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of

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Nov 12, Nov 26, Dec 10, 1979

date(s)

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(signed) MILTON E. KRENTS

(date) DEC 10, 1979
Q: This is an interview with Milton Krents for the William E. Wiener Oral History Library project on the history of the American Jewish Committee and Jill Levine is doing the interview. It's Monday, November 12, 1979. Well, I thought that it would be very interesting to go back to your very earliest roots and origins and I would like to know about your parents and where they came from.

A: OK, can we keep on a first-name basis. Can I call you Jill and you call me Milton?

Q: Certainly.

A: OK. Well, Jill, going back to my roots, so to speak, I am a New Englander from the western part of the state of Massachusetts. My wife always kids me about that because I also talk about that I am from the western part of the states. That's very important because Springfield, Massachusetts was kind of the -- well, we were always laboring under a cloud in that we were the -- the capital of the state was on the other end of the state and the eastern end of the state and of course we were like 25 miles from Hartford, Connecticut and there was great rivalry between our town and Hartford because Hartford is the capital of Connecticut. We were -- we practically had the same population except they had an extra plus on us. But we still felt that we were a great city of culture and that we had a very special place in the sun. In Springfield.

Q: Your parents were not born in Springfield?
A: No, they came from -- I am a first generation American. My mother came from -- she always liked to call it Austria and I think a lot of people who were born in Poland got a little fancy when they said they were born in Austria. What they were referring to -- she was born in a town called Lanberg called Lavog (?) I think it may now be called and it was under the I think it became part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and for awhile, the great Emperor of France Joseph was their king and so they like to talk of themselves as being Austrians. But she was born in Lanberg and came to this country as a young girl. I think her family -- oh, I think they had about ten daughters and one son and the son died early so my grandfather name was -- his name was Elias Malivkin (sp?) and that's where the Elias comes from in my name. Malufka being a very strange kind of Polish name, I would think. Malufka M-a-l-u-f-k-a. Now my mother had relatives here. It seems that let -- Mr. Malufka's sister married into the Kramer K-r-a-m-e-r and they were a very illustrious family in Hartford, Connecticut and I think that when the young girls' came to America their father was living in Hartford, Mr. Malufka. They were brought up by the Kramer family who were, I would say, for those days at the turn of the century a very upper class kind of Jewish family for Hartford, Connecticut who were immigrants. So she was brought up in the Kramer family and adopted their name so when anybody asked her her maiden name she would always say it was Ethel Kramer and she was very proud of being involved with that family. We maintained a lot of contact with the Kramer family as we grew up. My grandfather was a teacher, a cantor and a
teacher in Hartford, Connecticut and my mother used to tell wonderful stories about him that one day he was teaching a youngster and they couldn't find a hat. And it was an Orthodox and he was a very Orthodox Jew and so he wrapped a towel, a turban, around the kid's head. Well, the mother came home and practically went into hysterics, practically fainted on the floor because the son had been in a terrible accident. He got plenty of hell for it. I don't know whether he lost his student or not (laughter) but he managed to live frugally and I gather amassed a pretty good estate while he was alive. He lived to a very ripe old age. He got plenty of hell for it. I don't know whether he lost his student or not (laughter) but he managed to live frugally and I gather amassed a pretty good estate while he was alive. He lived to a very ripe old age. I don't know whether he lost his student or not (laughter) but he managed to live frugally and I gather amassed a pretty good estate while he was alive. He lived to a very ripe old age. He got plenty of hell for it. I don't know whether he lost his student or not (laughter) but he managed to live frugally and I gather amassed a pretty good estate while he was alive. He lived to a very ripe old age. I don't know whether he lost his student or not (laughter) but he managed to live frugally and I gather amassed a pretty good estate while he was alive. He lived to a very ripe old age. I don't know whether he lost his student or not (laughter) but he managed to live frugally and I gather amassed a pretty good estate while he was alive. He lived to a very ripe old age. I don't know whether he lost his student or not (laughter) but he managed to live frugally and I gather amassed a pretty good estate while he was alive. He lived to a very ripe old age. I don't know whether he lost his student or not (laughter) but he managed to live frugally and I gather amassed a pretty good estate while he was alive. He lived to a very ripe old age. I don't know whether he lost his student or not (laughter) but he managed to live frugally and I gather amassed a pretty good estate while he was alive. He lived to a very ripe old age. I don't know whether he lost his student or not (laughter) but he managed to live frugally and I gather amassed a pretty good estate while he was alive. He lived to a very ripe old age. I don't know whether he lost his student or not (laughter) but he managed to live frugally and I gather amassed a pretty good estate while he was alive. He lived to a very ripe old age. I don't know whether he lost his student or not (laughter) but he managed to live frugally and I gather amassed a pretty good estate while he was alive. He lived to a very ripe old age. I don't know whether he lost his student or not (laughter) but he managed to live frugally and I gather amassed a pretty good estate while he was alive. He lived to a very ripe old age. I don't know whether he lost his student or not (laughter) but he managed to live frugally and I gather amassed a pretty good estate while he was alive. He lived to a very ripe old age. I don't know whether he lost his student or not (laughter) but he managed to live frugally and I gather amassed a pretty good estate while he was alive. He lived to a very ripe old age. I don't know whether he lost his student or not (laughter) but he managed to live frugally and I gather amassed a pretty good estate while he was alive. He lived to a very ripe old age. I don't know whether he lost his student or not (laughter) but he managed to live frugally and I gather amassed a pretty good estate while he was alive. He lived to a very ripe old age.
they were involved in. The family's name was Krents. The family name is not the true name - Krents - because I understand from my father that my grandfather wanted to escape military duty and so he took the name of an uncle in Germany and escaped military duty that way.

Q: By taking a name that was German?
A: But Joseph was the real family name. It was a nice name (laughter).

Q: And Joseph was a Jewish name?
A: That was his real name. Morris Joseph. As a matter of fact he called himself Morris Joseph Krents through his life, you know. But Joseph was the name. It was interesting. I read someplace where the new president of the Anti-Defamation League is Burton Joseph and he comes from Roumania. So I have a feeling there may be some kind of a link of relationship.

It was interesting that I was doing the program -- we will get to that later on -- I wear two hats beside working the American Jewish Committee for so many years, I also have founded and produced a program called The Eternal Light for the Jewish Theological Seminary of America that's on NBC and we had as a guest a couple of years back Rabbi Rosen, who was the chief rabbi of Roumania and I had occasion to ask him if he ever heard of a town in Roumania called Roman. And he said, "I certainly did. As a matter of fact in about three weeks I am going there. There's still a small pocket of Jews there and in its heyday it
was a nice thriving community." But I got a bang out of the fact that it's still alive and that there is still a small Jewish community there.

Q: How did your father get from there?

A: Well, he has some friends, family, who live in New York (laughter) and he tells me he came through Ellis Island and they asked him his name. I don't know why, but he was constantly changing his name. But he took the name of Siegel (S-i-e-g-e-l) and finally when he got off the boat they said, That's not your family name. I don't know why you ever picked that name. Maybe the man in front of him was named Siegel, so he went back to Krents. He had a family here in New York and they sent him on. They thought there was an opening for a -- he was in the tailoring business. There were so many tailors here who came from Europe and he had been an apprentice as a young boy in Roman to be a tailor so he went on to Springfield and he used to make custom suits.

Q: He picked Springfield out of a hat?

A: Well, no. Somebody told him they had I think they had friends there. There was an opening for someone to do custom tailoring work which was his specialty. He used to make custom tailored suits, and he met my mother there in Springfield. She had gone from Hartford to Springfield because several of her older sisters had moved to Springfield and had gotten married. Springfield was only twenty-five miles away. So they met in Springfield and had three sons, of which I am the oldest.
Q: And you are the oldest. OK. Now, tell me, what was the size of - do you remember the size of the Jewish community when they first came to Springfield? Has it changed much?
A: No. Well, we had a sizeable Jewish community there. When I was growing up, I think there was about a 125,000 people in Springfield which is a nice size town. Now, I understand it's gone up to like about 175 - almost 200,000 and it has now become the second largest city in Massachusetts beating out Wooster. Wooster used to be one of our rivals. It was a good sized town. When I was going up, there was a good sized Jewish community in Springfield.

Q: Was your family religious?
A: No, my father being in the tailoring business got involved with unions and was a member of the Arbiter Ring, which was a landsman group of people who were interested in socialism, you know. While he was never active in that nevertheless that's where his feelings were was to read the Jewish Daily Forward regularly, you know -- and a lot of Yiddish was spoken, particularly if they didn't want us to know what was going on so I picked up a smattering of Yiddish from listening to them. But it was a family who had to scrape to keep on going, and my mother worked a great deal with my father when he opened up a store and she used to help him with his tailoring. They would do tailoring on two levels (1) for the general public and (1) that was to make these -- he used to specialize in making custom tailored vests and he became the outstanding craftsman in Springfield. He was hired by all the top custom tailoring
clothing places in Springfield.

Q: Did you ever help in that in the business?
A: Yeah, I was his messenger boy. Being the oldest, I used to go around—after school we went down and delivered the vest or packages or whatever.

Q: Did you ever learn the trade?
A: No. Some of my other brothers did but I didn't because I ended up at age twelve going into the newspaper business, becoming a newsboy so I used to have a route of delivering newspapers when we lived downtown Springfield and then we moved uptown Springfield—we moved to a wonderful section called Forest Park which is a lovely area. I mean, most of the Jews in Springfield lived in the Forest Park area. They had originally come down from the downtown area and they had almost like their own marketing ghetto kind of an operation and then they moved up to Forest Park and now today most of the Jews live in (?) Meadow which is just outside of Springfield which is kind of a Scarsdale of its day. No Jews lived there when I was going to school. But today it's -- I would say three quarters of Long Meadows is Jewish.

Q: Well, I would like to go back to something you said that your family wasn't really religious, yet on one of the resumes that I read about you it said that when you were young you had taught Sunday School.
A: Well, what happened was that I -- there wasn't an awfully lot to do in those days and we didn't have too much
money in our family and I was always interested in Sunday School, believe it or not--

Q: How did you get into it?

A: Well, it gave me a chance to get out of the house and to meet people and I somehow enjoyed the religious stories, the Bible stories even though I was never sent to school like my younger brothers later on, but I ended up being Number One in my classes at the Sunday School. It was called a Kiddunah (sp?) Synagogue which means to get forward in Hebrew and I met a lot of my lifelong friends in that Sunday School and they are my friends to this day.

Q: Was it an Orthodox?

A: It was a conservative Orthodox, now it's completely Orthodox but I think in those days it was probably conservative synagogue.

Q: How did your parents feel about your taking on this responsibility?

A: They went along...

Q: It didn't bother them?

A: As long as it earned us some money, in terms of..

And when we lived up in Forest Park I also branched, although I didn't read Yiddish delivering Yiddish newspapers, so I had an English route, a Sunday route and I had a Yiddish/paper route. And I used to run around on my bicycle. I got bitten many times by all kinds of dogs whom I still don't care for particularly, because I used to get bitten on my bicycle delivering newspapers.
Q: Well, now, tell me. I want to go back again to the religion in your family. Did they practice their religion during holidays. I mean, what was there anything. How did you know that you were a Jew?
A: Well, they were always talking about it. My mother and father would talk about stories he would read in the Jewish Daily Forward and I became an avid reader of newspapers. Still am, and then I mean, to associate with all these kids going to Sunday School with me. We got a very strong sense of our identification and out of this whole business of delivering Jewish newspapers came a very interesting incident that's kind of funny in a way, because one day I was delivering papers to the local kosher butcher and this was like in the spring of the year and I dropped my papers off and I think the local cantor was in there doing some, ritualistic slaughtering in this kosher poultry store and he saw this young chap and he said, "Can you sing?" And I said "Yeah." I had a lot of musical talent because I played the violin and played in an orchestra, played the harmonica. I can tell you all about that, became one of the harmonica champions of Springfield, Mass. I want you to know so I said, "Yeah." So he said, "Come along in the back of the store and sing" and so there we were with the poor birds gasping their last breath of life in barrels and he asked me to sing something and the only thing I could to sing was "My Country Tis of Thee" so I sang it in my beautiful
boy soprano voice and he said, "You're hired." I said, "What
do you mean? What's this all about?" He said, "Well, you
are going to be in our Tedyemah (sp?) Boys Choir for the
holidays. It means that you have to practice every single
day, come to choir rehearsal after your newspaper deliveries
and you'll get fifty dollars for singing on Rosh Hashanah
and Yom Kippur. That was a lot of money and of course my
family was ecstatic, that was earning some more money and
so I did this for two or three years. In a way it wasn't
good because we worked so hard that I think I strained my
voice, and I lost...

