.

C. SCHULHOF: They were very good friends, and they still are, and you know, that's, that was interesting, too.

P. SCHULHOF: Yeah. Our kids happen to live in the Heights.

SULLIVAN: Oh they do?

C. SCHULHOF: Mmhmm.

SULLIVAN: Oh wow!

C. SCHULHOF: Yep. They didn't go very far [laughter].

P. SCHULHOF: Not yet.

C. SCHULHOF: And we know many people whose kids were brought up here, the kids find their way back if they can--

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: They have happy memories of it.

SULLIVAN: And are your kids, are they members of the Synagogue?

C. SCHULHOF: No, no.

P. SCHULHOF: No.

SULLIVAN: Are they going elsewhere?

C. SCHULHOF: No, they're, they--

P. SCHULHOF: No.

C. SCHULHOF: weren't happy with the way the services were. They would come along with us. They didn't care for it, and, and, and frankly, they haven't found a way to somewhere else, because that would take a little more of an effort, so.

P. SCHULHOF: Yeah, I, I guess as a general matter at least in our case, in our family, and perhaps others, the interest in, formal, formal religion has waned.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm. And did they have kids. Do you have grandkids?

C. SCHULHOF: We do. We have one granddaughter who's three-and-a-half, and you know, we'll see whether she, they affiliate. Her mother is not Jewish, and they have, you know, celebrate holidays with us, and have gone to the Synagogue with us, but I have-- We don't have a clear picture as to what will happen.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: Mmhmm. So.

SULLIVAN: Tell me, is there a certain moment or event or time that stands out to you where you felt most connected to the Synagogue?

C. SCHULHOF: I think it was the years when the kids were in the religious school. I was on the religious school committee. And I do think that that's a time when, when people feel most connected; when they have young children and through their years of bar-and bat-mitzvah and teenage years, and we definitely were much more active then, wouldn't you say?

P. SCHULHOF: Oh, absolutely.

C. SCHULHOF: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: My experience with older people, namely my parents was that, that was probably the truth for them as well, but then they got much more active when they got quite a bit older again.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: I'm not sure exactly why but one could con--, you know, have some [inaudible]

C. SCHULHOF: Can speculate, right [laughter]?

P. SCHULHOF: Can speculate about that [laughter]. And that's probably true for more than just my parents.

C. SCHULHOF: Mmhmm. Yeah. And, at this point, I would say that you particularly don't feel you know too many people in the Synagogue.

P. SCHULHOF: Yeah, unfortunately that's true, that's not, that's not anybody's fault--

C. SCHULHOF: [laughter] Not their fault; it's our fault. I, on the other hand, probably know more people, simply because of my affiliation for twenty-eight years with Packer, which meant that I, you know, knew their families and their kids through their regular schooling, so that was, you know, a slightly different story.

P. SCHULHOF: I couldn't her anywhere in the world without someone saying "Mrs. Schulhof" [laughter].

C. SCHULHOF: This is true [laughter].

SULLIVAN: Actually that reminds me: In, in reading through the archives, there was--I think it was noted in one of the newsletters that Packer had celebrated Hanukkah for the first time?

C. SCHULHOF: Right. Rick came.

SULLIVAN: Oh, can you tell me about that?

C. SCHULHOF: Well, that was a big because Packer, our first experience with Packer goes back to our daughter, and she must have gone there in 1977, and they still used-- sang Christian hymns in the chapel, and I came as a teacher in 1978, and they still had what

was known as the Christmas pageant, and that was every year, the Nativity, and so forth, and kids would say to me, "It's always the same!" [laughter] Yes, it's always the same. And, there and so, you know, for those years when I first came there, there didn't seem to be any big movement to sort of—not that they didn't recognize the fact that the school was diverse. It was diverse, and they would talk about how there were so many different languages spoken, and so forth, but it was diverse, but the only holidays that were celebrated were the Christian holidays, and that was a big deal when Rick came and, and had this Hanukkah celebrational, and again because he was such a charismatic guy, I think it, the kids were, were taken with that, and, and then life changes, and I do think that as the '70s wore on into the '80s there was a more of an effort to reach out and understand that there was diversity, and we started having the Hanukkah Menorah, the Kwanzaa candles, and the Christmas decorations all together, and clearly singing songs the kids sang at their winter celebration, and at some point-- I'm not exactly sure where it was--the fact that it was quote "Christmas holidays" changed to "winter holidays", and "Easter holiday" changed to "spring holiday", so it became much more--

P. SCHULHOF: Accepting.

C. SCHULHOF: welcoming and accepting. As I say, it was always diverse, but it was diverse in, within a very uni-dimensional atmosphere, you know--

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: but then it really changed tremendously, so there's-- I'm sure today. Well, I've been there as recently as '06, and it was extremely welcoming to every group, even groups that weren't involved [laughter]--

SULLIVAN: Mmmm.

C. SCHULHOF: so that the children would understand different backgrounds.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: You know, so.

P. SCHULHOF: From what you've described, that didn't make everybody happy at the time.

C. SCHULHOF: No. No change makes everybody happy.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: Right.

C. SCHULHOF: But--

SULLIVAN: What kind of ris-- you mean, like faculty, or who those

C. SCHULHOF: No, no, not the faculty, but alums who remember the old days, and this wasn't how it was done, but I remember a woman who, whose family gave a great deal of money, for the children's library at, at the lower school library at Packer, and the family came to speak, and they talked about their mother, and the fact that there's Brooklyn Day. I don't, you know about Brooklyn Day, and it's a school holiday here in Brooklyn and Queens, and what it was originally was a church holiday, and the children--

SULLIVAN: Oh really?

C. SCHULHOF: Yeah, and the children in all the congregations, they would have picnics, and they would go out and have this kind of picnic, and they said that their mother was not allowed to participate in this--whatever it was--because she was a Unitarian, and the Unitarians weren't really Christian, because they didn't believe that Jesus was the messiah, and so she was discriminated against and could not join the other children; they went to some kind of a picnic, all the little girls at Packer, and she, she was not allowed to go, and I would imagine if there were any Jewish kids at the time, they wouldn't have been allowed to go, too, but I thought it was striking that even, you know, someone who was Unitarian wasn't allowed to participate, so life changes tremendously, and that was really struck me as being something that I thought wow, you know, this goes back to the early nineteenth century.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: So we've talked--

C. SCHULHOF: Early twentieth century.

P. SCHULHOF: We've talked about a number of things today about things that divide

people, you know, with the segregated South, and all that that you just described.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: Hopefully that's changing.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: Or has changed.

C. SCHULHOF: Definitely that, I would say we feel that is the biggest change. The other big change that of course happened with Brooklyn is Brooklyn was, you know, Brooklyn, and now Brooklyn is Brooklyn [laughter]!

SULLIVAN: I get what you mean, but elaborate.

C. SCHULHOF: Elaborate on it? Well, you, if, if you said you lived in Brooklyn, you would get a very strange look.

P. SCHULHOF: A snicker.

C. SCHULHOF: A snicker [laughter]. "Oh, Brooklyn?" So that people took to saying that they lived in Brooklyn Heights. "Oh, oh, Brooklyn Heights," and you would get that kind of a-- you know, but the rest of Brooklyn was considered no-man's land. It was a vast wasteland, and who would wanna live there if you--

P. SCHULHOF: Now, Brooklyn--

C. SCHULHOF: could possibly live in Manhattan.

P. SCHULHOF: Yeah. Brooklyn--not that I was that--well, I was gonna say I wasn't that familiar with it, but that's not really t-true, because I traveled from Inwood to Brooklyn Tech. During my high school years, I went to Brooklyn Tech.

SULLIVAN: Oh, Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: but Brooklyn was a-- has changed quite a bit, you know, since '48 when we arrived, until now, has changed tremendously, over 60 years, of course, but in the scheme of things, that's not all that long. But it was very middle class-- not all of it, but very large sections of Brooklyn were, you know, lower, lower middle class, middle class families and relatively low rise housing, different ethnic groups, of course, but there was that general middle class aspect of it, and that changed over the years, and, and it



got to be, you know, more-- there are a lot of poor--economically poor areas during the '70s.