Q: This was when you were about how old?
A: Oh, I guess I was going to junior high school
and there is one observance called Slikkoh (sp?) which is
a holiday just before Rosh Hashanah that opens up the peni-
tential period of observance. The service begins at midnight,
and it was kind of scary because I lived about eight or ten
blocks away from the synagogue and nobody took me. My family
didn't have any car and so I had to go on my own, coming home
early in the morning, too, you know. And I was a little bit
miffed because my mother forgot to put my shoes in the shoemaker
and we all wore special gowns and all so I had to wear my khaki-
brown type color sneaker under my choir robe and in a way I
was kind of annoyed about it. Any religious Jew is required to
wear rubber sneakers. You are not allowed to wear anything
that comes from the hide of animals, so I was really hitting
a hundred percent on target by the mistake of wearing my brown khaki-sneakers there. But it was an interesting experience and I couldn't read Hebrew and I hadn't taken any lessons because he made me his boy soprano soloist he taught us, the few of us who were in the choir -- I would say about eight of us. He taught us phonetically and so today all the tunes but I don't know Hebrew.

Q: Right. Well, did you, after you went to these services and you would perform and teach in Sunday School..
A: My mother, my father never showed up at the services and here I was the boy soprano.

Q: Oh, that really is interesting? Did they, when your brothers were growing up, did they have any more/education?
A: Yes, they had their Bar Mitzvas and they went to Hebrew School which I didn't because they went trying it on me. I guess I was the guinea pig, you know, but I on my own ended up with First Prize in Sunday School classes on a student basis and I remember as a kid when we lived in the country in a little town called Heading Hills (sp?) -- now that's a name person for you -- the only man who ever came from Feeding Hills, which is in Attawa, which is -- my father, for awhile got tired of the tailoring business and invested in a -- don't ask me why -- in the coal business in Feeding Hills with his own railroad slide and he thought he was going to be a millionaire and he was going great guns but a coal strike came on -- I forget what year it was and he was locked out and lost his whole
business so I used to walk from Feeding Hills into Springfield to go to Sunday School. Everybody thought I was kind of kookie, but I really enjoyed it because in Feeding Hills I think we were the only Jewish family there practically. The only other person who came out of Feeding Hills was the late General Craighton Abraims (sp?) - the guy from Vietnam. He came from Feeding Hills.

Q: Did you know him?
A: No.

Q: When you were living in Feeding Hills did you encounter any kind of Anti-Semitism?
A: No, the kids were kind of -- they would play with you but we never felt it at home. My younger brother in a snow storm was hit by a car and my mother said "This is it. Let's go back to the city," you know, and so we moved back to Springfield. I was very happy for that because the schools were not particularly great. If you wanted to go to the library -- we had a great interest in books because there were few around the house you would have to walk about ten miles to the library which we did and so we were glad to come back to Springfield.

Q: Well, then, it seems to me, that you have always had a great identity with your religion.
A: I never expected to end up the producer and founder of The Eternal Light program, to be frank with you, but that's the way God has reckoned it.
Q: Do you feel that your Jewish identity is much stronger in you today than it was in the early years or how has it changed?
A: Oh, it has to be if you end up running The Eternal Light for thirty-five years and work at the Seminary and work with all kinds of interesting and religious people, rabbis, lay people, scholars and writers, producers, directors. It's a great adventure. It has been the greatest adventure in my life, but I have been able to build this project, build this program and we in our heyday The Eternal Light program was the window on the world for a lot -- young people all over the country that had no Jewish roots or Jewish attachments because they lived in remote places in America and when I travel around the country and meet people of my age or even younger and I am introduced as the producer of The Eternal Light program they all come up and say "Golly, you are the guy who was the window on the world" and they would read scripts to me or tell me about scripts or where can we get copies of scripts, so we brought up a generation of Jews, American Jewish kids...
Q: Well, we are going to go back later on in the scheme of things and talk more about The Eternal Light...
A: But that's how I picked up my Jewishness, even more strongly because of this...
Q: Did you start practicing more...I mean, do you observe the holidays.
A: We observe the holidays but our family is not deeply
religious right now, but our kids, my children, by osmosis, because of The Eternal Light and because they would go to rehearsals with me on Sundays at NBC got good grounding because there was thirty-five years of programming...

Q: Have they become more religious?
A: I would say as a result of listening and being involved with me and meeting people who were in my orbit, I would say -- but they are not Orthodox people by any sense of the imagination.

Q: But they have more of a -- I am not quite sure how to say this -- but they practice their religion, the traditions...
A: The holidays, of course, you know, are all...

Q: But I get the sense when you were growing up that you didn't really have a seder and you didn't have...
A: We would have some seders occasionally, but they were not on a regular basis. But we would have some seders that my father would run and everybody would kind of laugh behind our hands (laughter) - You may have done with your father. Because it was trying, well, you know...As we got older we got to appreciate it.

Q: So that even if your parents didn't have a sense, a true sense of the rituals of Judaism they did try in some ways to instill.
A: Oh, yes. Passover was one of the biggest holidays in our family because we would be all excited about our mother buying the Passover order. We never ate bread in the house...
during Passover Holidays and we never had candy. When they began bringing out Passover candy that was a big deal for us and this goes way back, you know.

Q: Was it a time when...
A: We were never even allowed to have milk until they brought out Passover milk, so it was kind of an interesting kind of family because, kind of a paradox for awhile, but on the other hand we did maintain the fasting for Yom Kippur and we did maintain the Passover holiday.

Q: Did your mother keep a kosher home?
A: Not really, no.

Q: But just for those times...
A: At Passover -- her mother, you see, she was brought up without a family here so she missed a lot of that family kind of bringing up because her mother didn't come over here until many many years later.

Q: And the family in which she really grew up she really didn't have..
A: She didn't have that, really. So whatever you are exposed to but I see to that..

Q: At an early age. Know tell me about your school years there. You went to public school..
A: Right. We had very few private schools in Springfield and most of the kids went to public schools.

Q: What were your classes? Did you have a lot of Jewish children?
Milton Krents

A: I don't think -- in those days, there was a sizeable Jewish community but most of the community wasn't Jewish. And when we went to school there were a lot of non-Jewish kids but they were a good sprinkling. Girl friends were Jewish.

Q: Girl friends were Jewish? Did you ever think of marrying someone who wasn't Jewish?

A: Nope.

Q: How would you have felt if your children, I know your children are married.

A: One of them did marry a non-Jewish. Two out of three.

B: How did you feel about that?

A: I was very unhappy about that.

B: Daughter or son?

A: My son, Harold and he married a gal who came from a society, a church-minded kind of family. I felt very badly about it. In fact, the experience so bothered my younger daughter our youngest child that she practically vowed that she would never marry a non-Jew, it would have to be someone Jewish because of that early experience with my son. He married a socialite girl. She's a sweet wonderful girl.

Q: I mean, they are still married?

A: But I felt pretty badly about that for a long time.

On the other hand, it's up to your child to make the final decision. All you can tell him how you feel about it then he or she has to make the decision.

Q: Has either one of them ever discussed conversion or do you get the sense that religion wasn't that meaningful.

A: No, my son said that he would never let himself or his children be converted to Christianity, so...

Q: So his children are being raised Jews.
A: Well, I wouldn't say—they are being raised as middle grounders.

Q: They are exposed to both religions?
A: Not really. Well, I guess. But they are not church going or synagogue-going. They had seder in their home last year and they read a lot of Bible stories and they come to a lot of our family affairs, etc.

Q: And they do that the same with his wife's family?
A: Not to that great extent but they do have relationship.

Q: She came...
A: Congregational background.

Q: And how is her family?
A: They were very unhappy. They didn't want her to marry a Jew, let alone a blind Jew. And her family evidently were very strong about it, gave her all kinds of threats that she would lose her membership in the country club. This is Fairfield society, you know, and her forebearers came over on the Mayflower and my son reminded them that the boats they came over on were sold to her forebearers by his forebearers (laughter)

Q: Good for him. So does her family -- they speak and they didn't cut off -- neither family cut off relationships.
A: Well, our relationship is not as strong as with the other two families, our in-laws who are Jewish.

Q: But you have tried to maintain as good a relationship...
A: There's just a semblance. We very rarely see one another. Maybe four or five years.

Q: They live where?
Milton Krents

A: In Connecticut.

Q: Oh, they live in Connecticut and my son's family lives in Washington.

Q: That's right, you said they lived in Washington.

Did you ever, when you were -- we are going back to your schooling, when you were in school there were no feelings or you were just not aware that you were Jewish and they had no feelings.

A: Well, everybody knew who was Jewish and who were Christians, you know. But nobody worked at it.

Q: No.

A: And they have respect for you and we have respect for them. I lived in a section later on in Forest Park and that particular area is very strongly Catholic. We lived next to the people in the big churches and cathedrals. Occasionally you would get an epitaph, but it never bothered me.

Q: Have you ever experienced an overt act of anti-Semitism directed against you personally?

A: No, only when I got out of college and applied for employment.

Q: Which we will certainly get to.

A: Right.

Q: Which we will certainly get to. So I think we ought to halt.

A: But growing up was no problem because I was very popular in my schooling and all the things we did in Springfield and I had a lot of fun because we had our own jazz band and we were
involved in a lot of activities, extra curricular activities. They were a lot of fun.

Q: I am glad you mentioned extra curricular activities because that's exactly what I wanted to talk to you about. Well, tell me, I know you had the jazz band. You were also involved with the orchestra, with the symphony ...

A: In my high school. I was the concert master.

Q: Well, tell me about these things.

A: Well, first of all going back to junior high school. There was a harmonica contest in Springfield and I learned to play and I won it for our area and my picture was in the paper and claps on the band part and I ended up starting a harmonica band in my junior high school.

Q: What is a harmonica band?

A: Oh, I would get kids to learn how to play the harmonica and we would put 25 or 30 of them together and we would have a concert in the school auditorium and it was very exciting. There were clubs. There would be a club like boating club or a tennis club. I started a harmonica club. It got to be so popular that I started at home another little extra-curricular activity where I set up a studio where I would teach kids to play the harmonica because that was a very popular instrument in those days. You could carry it around in your pocket and you would have your own little band with you.

Q: Do you still play the harmonica?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Do you ever get it out?
A: The family loves it. The kids and I do a lot of harmonica tricks of playing the harmonica with my nose (laughter) or playing the harmonica with a violin and a drum (a one-man band) and all those kinds of things, so you get to be a special hero.

Q: Now, did you learn to play the harmonica before you became a violinist or...

A: At the same time. Q: How did you get into the violin?

A: Well, if you had been brought up in a Jewish family (laughter) or you came from Poland or Russia and all you do is play the violin and you are in business and you would go for fifty cents a lesson. Every Jewish mother had high aspirations that her son would be a Heifetz or a Mischa Elman and that's the names I grew up with - and they would come to Springfield we would practically pawn our jewels to go hear them - what little we had because they were the greats and we got to hear them when they would come to Springfield. So it was practice, practice, practice. We practiced the violin along with the other instruments. With the activities of school and working for my dad after school and the newspaper routes and so it was a good full day.

Q: And how did you get into the symphony? I mean you obviously were quite good.

A: Oh, yeah. You had to - oh, I had a very good teacher who was like a thirty-second cousin in the family. Very strict and I had to do a lot of practicing. The violin is a very
tough instrument, you know.

Q: How old were you?
A: I am sorry I inflicted it on my sons.

Q: Oh, you did. I think it killed his whole interest in music and he was a very great musical boy.

Q: Well, how old were you when you were able to play with the symphony?
A: Well, when I say symphony -- when you went to high school and I started playing junior high school in the orchestra and then when I went to high school and then I became involved in that and I became the concert master of the high school symphony.