C. SCHULHOF: Well, what happened was that the families, many families migrated to the suburbs, leaving the relatively rich and the relatively poor behind.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: And also, the racial mix was quite different partly because of that very same reason. Anyhow, and then that changed again, and w- it's still in the process of changing, where, I think, many neighborhoods now are considered quite viable, quite interesting, thriving, that never were before. Artists have a lot to do with that. Poor artists; wherever they move turns out to be chic, and they can't afford it anymore [laughter]. But Brooklyn Heights has been relatively stable throughout all this time, I mean--

C. SCHULHOF: Right, but the neighborhood just got bigger and bigger and bigger.

P. SCHULHOF: Well, no

C. SCHULHOF: Yeah, yeah.

P. SCHULHOF: The Heights itself is still the Heights, right?

C. SCHULHOF: E-exactly, but then--

P. SCHULHOF: I mean, real estate agents may call everything around it [laughter] the Heights, but it's still, --

C. SCHULHOF: Right, but it was surrounded by DUMBO, industrial area, by Cobble Hill, which was relatively marginal, and, --

P. SCHULHOF: I-I think you'd have some argnt on that part.

C. SCHULHOF: Oh, I don't know. We had friends who moved to Cobble Hill, bought a brownstone and probably in the early '80s, and they had to deal with what was known in the neighborhood as the Stoopies [phonetic]. They would sit on the stoops smoking marijuana, and [laughter] carrying on and right in the schoolyard of PS 29 down in Cobble Hill, and you know, it was not exactly the kind of thing that you want your kids out on the street playing with these guys, and, and, and those were, the challenges of

brownstone, you know, pioneers in those days, and you know, Smith Street, my god. Nobody would walk on Smith Street. [laughter] Smith Street, you know, places that certainly there would be no reason to go there, and if you did, it wasn't particularly safe. I remember Marquet, the bakery was the first one that opened over there, and some of the, you know, r-, early, the restaurants in the early days, but and so, Brooklyn, really had a renaissance, and so many neighborhoods have become attractive. Again, Park Slope was a small core neighborhood in the North Slope, and it's just spread, you know, completely, Fort Greene, you went to school there. It was--

P. SCHULHOF: Well, in Brooklyn Tech--

C. SCHULHOF: Tech [inaudible]

P. SCHULHOF: borders on, on the F-Fort Greene neighborhood.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: And, yeah, it was a place that I got out of the subway, walked a block to get into school in mid-r-reverse. I-I didn't feel comfortable walking around in that area.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm. Why? What was it, was it--

P. SCHULHOF: It was kind of rough, you know. A lot, of course, has to do with economics, so, so, poverty doesn't breed good behavior. Let's put it that way [laughter].

C. SCHULHOF: [inaudible] can, can be a problem.

P. SCHULHOF: Yeah, so I mean, there were movie theaters there that, you know, would not be pleasant to go into, and, and generally, it was kind of down in the dump, that, that area.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm. Who was living there at that time?

P. SCHULHOF: You know, I can't tell you, I-I just don't know. I mean, as I say it was four years there, and that was not where I knew much about Brooklyn,

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: And there was a prejudice about Brooklyn. It was a general, it was a general thing.

C. SCHULHOF: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: I mean, I remember my father saying, he read something about Brooklyn in the National Geographic while we were still living in China, and the impression he got was "Brooklyn, whooo!" [laughter]

C. SCHULHOF: And everybody--

SULLIVAN: Even in China.

C. SCHULHOF: Right.

P. SCHULHOF: That's right.

C. SCHULHOF: And everybody speaks peculiarly, and the Brooklyn accent, the Brooklyn Dodgers, so you know, it was, it was definitely not the place to live, and then it changed in the last 15 years--

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: and, and I think all the Brooklyn cultural institutions profited by it. The Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Brooklyn Museum, the Botanic Gardens, and so forth, all--

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: I'm sure you're quite aware of that.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: Yeah, mm hmm, yeah, a big change, and all the independent schools, too, who benefited by the fact that there were new neighborhoods to call upon. DUMBO, Battery Park City, Tribeca, Soho, you know, where kids all would come here from those areas. They, they didn't exist. No, there were no people living in there, no families living there. They were industrial areas, or landfills, you know.

P. SCHULHOF: Or, or Wall Street area was all offices, It was like--

C. SCHULHOF: Business, mm hmm.

P. SCHULHOF: Nobody walked around after nine, ten o'clock at night in Wall Street, not because it was unsafe. There was just nobody there.

C. SCHULHOF: There was nothing there to do. [laughter] Why would we go, you know?

P. SCHULHOF: No one lived there, that's [inaudible].

C. SCHULHOF: Right. So those were the big changes, but Brooklyn Heights was always convenient, always an easy commute to anything you wanted to do. And-- [sigh]

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm. What high school did you go to, in--

C. SCHULHOF: Erasmus Hall High School.

SULLIVAN: Oh.

C. SCHULHOF: Mmhmm. Just there has been an article, actually, last Sunday in the metropolitan section about Erasmus Hall, and the Erasmus Hall academy in the center of the school, a landmark building that's falling apart.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: and I don't know what can be done about it, but--

P. SCHULHOF: Yeah, a picture of the auditorium is--

C. SCHULHOF: Oh, th-the auditorium is--

P. SCHULHOF: Yeah, pretty amazing--

C. SCHULHOF: amazing, yeah.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm. So who of--I have the high school question for both of you--who was the, what was the ethnic mix, or who were the kids you went to high school with?

C. SCHULHOF: In my high school? It was basically White. I would say a combination of lots of Jewish kids, Italian population, some Irish. I looked through my yearbook; there were probably a half a dozen, maybe a dozen, Black kids.

P. SCHULHOF: Brooklyn Tech was a little different because it even then was a school, a special whatever they call it, school that you needed to take an exam to get into, and there were students from all over the city coming to Brooklyn Tech, and so the mix was quite thorough.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: But again, there were very few people of color for whatever reason.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: And but ethnically, it was quite a mix because they came from all over the city--

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: and also because there were different tracks at the time. I'm, I'm talking about curriculum tracks. There were a number of tracks, which educated--, it was all boys, by the way, 6,000 boys.

SULLIVAN: Oh, I didn't know that!

P. SCHULHOF: Yeah.

SULLIVAN: Oh!

P. SCHULHOF: that--

C. SCHULHOF: A lot of boys. [laughter]

P. SCHULHOF: That didn't get co-ed 'til. "Co-ed's" not a good term to use these days, I guess, but relatively recently, I don't know which year.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: But it was all, all boys, 6,000 of us, and 1,500 in each grade.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: about. And where was I heading? --

C. SCHULHOF: The group of kids.

P. SCHULHOF: Yeah.

C. SCHULHOF: So some of them were going to college--

P. SCHULHOF: Oh yeah.

C. SCHULHOF: and some of them weren't.

P. SCHULHOF: That's what I-- Some of them were from day one, they were not gonna go to college; they were gonna get trained to do, you know, certain things. There was an aeronautical track, an electrical track, a mechanical da-da-da.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: And then there was a college prep track. So there were diverse people in that regard as well.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: Well, that was true in my school also; there was a college prep group, and

then there were the vocational group and we learned early on that there were certain girls you did not make eye contact with in the locker room [laughter] because they were pretty tough, [laughter] and they'd just as soon take off their shoe and threaten you with the heel of your shoe [laughter], so you learned to mind your own business, and as I said, these were all White kids--

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: from different, very different backgrounds and anyway, it was, it was an interesting mix.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: Hmmm.

SULLIVAN: Going back to the Synagogue for a minute, I think this is sort of my final question: Was there a moment or an event or something where you found being part of the Synagogue challenging?

P. SCHULHOF: Challenging. You mean it was a problem?

SULLIVAN: Yeah.

P. SCHULHOF: I can't think of anything. Can you?

C. SCHULHOF: No, I can't either.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: No.

P. SCHULHOF: No, I mean it wasn't like we had some major difference in the w- approach or whatever, --

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: There were times where the different rabbis, different levels of satisfaction, let's put it that way.