Q: That was the symphony of your city?
A: Not of the city. I never got involved in the city. I was involved in playing in various quartets and ensembles around the city.

Q: Well, now, before we get to the jaza band I would like to hear about WBZA Radio. Does that ring a bell with you?
A: Yeah. Well, WBZA Radio was our foremost station and they ended up by asking me to come and play the harmonica and there was a famous man who came to that station, his name was Roxy. He ran a radio program, Roxy and his Gang, and everybody used to love to listen to that. He came to our town and he was on WBZA which is an offshoot of WBZ in Boston. They were tied together and we would do concerts on that station and I got to meet the great Roxy and get his autograph. Then at that point I got stars in my eyes (laughter).

Q: That started it.
A: So, I started going to New York. I had family there.
lived in what was then Jewish Harlem, 110th Street and they would run excursions.

Q: How old were you then approximately?
A: Oh, I guess I was in junior high school and high school and they ran a two dollar excursion and you could leave about six or seven in the morning and spend a day in New York...

Q: Take the bus down?
A: No, you would take the train. Buses were terrible and when I went to college I took the bus, but buses were the cheapest way ever. I still hate bus driving. So I would take this two dollar excursion. I thought, "Oh, boy. Someday I am going to get out of this town with the harmonica." There was nothing much for me in that town because some of my friends there had businesses. Their parents and family had family (?) I didn't. My dad had his custom tailoring business. Later on he moved to New York when I graduated from college. One of my brothers followed me down here.

Q: Any of your other brothers?
A: And then the family moved down here, you see.

Q: Well, then tell us about the jazz band.
A: The jazz band was something -- one of my friends who met in Sunday School was a fellow by the name of Sid Cooley (C - O - L-E-Y) who today is one of the presiding judges. We are very proud of him. We had a long-time relation going back to our childhood. He is now a presiding judge over the whole western circuit in Massachusetts. Out of Westfield, Mass.
and we practically...our families have become (laughter) practically relatives as a result of...

Q: Is he Jewish?
A: Yes. Cooley. He and his brother. His family ran a dry goods department store and so he played the piano. I played the violin and his mother would invite us over to do duets and got the idea of putting a band together and a gal in the next street where he lived in Forest Park had a friend who ran a hotel up in Vermont called Twinawanee Lodge. It was part of two camps in Brandon Vermont. Twin Lake Camp and Wanee Camp mostly from New York and from Canada and we were the band because of our friendship with Corice (sp?) Weber we were hired on as a band and it was great. People from New York became friends of ours.

Q: How many summers?
A: God, it must have been about four summers, because later on when Sid Cooley was not involved I ran the band myself and had some great special place in my heart because I met my wife up there. She was a guest with her father and I would serenade here. I was like an early fiddler on the roof, you know and we got to know each other there and she was just graduated from New York University and I was in my last year.

Q: Oh, so you met when she...
A: She graduated from the Class of '44 and I was in the Class of '45. One of the fellows I had in my band, I had to export a saxophone player from Boston. His name was Henry Lippman who later became an active member at the American Jewish Committee
Milton Krents

staff. Subsequently, he left and ran the New York University adult education program. I think he just retired.

Q: Well, let's go back to your meeting your wife. Your wife's name?
A: Irma and she is a fantastic individual. I think you probably know her.

Q: Well, I think that we should tell the people who will be reading this transcript exactly who your wife is and...
A: Well, Irma Kopp. Kopp was her maiden name. Irma Kopp Krents. I met her in Brandyville Vermont in the summer of 1934. She had just graduated from college. She was 19, very impressed with the fact that she was a Phi Beta Kappa, 19 out of college and I had known about her through mutual who were at New York University with me in my class. Her best friend was a campmate of hers from her camp years and she told me about Irma and we met each other at the lodge because her dad had come up -- he was an invalid and she was taking care of -- her mother had died at age about 47 and she was taking care of her dad. Her father loved music and liked my violin playing because, what stood out in my memory was that we would play special songs for him and his family when Irma was a camper there and he would give his a tip of about fifteen bucks and boy that was something.

Q: And that made your summer.
A: We didn't get that kind of tip too often so Kopp had a special kind of place for us.
Q: Well, now, let's just put into the tape right now exactly who your wife is today.

A: Well, from being involved with me I don't know whether she would like came out of this we got three great children, two boys and a gal and the first thing I did when I met her I got her a job at the American Jewish Committee. I think she still holds that over my head. So she started right off the bat after we got married -- we have now been married 42 years and she got involved in professional work early in our marriage. She wasn't the type who liked to stay home too much so she would have our kids taken care of and then she would go out and do things. We would have joint programs because after awhile I got involved and ran an independent office with the American Jewish Committee as one of my clients and Irma and I worked together in other areas of work. We had a number of Washington accounts, working for the government and New York City accounts as well in the public relations, communications field.

Q: And today....

A: She ended up as working in literary agencies, two of us were involved with a literary agency called the Harold Ober Office and the Brandt office. These were the star, top agencies. We worked in developing their properties and their writers are the cream of American writers. Writers such as Paul Gallico, the estate of Booth Tarkington, F. Scott Fitzgerald. You name it and we developed their properties for radio and later on for television and Irma would do all the inhouse literary work and
I would do the selling outside to a number of top radio and television programs. She became involved as an editor of one of the top producers which was the Robert Montgomery Presents program, which was one of the early ones. So from that literary work she ended up also as the director of public relations for the National Council of Jewish Women, worked there for a number of years and did a fantastic job working with them and then she would be working here with me in my capacity as director of radio and television for the American Jewish Committee for I worked for the American Jewish Committee for some 40 years, having, I think I ended up by being the oldest employee when I left which was, let's see...

Q: Employee with the longest amount of service.
A: Longest amount of service, right. And they were great years and I was able to develop a lot of interesting techniques and innovations in the radio work which subsequently became radio and television. Then about 12 years ago I was invited by the Committee to develop an oral history library with a grant that came from an individual Mr. William D. Wiener who was in the real estate business and through his lawyer, Mr. Wiener had just been deceased, but through his lawyer he felt that our oral history project was one being worthy of a grant from his client's estate so we started off and here we are like well over ten years down the pike and we have established a very fine oral history library that's highly regarded and Irma is now -- I stepped aside in 1976 or 1977 (I think it was 77) and Irma took over as the director of it and has been doing an unusually fine job. I am now the national chairman of their advisory board so we manage
to talk to one another morning, noon and night.

Q: I think this would be a very good place to stop.

This is Side One, Tape 1 completion.
Q. This is Side Two, Tape I. I think that now would be a good time for you to tell me about your college days and then we will get you married finally to Irma. Where did you go to college?

A: Well, I went to New York University at the Square, but I just want to back up a second and tell you an interesting thing. When I graduated from high school in 1931 in Springfield I won a scholarship to whatever school I wanted to go to, which is called the Carlos B. Ellis scholarship...

Q: Carlos?

A: Carlos B. Ellis scholarship and that was very helpful because you have to remember in 1931 we were in the middle of the depression. It ran for some years and I remember when we graduated from high school all the high schools marched down our big street, State Street in order to get the diplomas and the commencement speaker, the speaker of the day was none other than Rabbi Steven S. Weiss of New York City. Wow, that was a big thing for us because here was one of the great Jewish leaders coming to our commencement at Springfield added a great sense of pride to all of the class of 1931, particularly the Jewish community. Of course he spoke very eloquently, and I remember coming out and my mother coming out and all the relatives were there wondering what I was going to be doing. I said I was going to college. And they said, "College." Nobody in our family had ever gone to college. You know, that was it in 1931 - depression and so I won a scholarship and so my mother had visions of my becoming a doctor. She gave up on that (laughter) and I was going to do to New York because I thought that was the most exciting place in the world, and still
is and so I won the scholarship and came to New York University. It was interesting to come to New York in the first place, because I came out of an atmosphere of well -- we had a good Jewish population -- community in Springfield. Nevertheless it was basically an Anglo-Saxon community. A lot of the department stores like Forbes and Wallace and Milton Bradley, the big toy manufacturers and there was Indian Motorcycle and basically most of them were run by a Christian community. So coming to New York University which is 75 percent Jewish was going from down in the valley up to the mountain because, here I come to New York not knowing a soul and I ended up getting a job running an elevator at 11 Waverly Place. It must have undermined my health a bit because you had to maintain good marks for that scholarship and I had the nightshift on the elevator and I think after nine months or a year I really got pretty sick.

Q: Was this a four-year scholarship?
A: Yeah.

Q: A completely paid for...
A: Well, no. It paid for part of the tuition. In those days you could go to college— in 1931 it was ten dollars a point. I don’t know what it is now. You could make on a thousand dollars but it was very hard and my family helped me a great deal because they had such a great feeling for education and I would be the first boy to get a college education. Nobody in the family had ever done it, but everybody put their shoulder
my younger brother who became an athlete, David and the youngest brother Mac really worked, was working with my dad and picked up a lot of things I didn't -- moreso. They had paperroutes of their own, too.

Q: Just an aside. Did they go to college?
A: Yes. Yeah.

Q: So you started the tradition? They did follow in your footsteps.
A: They went to the same high school so I came down here and of course some of the people were so wonderful to me in high school. I have to this day a math log and you had to pass that algebra and geometry for your fifteen units to get into college and this woman who was not married, Christine Lewis, a great great woman who lived in the suburbs of Springfield who would take me home weekends, because nobody in my family could help me. My family was unschooled. My mother and father -- no older children. She would tutor me in my algebra and my geometry and I was able to pass because of her. Years later when I started a scholarship up in my name in high school, I called it the Christine Lewis Scholarship Honor Awards. They were like Phi Beta Kappa awards in her name.

Q: So you had maintained a friendship with her until...
A: Years after I graduated. She used to visit us here in New York. That program I subsidized for about twenty, twenty-five years for my local high school so that kids would get to know what a fantastic person she was. She did the same thing for my younger brother who went on to New York University too.
and she did it for other people too. She was quite a woman.

Q: I have a feeling from what you say that Springfield was a big city but it really was a very small town and it really has a heart.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: And that the community as a whole Jewish and non-Jewish -- as you talk it just seems more clear...

A: My younger brother -- we had three boys -- my younger Mac brother and my youngest brother had the same wonderful love for her as I do. My middle brother Dave can't stand it and never he/wants to go back to Springfield and never wants to have anything to do it with. He never wants to go to reunions and get involved with anything with Springfield.

Q: I wonder why?

A: I don't know. He may have had bad growing up experiences there.

Q: But yours were wonderful?

A: Fantastic. And I still love going back to Springfield. I have friends and relatives there. I consider it my home. Exciting So getting to go to New York University was a real/adventure.

Of course, not knowing a soul there and starting from scratch and I ended up four years as president of senior class and interesting enough -- well, talking about religious divisions-- I don't know whether the same thing applies anymore but when I went to New York University I went to the school of commerce Every year the election campaign was the big thing at the end of the year and we would rotate. One year a Christian would be
the head of Student Council and the Jew would become head of
the senior class and whenever a year fell on. Well, my year
1935, the Jewish -- that was my year and I ran as a non-fraternity
representative. It was amazing the kind of politics that ran
on. I was not a member of any Jewish fraternity like ZBT or
any of the others because I didn't have the money. As I say,
the Christian that year George Dade (sp?) became the head of
Student Council and I became the head of the senior class
which was a great honor.

Q: How large a class approximately?
A: Well, that class - of course you had daytime students.
I was in the day class. We must have had 800 in that class.

Q: A large class and for the Depression. Well, a lot
of kids were going to schools like New York University because
they couldn't afford to go anywhere else. A lot of those people
from my area and my class have become distinguished individuals.

Q: Do you know any of them now or do you talk to any
of them?
A: Well, of course Dave became (D-A-D-E) head of the
Dade Aeronautical Company out in Long Island. Some of them
are very active here in the American Jewish Committee who are
big contributors and at Long Island. I can't remember the names
of my class. One of them became head of McGraw Hill. They
all went to very important areas of work. The head of Lowe's
Corporation is a New York University man. The financial
advisor to the presidents, what was his name, Greenspan, was
an NYU man. I am still active in the NYU affairs. I sit on
their Alumni Committee because I owe them a lot and I gained a lot from them and they were responsible for my getting into broadcasting. Well, my professors knew of a Jewish first vice president at NBC and sent me up with a strong recommendation.