SULLIVAN: Mm hmm mm hmm.

P. SCHULHOF: Um--

C. SCHULHOF: Yeah, and the personality--

P. SCHULHOF: N-never to the point, never to the point, where we left--

C. SCHULHOF: No.

P. SCHULHOF: The members all through.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: But, yes, and the personality of the rabbi makes a big difference, and also all sorts of the aspects of the congregation, and, and they've been lucky that they've been relatively stable recently, and you know, so-- No, I ca-, I can't think of any big deal.

P. SCHULHOF: No.

C. SCHULHOF: Maybe we were never that--

P. SCHULHOF: Involved?

C. SCHULHOF: Involved [laughter] that we were totally, you know, com-, you know--

P. SCHULHOF: Yeah, it was a, it wasn't a daily commitment for us.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: And so, you know, perhaps some people who, for whom it was, then daily things come up that bothers, you know, bother you. That was not the case with us, so--

C. SCHULHOF: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: so, that didn't come up.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: Yep.

SULLIVAN: How would you say that being a member of the Synagogue has affected your lives?

C. SCHULHOF: Well, it was good to know that there was a group particularly back in the '60s, when, the-- I-I would say that the Jewish people at the time didn't feel as comfortable in different organizations in the neighborhood, and it was nice that there was the Synagogue.

P. SCHULHOF: Yeah, well, my background was such that, that was sort of a common denominator throughout my life, whether we were--

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: Mmm.

P. SCHULHOF: Of course, I don't remember. I was only three when we left Prague, but I'm sure that was the case there, even though I was too young to realize it, but then certainly in China, there was a central aspect of our-- of our social life, and so-- and then to perhaps lesser degrees, that was true subsequently here in the United States, but it was, it was a common, you know, it was a place to go to, to feel comfortable and to be among people that you, you had common things with--

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: which I guess is true of any congregation, no matter whether it's Jewish or not.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: My stomach is telling me--[laughter]. Hmmm, I have to think of anything to add to that.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm. Are there other things that I-- that I didn't think to ask about that--

C. SCHULHOF: Mmmm.

SULLIVAN: that we should talk about?

P. SCHULHOF: Can't think of any offhand.

C. SCHULHOF: No. I think you've covered everything, and I-I'm sorry we couldn't let you know more.

SULLIVAN: This is, you, this has been great! [laughter]

C. SCHULHOF: Oh, OK.

SULLIVAN: Yep.

P. SCHULHOF: Have you had a lot of other interviews like this?

SULLIVAN: I've done two others, and then I have one more scheduled, and then we're hoping to do three more after that, so scheduling that--

P. SCHULHOF: So you--

SULLIVAN: So it'll be seven total.

P. SCHULHOF: Oh, seven total, and are these all people who have been with the Synagogue,



associated with the Synagogue for quite a long time?

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: Oh I see, so that's the commonality.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: Yeah, did anyone reach out to Ruth Levinson?

SULLIVAN: I'm not sure. I think I wrote her name down.

C. SCHULHOF: She,--yeah, she's very old,

P. SCHULHOF: Yeah, she's one of the

C. SCHULHOF: Well, she's quite elderly, but--

P. SCHULHOF: A little infirm at this point--

C. SCHULHOF: Infirm, yeah.

P. SCHULHOF: I don't, I don't mean mentally, necessarily, but just physically.

C. SCHULHOF: Mmhmm.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: So I, I don't know of anybody.

SULLIVAN: I know that Jack Cohen is on--

C. SCHULHOF: Jack Cohen

SULLIVAN: is on the list.

C. SCHULHOF: Oh, he should be, yeah.

P. SCHULHOF: OK. Well,

C. SCHULHOF: B-, I-I the Steins would have more information than we did, so that might be  
some--

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

P. SCHULHOF: And, and yeah, and, and they're all there.

SULLIVAN: Mmhmm.

C. SCHULHOF: Yes, so OK.

SULLIVAN: Great.

C. SCHULHOF: Well, thank you for this, e-easy to talk with.

SULLIVAN: Thank you! Mmhmm.