Q: That's David Rosenblum.
A: And that's where I met my first real anti-Semitism because he sent me to see the personnel director and the personnel director wrote back a report that Mr. Krents is too aggressive in his manner and I don't think he kidded the NBC.

Q: So Rosenblum hit the ceiling and insisted he had to find a place for me because I was qualified so they gave me a job in the mail room. I started right down in the cellar.
A: Let's go back for one minute. I want to go back to what you specifically said -- anti-Semitism. How did you feel when they told.
Q: I felt pretty bad because it never really hit me that way before. I knew there was always a difference, you know, in terms of Christian-Jewish relationships whether it was on a social level or a business level but it had never hit me personally. I never had had any problems in getting summer jobs.
A: Did they tell you after you finally had gotten the job.
Q: I found out about it from David Rosenblum who subsequently in later years became executive head of the American Jewish Committee.
Q: Right.
A: But he went back to this man (?) and I wanted to train for the sales department. I wanted to train for the sales department -- I was very young -- because I felt with my background.

Q: You had done radio work in college, hadn't you?
A: Yeah, we had done interesting things we had worked on in college way back when I was running for office. We dreamed up the idea of starting to bring to assemblies outstanding radio personalities. I figured out I betcha' dollar these guys would like to come and talk to college kids and sure enough I would write to -- Eddie Cantor was my first candidate and he came up and I had the honor of introducing him to the student body and we had Eddie Cantor and Joe Penner and Joe (inaudible) I even invited Sally Rand and Sally Rand invited me to her apartment. She lived about a block away, I think, No. 1 University Place and I went up this apartment and she was still in bed and she had the great four-corner post bed and fans all over the place, you know. She was a big success, you know.

Q: Oh, I bet she was a big success when you went up to visit her too. And you also brought Rudy Vallee.
A: You see I had -- there was a guy from my home town, John S. Young who was a great announcer in those days. He had graduated from my high school. I had a letter of recommendation to him. He brought me around to see programs at NBC before there
a Radio City and there offices were up at 711 Fifth Avenue which I think is 55th Street and so I was bitten by this radio bug and I would bring him back to my high school and introduce him to the kids and say, "Here's the guy from our school, fellows, who made it" you know and I would bring him down to New York University where he had eventually landed up teaching, but I would bring him down to our...

Q: Well, let me get something clear. You started the first radio course at NYU.
A: No, I would say that. Because of my association with him, I brought him down and I would help start the first radio course teaching radio techniques.

Q: And he was the head of the department.
A: I assisted him, and because of my association with him he ended up teaching there and I ended up as student assistant.

Q: Isn't that interesting when you think that today where communications are in colleges and that NYU in 1931
A: '31, '32.
Q: Had nothing.
A: Now they have a famous school of communications for television mostly.

Q: Well, did you have a lot of trouble trying to talk them into this? Or brought it to their attention?
A: I brought it to their attention and they were interested (inaudible).

Q: Now the School of Commerce, is that what they call...
A: Advertising. All kinds of. It was a cross between
which is across from the Washington Square. We took courses at Washington Square and then we took courses at Commerce.

A: I see.

MK: One of Irma's best friends was a member of the School of Commerce. There was a constant back and forth between those two schools.

Q: And you majored in.

MK: I majored in marketing with journalism as a minor. And a lot of our people in our school became top advertising executives, opened up advertising agencies.

Q: Now along with your work, your part-time work at NBC I found somewhere that you worked an organization called Trade Ways. Does that ring any bell?

MK: Well that was an activity that Mr. Roosevelt was involved in, that was to give part-time work. That was doing market research work.

Q: So it helped you along in your studies, I see?

MK: It was hard to find money any place those days.

Q: For sure.

MK: I worked for a dollar a day, by the way.

Q: Did you live in school or did you have an apartment. How did that work?

MK: There was no real dormitories in those days as there are now. Two or three kids -- some boy from New Hampshire, Channing Evans -- he was Jewish. His father had a department store up in Burling (?) New Hampshire. Another boy who had a father, Michaelman, had a department store in Greenville, Mass. and so we shared an apartment at University Place, a few blocks
from school.

Q: Did you stay at an apartment...

MK: All three years. After all, we got student jobs. The job was almost like a WPA. We did library work and you got paid.

Q: Well, is there anything you would like to tell me about college that you haven't.

MK: Well, it was a tough grind. I had to keep up my scholastic average and I was also very actively involved. I was president of the senior class and a lot of other things before the senior class because you had to pull your weight in a lot of other activities. I worked on the college yearbook and I worked on the special assembly programs and I thoroughly enjoyed it.

Q: Yeah, it sounds like you were totally engrossed.

MK: But we had to watch our money, you know.

Q: But you were all there under the same conditions really. Most all of the kids were subway kids.

Q: And that meant that their conditions were somewhat worse than yours.

MK: So we were all the same way.

Q: Well, now, tell me...

MK: I never thought of graduate school, by the way.

Q: You didn't.

MK: For example, one fellow I got involved in with extra curricular activities was my college classmate, going to Harvard on a scholarship, but I couldn't do it. He was from Bridgeport and I never realized those things were open.
Q: Yeah.
MK: I was just going to get through school because my family was having a tough job maintaining me. And my brothers were coming up the line so I never thought of graduate. But one of my young friends did who I got involved with extra curricular work because he had no background for that and knew that he had to have this -- this boy from Bridgeport. He ended up had to pay in books. Oscar Dystel who now has gone from presidency to chairman of the board. He was one of my classmates.
Q: Do you still keep up contact.
MK: Well, we maintain contacts.
Q: Well, now, tell me, after you graduated from NYU, before you went to NBC didn't you work at Altman's.
MK: I had a job there while I was waiting to hear from NBC as to whether I was going to be hired.
Q: Oh, I see.
MK: And one of my friends said, "Why don't you go to B. Altman's because they are interested in top people who are NYU graduates and they were interested in me becoming involved in the merchant business, you know, becoming a mercantile. And I went there and worked a summer while I was waiting for this appointment from NBC. I was doing time studies, people coming in certain doors, who were men and who were men. What time, when you got the biggest influx of customers. It wasn't my cup of tea. They were very pleased with my work and pleaded with me to stay.
Q: How many months did you wait until you were finally hired?
MK: Yes, it was the summer time. I graduated from NYU and I worked there during the summer. In September I guess was when I got a job at NBC.

Q: And what were you hired to do at NBC.

MK: I was down in the mail room. And I wanted to get into the sales department and they weren't having any Jews in the sales department. I knew friends, kids of my age, whom I thought had the same kind of ability I had. But the O'Briens, the Kellys and the Smiths were getting the jobs. But at that point in 1935, I think maybe there were three Jews there. David Sarnoff was head of it and I think there was myself and Ben Grauer, the radio man who just died a couple of years ago. A fellow by the name of Emil Corwin (C-O-R-W-I-N) who was Norman Corwin's brother (indistinct) -- that was it and then a couple of more began to come in. There were not too many Jews in broadcasting then.

Q: Well, how were you able to get out of the mail room?

MK: Well, I ended up -- a couple of friends pitched for me. The best they could do for me was to get into -- of all places -- the accounting department and I hated figures but I managed to get a facility and I kept looking. The idea was once you got there, the idea was to get your foot in the door and I was kind of looking for public relations because that was a good field, too. If you couldn't get into sales station relations was good too because you could learn about stations out of town and eventually they became valuable properties.
Q: Well, did David Rosenblum sort of watch over you at all?

MK: Some of his office staff became interested in my career. I remember one of them saying "You are going to be a great consultant some day." That was the greatest thing to be, a consultant. So when I went into the accounting department, I think I started at 25 and along came a call one day from a man who had succeeded David Rosenblum (David Rosenblum was no longer there) and his name was Frank Mullin and he got a call from a man named Benjamin Buttenwieser of Kuhn Loeb. Mr. Buttenwieser called Mr. Mullin who was an executive vice president of NBC and said, "Have you got any Jews up there, any young Jewish fellows." I was the only one and he said, "There's an organization called the American Jewish Committee" -- of course, this was 1937 and he said "We would like to hire someone to start working with us in radio, interested in the media. If this man could go down and see Mr. Wallach (sp?), 461 Fifth Avenue.

Q: Was that 31st Street?

MK: No, but first he has to come to see me. So I went down to see this fellow at Kuhn Loeb and he asked me all kinds of questions. Of course, the only person he could send was me because I was the only Jew in the place, young fellow.

Q: Despite yourself.

MK: So I came up there, just out of college, and they offered me $40 a week (whistles) and I was going out with Irma
you know, and I figured when I made $50 I could get married. So I accepted the job with alacrity and there was no such thing. All they knew how to do was to spell the word.

Q: In other words, they wanted to start a radio department. They didn't really know what they were going to do with it so you both were going to be thrown together.

MK: I had to do the creativeness. That's good practice.

Q: That's the best. And how shortly thereafter did you go to work? Right away.

MK: '37.

Q: In other words, he interviewed you "yes" and that was it.

MK: After a couple of weeks.

Q: But it was a quick thing. Right. Oh yes.

MK: I talked with Mr. Buttenwieser years later and I told him he was responsible for my working and he got a bang out of it.

Q: And after you interviewed with him, he sent you up to see Mr. Wallace who said "Come join us."

MK: Great guy.

Q: Would you like to tell me about him now.

MK: Well, we just hit it off. He died about six months ago. He hired me and he was a kind of a warm person. He had another member of his own family working for him. He had his sister working for him in the organization, cousins and stuff like. I guess in those days you could bring members of your family into.

Q: Nepotism.
MK: We had just a small staff and it was a lot of fun in my office and they had my name printed up on a board and that was very heady stuff. And then after I got to Mr. Wallach he began to really develop this department I really got to like this job.

Q: I think I would like to go back a couple of steps and take the very very beginning of the American Jewish Committee.

MK: I wasn't in it in the beginning.

Q: No, no. I mean your beginning into the American Jewish Committee. Now, we know that you were interviewed by Mr. Buttonwieser and Mr. Wallach and your first job was to create a department that they had never had. Now you worked in doing this....

MK: Another five years.

Q: OK. But I wonder if we oughtened to stop right here because this might be a good place. This is Jill Levine. It's November 26, 1979. When we last left off we had just gotten into the American Jewish Committee and I was wondering if you could remember your first day here.

MK: Yeah, I sure could. It was a circuituous way to get here, though, by way of Massachusetts, Vermont, etc., etc. Sure, I remember my first day here. I came here in 1937 reckoning back like 42 years but I sure remember that day because I had been hired, there was no such thing as television, as director of the American Jewish Committee I reported to work at 461 Fourth Avenue, Park Avenue South, much more fancy, which is about 32nd Street. We moved from there to 386 Fourth Avenue and then to our present
quarters. But there we were at 461 Fourth and I was with a small staff and my immediate boss was a fellow by the name of Sidney Wallach. The head of the agency was Morris Waldman and the second in command was the venerated Harry Schneiderman and there one or two people there. I remember we had a Walter Clymer who was our very small skeleton-type staff. We had Walter Clymer who was not Jewish but who was our -- had been there for years -- his forebearers were -- one of them was on the signers of the Declaration of Independence, Adam Clymer -- and he had been there for many years, stayed on for many years after I joined the AJC. We had Miss Herzhog who was related to Cyrus Adler who was one of the early presidents of the American Jewish Committee and we had Anna Friedman who was Mr. Goldman's secretary and so on down the line, but on the professional staff there was David Bernstein and Norton Belf and myself. I guess we were kind of the three musketeers.

Q: In radio.

MK: No, they were in publications in the Jewish field and I was involved -- I had the radio field unto myself. I was a brand new kind of an area that was opening for the AJC. They ushered me into my own office and I even had my name on the door, not painted but in a placquard and I must say that I was very excited about that coming from NBC where I had worked in an office where there had been 30, 35 people in our operations so here I was in my own office and my own telephone and a real desk and my own name card and the first thing I did was to get a map of the United States. We were starting, you know, zero and on it I put some colored pin spots of all the various radio
stations around the country and at that time we had, let's see -- there were three networks, really two, because you an NBC network -- NBC had a red network which was headed by what was then called WEF and the blue network which was headed up by WJZ. Then there was CBS. Of course, you had mutual but that was kind of orphan (?)-type network. It was very loosely fit operation. WOR was the flagship there. After awhile the Justice Department had NBC divest itself of the blue network. The blue network then became the ABC network.

Q: What was the difference red and blue?

MK: Well, it had two different kinds of networks, both under the NBC banner and the U.S. Department just said, "Look here, you can't run two networks under the guise of one network. You've got to split, so they sold what now was the blue network became ABC to a man by the name of Edward Mulbel (sp?) who was the owner of the Lifesaver Corporation up in Portchester who later on sold it to Leonard Goldenson and his group and the rest is history, one of the most fabulous successes in broadcasting. Of course, all the other networks are very much alive and kicking -- CBS, NBC and ABC.

Q: Well, when you came in and you first put your map up and then what did you decide you were going to do once you had this map up. What was your direction?

MK: Well, I was handed a directive of being able to figure out what I wanted to do. Here was radio -- for them a very important medium. There were no Jewish religious programs per se except one, The Message of Israel was on the blue network and
hey went over to ABC which left NBC proper without any Jewish religious. There was the Catholic Hour on radio and there was the radio and several other Protestant programs on NBC radio but no Jewish religious programs so I knew a number of people at NBC in the public affairs educational department in the early days besides getting started in this virgin territory of radio for a Jewish organization. None of the other Jewish groups were involved in radio or had any special interest AJC had a foresighted look at this and knew they had a great potential so the first I had to do was to study the field to see what kinds of programs were on. We began to get all the press releases and press information from all the networks sent to us and began to study very carefully children's programs, women's programs, religious programs, soap opera programs and so on down the line. I was able to make a judgment and I was even able to go talk with Mr. Wallach and members and we had a survey committee of some top individuals who were interested in broadcasting, among them General Edward Greenbaum, Harold Ginsburg of Viking Press and others. So that's how we started and we began to incorporate -- this was an idea that I had of salting in.

Q: Salting in? What is that?

MK: Salting in means just exactly what the phrase says. To begin to integrate into existing programs, program ideas, program information tied in with relative to the work of the American Jewish Committee and to the interests of the American Jewish community at large so we could be talking about intergroup
relations. You could be talking about at that point there was a big push in terms of the National Conference -- it was then called Jews and Christians under Dr. Edward Clinchy (sp?) who later switched to the National Conference of Christians and Jews for evidently some special reason and it was under the aegis of this man Dr. Edward Clinchy, a Protestant clergyman and the chairman of his board was Roger William Strauss who was a great well-known industrialist, I believe, in the smelting field whose son later on was one of the founders of Ferris, Strauss, Cunningham and so we began to do our programming in cooperation with them. We would pick up ideas for them tying in with other some other individuals from the American Jewish Committee and others we worked with outside.

Q: Was this still in connection with the mounting feeling that there was going to be a war?

MK: Well, I came to work for the agency in '37. You already had the rumblings of Hitlerism and sure there was a lot of worry. I think that was one of the reasons I think probably that the American Jewish Committee got involved in radio because you had a lot of propaganda being sent out by the German government and you had big German propaganda apparatus in this country. The American Jewish Committee was doing a lot to combat that propaganda and they felt that radio could be a very important arm educating the public as to the pro-democracy line and so we got involved with the children's programs. We had a series we did on WOR with the famous children's character at that time. He was like "Sesame Street" in his days, Uncle Don
had all the kids listening in this area and I came up with the idea of why it's mighty fine to be an American. Really cornball stuff, but we ran an essay contest with Uncle Don and the kids brought in poems and stories and essays and every day a big push about how to work with your neighbors, and how to think with the next person and how to recognize anti-democratic propaganda on a junior juvenile level and everything went fine. We were getting great response and great letters and everybody was quite pleased except for the very last day we had a catastrophe and when Uncle Don went to make his final announcement to the winner and the prize which the AJC had put up he said, "And it's great that Anti-Defamation League of B'Nai Brith has made this possible."

Q: Oh!

MK: After months of work the work fell through and the Anti-Defamation next day a correction but it was a shock for awhile.

Q: Was this a 15-minute program, a half hour program?

MK: A half-hour program. They did a regular segment for us.

Q: And people knew that on the AJC...

MK: Well, we had mentioned that the big push was to be the final prize.

Q: The final prize which he really....

MK: Well, you know, again, it was not his fault. It was his assistant's. I remember the guy's name, Bill Treadwell. He gave him the wrong information. But we did a lot of that
kind of programming.

Q: So that was actually before the war started here.

Well, let's go back to the survey committee. We were going to talk about more of the radio programs during the war years but let's concentrate on what the survey committee did and what your part was with them.

MK: I didn't work that closely with the survey committee. I got to know a number of the members through association. This survey for me was an on-top group that worked very carefully with executive management, with the Waldmans and with the Frank Craigers (sp?) and the Sidney Wallachs. Mine was more of a peripheral arrangement with them -- the kind of ideas that they developed the strategies from top to bottom filtered down to us on the firing line whether it was David Bernstein or myself.

Q: And then you would try to implement them.

MK: We would work the implementation of it.

Q: I see. Now Richard Rothschild...

MK: Yes, he came in from the survey committee. Richard Rothschild was brought in by the survey committee. He was long-time practitioner in the advertising agency field, a philosopher, and had a lot of ideas as to how to counteract this Nazi propaganda that was starting to infiltrate our country and he devised a number of ideas particularly one called "Divide and Conquer" that what they were trying to do in this country was to divide all of our minority groups to be able then to conquer us by confusing chaos. This was a theme that we harped on and worked on
There were countless ways -- there was a program with Kate Smith, a program on "We, the People".

Q: So would this be a way that you would use the salting in. Would salting in be used as a technique.

MK: There was a program called "The Cavalcade of America" which was a very important program series, drama series, on the great American biographies of Americans and we were able to have a number of programs done about great world figures whether it was an Einstein, or Solomon or whatever. It was important for us to get those kinds of stories across and we did.

Q: Really, what I think you are saying is almost that the networks were not reticent to have this kind of...

MK: Well, we did a lot of work on the network with the public affairs departments but on the other hand when you went to work on the networks the programs may be with them on association red but when you went to work with programs like "Cavalcade" they were handled essentially by the advertising agency, by the national sponsor himself or by a public relations individual or by a program packaging group so you had to get familiar with really knowing your way around. This was where we did a lot of pioneering work in getting to know these people and working with them.

Q: And building up that rapport...

MK: And taking a lot of time, socializing and cultivation until they got to have confidence in you. It was built up over a number of years.

Q: Going back to when you were with NBC and the anti-Semitic
there. Did you ever get any of that when you then went into radio and the AJC.

MK: No, because then everybody was interested in countering the German propaganda. That was not a factor at all and more and more Jews were starting to get involved in broadcasting. New columns were involved and programs like "The Quiz Kids" -- there were a lot of individuals starting to come in broadcasting so I didn't run across that at all.

Q: Did you -- I was reading the history book of the American Jewish Committee and somehow I had the feeling that the problem between the survey committee and Morris Waldman. That didn't touch you at all.

MK: That was strictly...

Q: Up there.

MK: Inter top-top executive level.

Q: Would you like to tell me now some of your thoughts about Morris Waldman and Sidney Wallach?

MK: Well, I didn't know -- I knew Morris Waldman and I know his daughter and he was kind of an important figure who sat up on top of the whole operation. He was not the kind of person you could knock on his door and say, "Hey, can I come in and see you?" You would have to make an appointment with him. Whereas with Sidney Wallach and Harry Schneiderman you just knocked on the door or called up on the phone and said "Hey, can I come up and see you?" But Waldman was a very very nice kind of person. I remember his calling me up to tell me I got
my first raise" and I was very excited about that. He checked me out with a couple of people in the field with whom he was friendly with and who ended up giving me high ratings for the kind of work I was doing.

Q: Did you have to travel outside of New York for the agency?

MK: Not too much. In those days of broadcasting, and still is, although you have other centers of gravity now. New York was essentially the headquarters and still is with the networks but we did have a lot of work with Washington and some in Chicago and some on the coast. That was pretty much it, so I would sometimes go out to broadcasting conventions like in Chicago and Washington because I was anxious to get to know broadcasting people. When I say I mean people in the networks as well as station owners and different operators from top places around the country. It was in the service of a very good cause to get to know those people who became very fast friends.

Q: And then they got to know you.

MK: Right, and that was part of the education.

Q: Salting units is a technique that they still use?

MK: Everybody is using it. I was the first one to come up with it and now it's standard practice. I get quite a bang out of seeing it happening now. You know -- it's kind of thing seeing documentaries using this material occasionally and news programs who come to the AJC or other organizations to get statements from the committee. In those days it was pretty tough because...

Q: They didn't come to you. You had to go to them.
MK: Now it's the other way around. They know there are organizations like the American Jewish Committee out there who are newsmakers. I went on, there's so much going on these days. There was a newsreel where they are anxious to get the viewpoints of individuals whether it be on Israel or whether it be on black-Jewish relations. In those days there wasn't that kind of a pull.

Q: Well, then, I would think from what you are saying that you in fact gave a tremendous legitimacy to it and therefore you really can take the responsibility and be very proud. I would think that is one of your major accomplishments.

MK: I am very proud of that whole development as I am of the Eternal Light program.

Q: We are going to talk about the Eternal Light. Let's talk about pro-democracy first and then we will get into the Eternal Light. That went arm in arm with the survey committee. It was set up by the survey committee. The pro-democracy campaign.

MK: The Eternal Light came out/them and concentrations were... public relations people and people like Edward Bernay and top individuals who were serving as consultants to the survey committee and to our executive staff and to ourselves.

Q: With the pro-democracy campaign was that when there was a 50-minute hour radio program and Stephen Vincent Benet and (?) Adolphs, did they...

MK: Again, a lot of that was started to counteract the Nazi propaganda. It was called "Conflict of Democracy," an
independent organization made up of top individuals and a lot of them non-Jews headed up by a man named Mercede Jackson who was an outstanding practitioner in the magazine media. He was a publisher of Time and Life and a terrific guy, great class -- had contacts with the Avenue of Americas society and I was put on loan and Dave Bernstein was too -- the Council of Democracy to call forward this whole idea of stepped up counter propaganda.

Q: And this started before the war.

MK: It started before the war and continued through the war. I was their radio consultant and Dave Bernstein was their magazine consultant and there I met a girl by the name of Selma Hirsh who was doing special work for the Council of Democracy on loan from Melvyn Douglas' office in Washington and she was on staff to do some special consultant work so that was our first friendship with Selma Hirsh who fortunately became a member of the American Committee. But I did a lot of very creative things. I should mention that my wife and I had some contacts with a literary agency here in town Brandt & Brandt, which is one of the outstanding literary agencies in the country and Irma, my wife, and I served as radio consultants for the placement of top literary material so I got to handle a lot of Stephen Vincent Benét material. He was one of the clients and became a very fast friend of him and his wife Rosemary Benet.

Q: I want to interrupt you for just a minute. We are coming to the end of this side and I want to hear fully about Stephen Vincent Benét so let's turn the tape over. This is end of Side 2, Tape 1.
Q: This is Tape 2, Side I interview with Milton Krents, November 26, 1979. When we left off we were talking about Stephen Vincent Benét, had just started talking about Stephen Vincent Benét and his wife Rosemarie.

MK: I became very fast friends of Stephen Vincent Benét. To my mind he was one of the great literary giants of this century. He came down with arthritis severely and gradually began to bend over and his heart was broken when this happened. Practically toward the end of the war and was stricken with a fatal heart attack and died in the forties. It was a great tragedy for the world and for America. Well, we became very fast friends and I had to think up an idea for the Council for Democracy so I went to my good friends at NBC and said I would like to pick up some kind of a good pro-democracy kind of program and they said if you could come up with some kind of exciting we would be interested. Well, being by that time, a veteran radio man I knew that the only way I was going to get any place in national network broadcasting I would have to bring something to them that they normally would not be able to put their hands on because if you had something they thought they could do they weren't interested in they would do it on their own. So I got the bright idea of doing a series of letters to Hitler right smack on answering his propaganda and what he was trying to do to America and tying in with Dick Rothschild's idea of Divide and Conquer of having these letters written by various segments of our population. For example, a letter to Dear Adolph
from an American farmer. A letter to Adolph, Dear Adolph
Hitler from an American factory worker, a letter from a
woman, a letter from a child and there was a whole series
we had and then I had to figure out the extra plus so I said
to myself, if I could get Stephen Vincent Benet to write
these letters we would really have something going and get
a star to play it. Melvyn Douglas to play a business man,
Paul Muni played another one, so on down the line with star
names reading these letters.
Q: Once a week?
MK: Once a week on NBC prime radio.
Q: Fifteen minutes.
MK: No, half an hour and I went to Stephen Vincent Benet
and I said "You really could do a great service" so I told
him about the American Jewish Committee and who was behind
it, the C ouncil of Democracy, (under the ae gis of the Council
of Democracy - garbled), not the American Jewish Committee but
nevertheless it would have our angle and our idea and of course
the big thing at that time we were pushing was the Divide and
Conquer that Hitler was trying to pomulgate here in the United
States and so I went to talk to Benet in his home and he lived
right where the New York Foundling Hospital is...
Q: 68th Street...
MK: A bunch of brownstones there and he accepted my idea
with great alacrity. Writers don't like to accept other people's
ideas especially someone of that level, and he said "I would love
to do it." So we started and I began giving him material and I
would want to say "This is the Divide and Conquer is what we are interested in and he was a pretty perceptive kind of guy because after the first or second program he said "You know, I have decided for the ten programs I am going to make sure that the Divide and Conquer I will put that in every single program" and we gave him the basic materials from the Council of Democracy and the American Jewish Committee which he incorporated.

Q: You mean he would mention certainly the Council on Democracy.

MK: Well, he had to mention the Council for Democracy because that was up at the top of the opener. We would say today's program is brought to you under the auspices of the Council for Democracy.

Q: And then did the American Jewish Committee -- was that ever named.

MK: No, but we publicized it through our own membership. Our first survey committee.

Q: It was a local profile.

MK: It was a big plus for us. A national program with Benet and the stars and then on top of that Life Magazine which was then the Number One Magazine all over the country printed the letters you know of the programs which was again another big tie-in that they would consider it such a great program and our director of those programs was a fellow by the name of -- who later became pretty well known -- was Joseph Losey. He's one of the great transcontinental, intercontinental movie
producers. He's in a class by himself. He was our director at NBC Radio. It was a very exciting project. As a result of that we did a big, I think when war was declared, we did a big one-hour program that Stephen Vincent Benet wrote again and we had a whole big studio at NBC, we had the big 8H Studio that Toscanini used to broadcast from and it was filled with -- we had Eve Curie from France, we had world figures. We had, oh, some of the top figures of the world. The King of Norway, so on. People who were in this country who were in exile because of what had been going on in Europe and we had a number of stars and it was a big one-hour program and Life Magazine did that and they printed that whole script. It created quite a stir. It was on the front page of Life Magazine. So these were very exciting times, very exciting days.

Q: Were these programs live or taped?

MK: Oh, they were live.

Q: Because I was going to say there was no such thing as tape.

Q: So that the only thing, that Life Magazine produced them that's the only copy that would be...

MK: I am sure our archives downstairs may have either scripts or recordings of it, you know or we may have it in our own files. They are historic.

Q: Yes.

MK: Now out of that, we created such a great reputation with the networks that I began to feed programs under AJC.

Q: Ah, ha, ha, ha.
MK: For example, I found a young guy who had been doing some work at NBC, who worked for the ILGWU, a labor young man named Mort Wiesengrad. Mort Wiesengrad (sp?) was just starting. He was really one of the great talents in broadcasting, I think and so I got him to write some programs for AJC and we would put them on at holidays for Passover or for Rosh Hashanah and I remember we took one program. It was called "The Battle of the Warsaw Ghetto" -- it was right when the battle of the Warsaw ghetto was going and we put this on under our own auspices and it created a sensation. We had Raymond Massey as one of our narrators and there was no television, there was no radio.

Q: Right.

MK: Then they gave us prime time. Then we did another program.

Q: You get a half an hour?

MK: And didn't pay for the whole thing, the network did. And then we began to move and move and they did a program called -- they took a poem called "Nightmare Noon" which is a foreboding if Nazism is to win you know what would happen to the world and Henry Hull did it with special music written with an orchestra. It was just incredible. And again that would be put in national magazines.

Q: So the agency was just getting more and more publicity all the time.

MK: We did the "Battle of the Warsaw Ghetto" -- I think we got 5,000 letters the first time we did it which is a lot of mail
in those days.

Q: Would you repeat a program like that?

MK: We did. As a matter of fact, the second time I repeated it on NBC I almost got fired.

Q: Why?

MK: Well, I decided to give it a little more of an AJC tie-up so we had the president of the AJC on who was then the old Judge Roskauer (sp?) who was a real tough baby to work with -- you know, one of the greats -- and we were doing this program at NBC on a Sunday -- we recorded it, no it was alive -- and we were rehearsing it, the drama, and then we left about three and a half minutes at the end for Roskauer to make his little speech about the importance of this program and the AJC and this guy would never take any kind of directions let alone even talk to him so I of course was relegated with the job, delegated with the job of handling him. I was vice president in charge of Roskauer. Well, he brought his wife with him who was a lovely woman. She sat up in what we called the client's booth upstairs and he was downstairs. I remember we did the rehearsal and then we did his piece. His piece at the end ran eight minutes, so I went to him and I said "Judge Roskauer, we had to cut this thing - it's set for three minutes. The most we can do is three and a half."

"Out of the question. No. Under no circumstances."

"Well," I went back to our director who says, "Look ole' Buddy, well, I have news for you. You tell him the network, what I am going to do simply is at the end of three and a half minutes I am going to cut him off and let him talk, you know." Well, that's
what happened. We forgot to cut off the microphone and the speaker in the control room.

Q: Where she was sitting...

MK: And after he finished, she came down and she said "Joe, you were cut off after three and a half minutes." Well, he gave me what for and I came home that night and I said, "Irma, that was my last job and my last at NBC and I tried to explain to him. I talked to Waldman. And they said, "Well, don't worry about it. You were following orders. We'll talk to him."

So they did but it was nip and tuck. It almost ended my career in radio. At any event, those were very successful programs. AJC began to get more and more in the forefront, and I remember towards the end of the war we were then working mostly with NBC and Max Jordan, who was one of the great, later became one of their top correspondents in Europe -- Max Jordan, I think there was a Max Jordan at the head of public affairs programs at NBC and then there was a man working in Europe for CBS was Caesar Sechinger (sp?). These are all names even before H. B. Kaltenborn.

Q: Oh, my! I didn't think there was anybody before him.

MK: So then, they asked us whether we had any ideas about the war. The war was waging... we were involved when D Day came. I was put on alert by NBC to select a rabbi and spokesman for the Jewish group so that when our troops landed in Germany, or France, I was then to contact Rabbi David DeSilva (?) Poole who was then very actively involved in the Jewish Welfare Board and army and nacy chaplaincy activities and I will never forget. I was living
in Scarsdale about two o'clock, two-thirty in the morning. There was Max Jordan and he said, "Milton, I've got historic news for you that the march has started, the landing has started. Please to call Rabbi DeSilva (?) Poole and tell him to meet us here in an hour." So I woke up Poole who was then waiting for my call at Central Park West (garbled). He rushed in and joined the other top clergymen there and joined in with prayers for our troops and for the peace of the world.

Q: That must have been an incredible moment for you.
MK: I still get goose pimples.

Q: I'm getting them listening to you tell it.
MK: And then when we began our successes in Europe and it looked like they were now going to cross over into Germany itself and the first town, according to the way it looked, was a town called Achan. Achan was a well-known historic town in Germany over the French line was where the Allies were going to cross into that town. So I said to NBC, "Hey, how about if we could find a chaplain, a Jewish chaplain to have the first Jewish religious service in Germany since Hitler and they bought it, the idea. I then got in touch with the Jewish Welfare Board. I did a lot of close work with them during the war. But let me finish Achan. So sure enough we got out our Jewish chaplain and our boys' Jewish soldiers who were fighting and we had the first sabbath service in Achan with the guns and the cannons booming in the background and here we had this service and that recording must be here someplace. It's a great historic event.
Q: Then technically, how did they do? They recorded it and then it was played back.

MK: They played it back probably to a Londoner.

Q: So they had the facilities.

MK: Yeah, they played it back and then it was played back again.

Q: That must have gotten...

MK: It was under the auspices of the American Jewish Committee and you got the credit for that.

Q: And you got the credit for that?

MK: We got the credit for that.

Q: Right, you and the AJC.

MK: So, there were all kinds of things going on like that. We were also working with the Jewish Welfare Board and the Joint Distribution Committee in placing war heroes, Jewish war heroes, on to existing programs. We would get stories about them on to the "Cavalcade of America", on "We the People", on Kate Smith who was a popular program and they would tell stories about Jewish war heroes, navy war heroes. And that was one way of showing because there was a lot of propaganda going on that the Jews were not involved numerically and they certainly were and there was a lot of great stories that we were able to get to the media. I am sure they were doing it on a national media level, but I was doing it in radio.

Q: Well, I was also told that you were special radio consultant to the Office of Civilian Defense.

MK: Well, that was another thing. All things began to come out like they had the Council of Democracy and I was asked
to come down to Washington and work with Mrs. Roosevelt at the Office of Civilian Defense on some ideas with radio for how we could work into that operation. And I went down to Washington once a week as a consultant. Got to a fellow by the name of Gilbert Harrison who was one of the people who worked very closely with Mrs. Roosevelt. I think later on he became owner of the New Republic Magazine (which still the size of Washington) but we did a lot of programming down there and I remember Mrs. Roosevelt every Friday would bring out her phonograph with some country records and we would do some country dancing in the hallways just for relaxation.

Q: Did she ever dance with me?

MK: Not me, but she did dance.

Q: Did you ever time to sit down and talk with her?

MK: I met her there and as a matter of fact later on many years later I did many programs with her on seminary programs on the NBC Directions and the Eternal Light. Great woman. Maybe later on I would like to hear more about her. What was her feeling on -- did she know that you were Jewish?

MK: Everybody was there. All kinds of individuals working down there. I didn't get to know her that well, but she knew who I was and that I was connected with the American Jewish Committee and had a high regard for our agency.

Q: She did?

MK: There were people there for example Samuel Rosenman who was FDR's counsel was very active in the American Jewish Com-
mittee as was General Greenbaum who was a (?) in Secretary Patterson's office so I think that's how I probably got involved in the operation. It was through Joe Greenbaum.

Q: Uh hum. I just wanted to touch here -- I was told that you did dramatic programs for the Annual Meetings of the American Jewish Committee. Is that true?

MK: Yeah, sure. Well, what happened there was I began to branch out into all kinds of things, all this creativity and it was such a great opportunity to do this because the AJC was one of the greatest learning places. They would give you a free hand and tell you what they wanted and they had confidence in you and you would go out and, at that point, having made a great reputation for ourselves at the AJC and myself in terms of myself of being able to deliver high quality kind of programs it was a great adventure. And so I would do programs tied in with our Annual Meetings. This was again a new project, what we have today in our Oral History Panels are pretty much like what I started with back there and I would do programs on stage. We would sometimes repeat our "Battle of the Warsaw Ghetto" for our audience. They would put in a star and I remember I was very much involved with Edward Murrow during the McCarthy period and this was after the McCarthy period.

Q: We will get to that.

MK: So we had him doing AJC interviews. We had all kinds of individuals working in doing original kinds of presentations and we were very successful.

Q: Do you remember the night Roosevelt died. Apparently
there was an Annual Meeting.

MK: Yeah, we were doing a program and it was supposed to have been in early evening and we had just finished our rehearsal and we had gotten the news that FDR had died and everybody was just grief-stricken. Our cast -- we had a number of top individuals. I think Tony Lieder of NBC was our director. We had a lot of top radio people, top individuals in the acting field and they all sat down and burst into tears and the women particularly were very touched and we decided whether we should go on or not to cancel out the whole thing and I think the agency decided to go on with the meeting as a tribute to FDR and we decided that our would also be a tribute to his memory so we did go on. It was a very emotionally charged evening and it was a great presentation.

Q: That sends chills too. Tell me, you mentioned women. That was something I was interested in knowing. Were there any -- I know there was at least one woman during the early years, your wife.

MK: Well, there were a number of women but the women at that point who were involved were very much on a secretarial level.

Q: That was it.

MK: Yeah. It wasn't until later on that we moved to 386 a Fourth Avenue that we had Ethel Phillips become/department head and Dorothy Nathan and other individuals of that type who became department heads and we began to have Andy Brooks (?) who became, Sandy Coffers and so on down the line.
Q: Had you ever thought today with women's lib on everybody's mind so much when you walk into an office and you see -- did you ever think 'Oh, gee, there aren't too many women here.'

MK: Very frankly, no. I know that in my own instance I had to depend pretty much on my wife who was my strong right hand and working way back there. I recognized her talents.

Q: You're right.

MK: And she did a lot of work with us and wrote a lot of our literary programs.

Q: I think before we get into the Eternal Light, just in general, are there any recollections of that period of the prewar and war years that we didn't go through that you would like to...

MK: Well, prewar there's one that stands out in my memory that one of the members of our survey committee was excited about and that was General Edward Greenbaum. Edward Greenbaum was another one of the great people that I will always remember from this agency. He was a lawyer, partner in Greenbaum, Wollf and Ernest -- Morris Ernest and that group. They are still recognized as one of the greatest. Harriet Pilpel who was very actively involved as one of the great women lawyers associated with that company and there was a big Madison Square Garden rally run by the German-American bund under the auspices of Fritz Kuhn, who was the American Hitler. There are all kinds of other individuals who had to be watched but he was the top man. Everybody was watching this with great trepidation, not only the Jewish groups but national
organizations as well as our government and at that meeting the Nazis paraded up and down Madison Square Garden and did a lot of anti-Semitic trading and I believe there was a Jewish war veteran and talked against them and was thrown out and created practically a riot. Dorothy Thompson was covering that as a top woman journalist who reported quite a piece on that. Well, I had a friend of mine who was working for a radio station, Leon Goldstein -- a terrific guy, great Jewish feeling and identification. He came to see me and said, "Hey, look, I got an idea. Can we work with local stations and networks..."

Q: Wherever you could get in.

MK: At that point there was not tape recording like we have, it was wire recording. It was done on wires. It goes way back to the wars. He said, "Hey, I think I may be able to plant a wire recorder under the rostrum of Madison Square Garden and tape the whole proceedings. How would you feel about it? It would cost a thousand dollars. I said, "Gee, that sounds great." (garbled) So I got the buyer and he jumped a mile. "Oh, my God, tell him 'yes'" so I will never forget. A couple of days later Leon delivered over in boxes (the boxes are still here, they are in tin boxes). We had them put on from wire tape to platters on the discs. We had to be very careful because they were not allowing too much acetate to be used so they are all like glass based. You have to be awfully careful -- and so these were very self-incriminating pieces about the Nazi spy ring and the Nazi activities here, particularly the American-German bund and after
the war General Greenbaum became one of the prosecutors of the whole Nazi ring in this country. He called me up one day and he said, "Hey, I need those tapes, those records."

Q: They had never been made public?

MK: Oh, no. They still haven't. They are here and I have made a typewritten sheet on what everyone was, how long it took, and what the subject was and he used those to convict Kuhn, first Kuhn and then other Nazis so it was quite a story.

Q: That's an amazing story.

MK: Spies. You name it.

Q: You were really into everything yet you were able to do it your way which is very exciting.

MK: Very exciting.

Q: I wonder -- I am not sure we should start the Eternal Light. It's just about 4:30.

MK: Well, let's give it another ten or fifteen minutes.

Q: OK. Well, why don't you tell me about the Eternal Light which I suppose is so famous.

Q: Well, what happened, as a result of my doing these programs the American Jewish Committee liked the "Battle of the Warsaw Ghetto" and others I got the bright idea, because here was this boy who was bothering me up at NBC and they were looking for this program and my friend Max Jordan said, "Hey, come up with a Jewish-religious idea and I had gone to Rabbi Jonah Weiss who ran the Message (?) to Israel program, that is still on the air. His son now still runs it from the Central Synagogue and is still on the Blue Network, now the ABC network, and I said to him, "Hey, I've
got a great idea. Rather than do these dry sermons that you
do every week, how's about if we do a series of dramas, really
exciting dramas of life in America, Jewish life in America that
will interest not only Jews but non-Jews as well. "He said,
'Out of the question. I would never do that in a million years.
Wouldn't be interested in hearing it.'" Then I went to see
Rabbi Louis Finkelstein who had become interested in broadcasting
through a friend of mine named Nathan Belth who was a brother
of Norman Belth and Nathan Belth we worked very closely with
during the war when he was the Jewish Welfare Board pr man and
when he was at the JDC (Joint Distribution Committee) and we
used to do a lot of placing of talent. He would get me the
heroes and the stories and so he interested Finkelstein in
broadcasting and I went up to see Finkelstein. I said, "We've
got a great opportunity here. NBC wants a program. It would
be a great coup for the Seminary which is a (garbled) to be the
sponsor, non-profit religious institutional sponsor, of this
program." He thought it was a great idea, and they thought it
was a great idea. But all the other Jewish groups began to
generate holy heck, because how come you give it to the con-
servative Jews and particularly the Orthodox group were not
interested in the idea but the reform group were. Other factors
besides Weiss...

Q: This is in '43, '44...

MK: So Finkelstein talked very closely and carefully about
this to General David Sarnoff who himself was Jewish and who
became quite interested in Finkelstein and the idea and said, "No, I am going to give this to the Seminary in trust for all the other groups." So I must say to the great credit of John S. Lawson (sp?) -- at this point I wanted to be able to branch from the AJC, do some independent things and take this idea and produce it for the Seminary and for NBC as independent packaging and John S. Lawson (sp?) said, "Sure, you've got my blessings. You'll be our radio and tv consultant, but take on this extra assignment." And so I did, and the rest is common history. I found a fellow by the name of Mort Wiesengrad who had been doing AJC programs for us, brought him up to the Seminary and it was a great marriage. He was perfect for us and the Seminary had great scholars to give us program ideas. Our first student assistant -- we always had a student assistant and I am one of the fathers of the Eternal Light Program and here we are 45 years later still on the air and hope eternally. We have won over almost a hundred awards, it raised a generation of young Jewish kids in this country. If you ever look at Phillip Roth's book, a woman (?) ghost writer, merely mentions a ritual every Sunday in his home in Newark. His family would sit down to hear the Eternal Light program, so this must have applied all over the country. Wherever I go now adults usually say to me, "Gee, you are our window on the world. I live in Kalamazoo and we had no Sunday School there and 12:30 to 1 'boy,' that was it for us." The program has won three Peabody Awards which is like the Pulitzer Awards,
we just won it recently again this past spring. It started back here with our activity at the American Jewish Commitee.

Q: Can you think of any programs that really stand out in your mind either because it was an embarrassing moment or because they were so great.

MK: No. I must say that one of the first things that I did I repeated Mort Wiesengrad's EJC (?) "Battle of the Warsaw Ghetto" on our new one and at that point it was practically the end of the war. It pulled in 10,000 letters which was another biggest record that was ever in non-profit educational broadcasting. But we did have a lot of very exciting programs. Mort Wiesengrad in my mind was a genius. I can tell you a lot of stories but I don't think they belong in here. They belong maybe more in the Archives of the Seminary, but he always had a soft spot for his early association with me and the AJC because we got him started.

Q: That's wonderful. I think that just before we close if there is anything else that you can think about and then we will close for today.

MK: Well, we did Eternal Light. We can do a program like a story of Louis Marshall (sp?) who was a great AJC person. Do AJC individuals as well as people who weren't even Jewish. Like we could do a story of Gandhi and what that meant in terms of universality. The program began to have universal appeal to everybody because it was a kind of program that was not parochial.
Q: OK. Well, then do you want to stop for a day and then...
MK: OK: The extent of the program. We receive thousands and thousands of letters in this 35 years and of course, one of my favorites is not related to the AJC but to the program. A letter from West Virginia who was not Jewish heard one of our Bible stories. That particular story was a story of Hosea, one of the great prophets in the Bible who had a wayward wife who went off and lived a life of sin and when she was thrown off on the ash heap and came back to Hosea's household he accepted her and took her back into his house. Well along came this letter from this lady. I know her name but I won't mention it from West Virginia and she said, "Dear Eternal Light, please send me and here's thirty cents, ten cents a script, three copies of your script posthaste. I need one for myself, one for my husband and one for his girl friend."
Q: (She laughs). That is fabulous. It really is very ecumenical.
MK: OK.
Q: Do you use black actors?
MK: Back in 1944. (Not heard of?)
Q: What made you...
MK: Well, we found that we were looking for good actors and we got a fellow like Warner Hernandez (sp?) one of the great black actors to play rabbis in the program. Unheard of.
Q: Nobody knew it, I suppose.
MK: Of course, we had a lot of women on our programs all the time and I don't know they didn't bother me but they went after everybody else but our program. The Eternal Light was never contacted or pressured. A lot of the actors and actresses were in red channels and I would put them on Eternal Light.

Q: And they would never stop the program.

MK: And I would also use writers who were and after the thing became a cause celebre these guys to this day are very wealthy. You usually see their names on commercials -- Alexander Scourby, Leon Janney, Roger (?), Sam Jaffe. Martin Ritt who now does a big movie production. These guys all worked for me and they said "We will never forget the Eternal Light." We kept them alive. That's another story.

Q: Yeah. How did NBC.

MK: They never bothered us.

Q: You think they just closed their eyes.

MK: They never said anything to us. We just went on our merry way.

Q: That's incredible.

MK: And to this day anytime we call them wherever they are they come running because they get like fifty bucks but to them it's like coming home and they are still doing dramatic shows.

Q: Well, everybody knows the Eternal Light. Well, it's like the sun coming up in the morning.

MK: A lot of the young, well, certain people, people --
we've got a series we are doing with Joel Grey.

Q: Oh, really.

MK: Whom I met through Oral History. He was on one of our panels.

Q: Oh, as a matter of fact I did know. Oh, he's wonderful.

MK: Oh, he's marvelous. OK.

Q: End, Interview Two, Tape 2, Side 1.
Q: This is Interview Three with Milton Krents for the William E. Wiener Oral History library's History of the American Jewish Committee. I am Jill Levine and this is December 10, 1979, at the American Jewish Committee. Well, when last we spoke I think we had just finished off, although one can never finish off, with the Eternal Light. For the moment, we have finished with the Eternal Light.

MK: It goes on eternally, you know.

Q: That's right. And now I thought we would get into the American Jewish Committee, post World War II. What is was doing and what your place was. So?

MK: OK. First of all, talking from the vantage point of working in the media field, particularly in broadcasting, with the post World War II era, you had to switch over from radio to television which is a big big pond (?) to jump and so we had to be involved in a new kind of medium, which had had and still has great potential but we are looking back now. Television really came into its own I would say about, we started on Eternal Light television, and some of the programs we did for The American Jewish Committee go back at least to thirty years ago and television first made its big public mark in the World's Fair of 1939, which is what, how many years ago.

Q: Forty years ago.

MK: Forty years ago where General David Sarnoff transmitted the first television program and ten years later they were on the air. So we were involved -- the American Jewish Committee
I think I touched briefly about some of the programs that we had done during the war and later in the post war years with programs like -- did I mention the 60 minute hour program?

Q: No, you didn't. I would like to hear about that.

MK: And the one we did with Arthur Miller's book...

Q: Focus.

MK: And what was the other program called, the first one. The one I just eluded to.

Q: No, the 60 minute hour.

MK: No, it was from the 50 minute hour?

Q: Is that the one that had come from a book or something?

MK: It's about a bigot who in prison...I know the name is on the tip of my tongue.

Q: I tried to find the name of that book and I didn't know. It was called the "Fifty Minute Hour", that was the name of the program.

MK: Well, the book. Out of that came a story about a bigot and the bigot lived...was in prison and he was being treated by a Jewish psychiatrist and there was a whole battle royale between the bigot and the Jewish psychiatrist and it was such a great success that it was adapted for television by a fellow by the name of Leo Pogostin (sp?) who was one of the great TV writers and still is and directed by Fielder Cook (sp?) who became and still is one of the top TV producer-directors and NBC was so pleased with that program a year or so later they asked us what else we had. This was the first time that organizations were being allowed to present and produced programs on their own.
and NBC gave us the time and all the facilities.

Q: Was this a Sunday program?

MK: It was a big Sunday hour program and they were quite successful, were pioneers in their day putting on programs about prejudice and probing the roots of prejudice. Both of them were prejudice-type programs. One was, I told you, a locale in a federal prison and the Arthur Miller one was a story of a man, a bigot, in Brooklyn which was where Arthur Miller came from of a bigot who was a personnel director in a big corporation in New York and practiced anti-Semitism as the corporate policy and then subsequently he couldn't wear glasses but had to wear contact lenses -- couldn't wear contact lenses but glasses and at that point he looked very Semitic. He was fired from his job and all the things that he did to these Jewish individuals were visited (?) upon him so it was called "Focus" and it was a very dramatic program.

Q: To it, was that before or after "Gentlemen's Agreement?" or was it all the same period?

MK: I think it was all around the same period. But in any event, they were very exciting and interesting programs and on the other level we had formerly been trying to work with existing programs. Another fascinating project that bears a lot of attention is the programs we got involved with with Edward R. Murrow at CBS. I became very friendly with Fred Friendly who was Ed Murrow's producer and he had a program called "See It Now" and there was a great great battle going on in America on the
battle going on in America on the McCarthy issue and Ed Murrow to his credit was right at the forefront leading in the fight against McCarthy and they built this special program and the important thing they want, Fred Friendly wanted, was that there be some kind of support from Mr. Murrow after the program went on the air because if they got anti-mail and not pro-mail it would hurt the cause and their programming as well, liberal programming, so I came back to the American Jewish Committee and we organized a very (?) campaign here with our consistencies around the country to the point where after the program they got a tremendous amount of favorable mail and a lot of it they attributed it to the kind of grass roots programming that we had done in terms of audience mail. They never forgot that because Ed Murrow -- years later we asked him to narrate one of our important stage presentation at an annual meeting and he was usually reluctant to take on those kinds of assignments but he remembered our part in that great fight and he said, "Certainly, for the American Jewish Committee I'll be happy to do anything so he came and narrated a fantastic program that was written for us by Marc Siegel on what was going on in the broadcasting field particularly on CBS programs in terms of fighting prejudice and even Fred Friendly too years later gave us great tribute for the kinds of support we had given Ed Murrow and their special program unit.

Q: Did you also try to give them ideas of maybe what some of their programs were.

MK: Well, you could. Just as we worked in radio, we would
give ideas to various programs whether it was Ed Murrow or "We the People" or "Calvacade of America"—these programs were making their switches from radio to television and we were able to give them program ideas that fell right into their format. But it was a transitional period and a tough period and it was again a pioneering kind of effort, a part of our now radio and television department and we again made the kind of contributions that are still lasting.

Q: Can you tell us anything special that Edward R. Murrow—any interesting stories.

MK: Except that he came and he said "I don't know quite how this project is going to work for you" and this was at the Waldorf Astoria and we did a run through and he gave us a lot of time and after we did the rehearsal he turned to me and said, "Gee, this is a good script by Mr. Siegel and it's going to work." And it worked. He was the narrator of this film sampler kind of a program that we had put together, a tie-in with a program and the objectives of the American Jewish Committee.

Q: So he had all these wonderful feelings...

MK: He did and so did Fred Friendly, so there are all kinds of interesting stories but I can't remember too many of them but that one with Ed Murrow really stood out in my mind.

Q: Is Fred Friendly Jewish?

MK: Oh sure. He comes from Rhode Island. You see, his name has been changed. I can't remember...

Q: Oh, really.

MK: Oh yes, but he was in the army and it was a long moniker
that was changed to Fred Friendly.

Q: But of course Ed Murrow was not Jewish?

MK: Murrow was not. He came from out of the West.

Q: Now "Directions." You had something to do with that program.

Q: Well, "Directions" is a series of programs like the Eternal Light that is on the ABC. It's not as old as the Eternal Light which is 35 years/this year in '70 in radio and 30 years on television. "Directions" which is again an ABC religious series divided amongst all the faith groups so that program I would say is about 18 years old. It's the junior to the other networks because it got started later. But that's a program that's got essentially a kind of news type of approach. It ties in with some kind of news aspect as it relates to religion.

Q: But you...

MK: That's again that comes under the auspices of an association with American Broadcasting Company's public affairs department and the Jewish Theological Seminary of America which also is the partner with NBC on the Eternal Light series.

Q: So that is how your link to Eternal Light comes there.

OK. I wasn't quite sure about...

MK: There are a number of AJC people who participate on the End of Side I, Tape Two.
Q: This is Side Two, Tape Two, Interview Number Three. We left off, you were just telling me some of the people from the American Jewish Committee who have been on the Directions program.

MK: Yes, and picking up too this past year, the Directions program had a very special tie-in with the Wiener E. Wiener Oral History Library Program when they did a special half-hour Directions program all about the William E. Wiener Oral History Library that was a good part filmed here at our oral history library committee. The program was called "In Their Own Words: The American Jewish Oral History Experience --the Twentieth Century."

Q: Now when Marc Tannenbaum, Rabbi Marc Tannenbaum, has also appeared.

MK: He has been on special panels or programs that he could make some contribution to the subject under discussion whether it be the Jews or the Jews and the Black situation or whether it be Israel and America, the Israel-America story or anything that we had special expertise in, particularly in the whole Jewish relationships.

Q: So are most of the Direction programs, pardon my ignorance because I don't watch. I did see the Oral History one, however. Are most of them question and answer panel programs.

MK: Some are. Some are conversations, some of them are documentaries, some are studio programs. The last program they did they did a documentary of the problem of how the Jews relate to the treatment of the and they did a program called"
Growing Old in Venice, Venice, California where there is an interesting group of aging Jewish individuals and families. That was a documentary that they did just a couple of weeks ago.

Q: So that you spend a lot of time with Directions and The Eternal Light still today.

MK: That's right. And my first love is to the William E. Wiener Oral History Library of the American Jewish Committee.

Q: Let's just save that for just a little minute or two.

MK: But I did have to tell you about the documentary which the Directions did do and was done twice, you know. Originally it was done in the spring and repeated again in the summer.

Q: I am going to come back to that in the Oral History. I want to ask you a couple of questions about it. Before we get into that. I just wanted to go a little more into the McCarthy era. Was there anything else you can think of that you were involved in through the Committee during that period.

MK: Yes. We were doing some programs, special programs. I remember on the American Broadcasting Company and I did arrange for an interview with Governor, or Senator Herbert H. Lehman who was one of the grand men in politics and the political story of America. He was practically, almost single-handedly leading that fight in the United States Senate against McCarthy and I remember doing a program with him and with Theodore Bikel who himself was an activist although he is an actor and musician and it was a fine program. Senator Lehman really spoke his mind.

Q: That must have made you feel good.

MK: It did.
Q: Now did you get into any of the Civil Rights Issues, desegregation or any of that?

MK: Well, the only way we would have gotten into that was the way we worked in radio days and television where we maybe would have special individuals who were involved in the Civil Rights Fight who got on to existing programs or conversation-type programs. There were a number of conversation-type programs that were on on NBC. I remember that network particularly. Were John Schlesser (sp?) came on early in the game and we had an interview with him on a program that Richard Heffner ran on NBC. And way back there John Schlesser signalled a clarion call that Jews and blacks had had a great amalgamation of common effort and purpose but he saw danger signals on the horizon. And of course, this goes way way back. I can't remember the year, but he made a very impassioned talk at that point and I remember a lot of people were kind of annoyed with him for putting what they called bees up people's noses but he was calling the shot right and of course years later he was proven right that there was something smouldering under the surface.

Q: He was a very forward looking person.

MK: He certainly was.

Q: I wanted to ask you about him. I suppose this would be as good a time as any. Do you recollect...

MK: Well, my recollections of John Schlesser. I was here when he came.

Q: Well, you were here when everybody came, just about.
MK: He was a guy. He came here when the Committee was just a small kind of -- the organization was on its way. He had a great creative organization genius that made the American Jewish Committee what it is today. I mean the foresight to bring together people who on his survey committee, on advisory boards that were top top men. He was the man who envisioned of strengthening the chapter program of the AJC which was just something on paper. He made it into a really network ...

Q: A nationwide organization.

MK: And he was able to find the funds for all kinds of important programs and of course, he has done so many. One of them that he is very proud of and created quite a stir was the whole project of the Authoritarian personality, which was his baby and which became one of the landmarks in human relations programs not only in America but all over the world and that was his baby. Of course, he had come to the AJC with a tremendous experience in the juvenile delinquency field. But he was a hard-hitting guy and he had what you would call (a phrase which they don't use much today but which had a lot of pull years ago) that was called -- he had a lot of moxie. That means he had a lot of guts and he stood up if he felt that something had a lot of merit to it he really went to town on it. Stuck to his guns.

Q: It sounds like that.

MK: He was not all sweetness and light. I got along very well with him because he respected the kind of work that I did.
Q: He would listen. He was a good actor.

MK: He was a good one to put on a program because he was a pretty snappy character. I remember besides, we used to put him on programs that David Susskind ran many many years ago and he was in those days those programs were on late at night and there was no pre-taping so at 11 or 12 o'clock I remember we did one great program with Susskind and John Schlossen on a panel and we got great response on that. So I have nothing but wonderful memories about John Schlossen. I must say to his credit too that when I wanted to start and organize the Eternal Light program and so I had to take some time away from my job at the AJC he backed me 100%. He said "This is an important program for the Seminary and the country and go to it."

A: Tell me. Go back to the Authoritarian personality of him, because I think people who would listen to the tape don't know what that was.

MK: Well, that was a project that brought in some of the great social scientists of our day and there was a staff set up here in this organization who worked with some of the great social scientists all over the world. One of them in particular was Max Horkheimer (sp?) of Frankfort Germany who was a world renowned specialist in this field. They burst upon the scene of many new kinds of concepts and ideas that were earthshaking in their import and had great significance for the whole field of combating and fighting prejudice. This was one of the great pioneer seminal landmarks. The book was that a compendium of some of the
articles and studies that came out of this special group and still is recognized by universities all over the country and organizations as the book in that field.

Q: Very exciting. Now tell me you were also John Schlossen's personal assistant very well. Dessie Goshel (sp?).

MK: Dessie Goshel. She was kind of like the Selma Hirsh of her day and Dessie Goshel was a warm, wonderful individual who came from Wonsocket (sp?) Rhode Island and she was a New Englander and she had gone to school in Pembrook which has now become part of Brown. We met her early in the days when she came with Dr. Schlossen—I guess she must have come from his Jewish board of Guardians organization to the AJC. She was his strong right hand and she worked very closely and very hard with John Schlossen when they put our own building up here, Institute of Human Relations. Right here are 56th and Third.

Q: He was responsible for this?

MK: He was. It was his vision but she did the hard leg work, you know and got sick in the process because it was such a long process, very arduous, but she was an unusual human being and turned out to be a great friend of our family. But if she was your friend, she was your friend for life. She befriended a lot of people around the American Jewish communities. She was like a mother hen and confessor for the whole organization. She died rather young. I thought she was the type that would go on forever. Her memory does and the work she has done.

Q: Well, and the way people talk about her.
MK: She was a venerated individual.

Q: Well, now, when did Selma Hirsh come to the American Jewish Committee?

MK: I can't remember the exact date, but I can remember Selma Hirsh and I had an early acquaintance. When I was loaned to the Council for Democracy during the War and Selma Hirsh was brought down to Washington to. She had been working with C.D. Jackson, the publisher of *Life* and *Time* and *Fortune* and she was also Melvyn Douglas' right-hand in the Office of Civilian Defense in Washington and so she came to the Council for Democracy. We were very good friends. I have nothing but great respect for her. Especially a job for public relations and I knew that she was quite a gal, quite an individual.

Then several years later when Dr. Schlosser came and my immediate boss at that point was a fellow by the name of Richard Rothschild who was director of public relations. I remember Dr. Schlosser and Mr. Rothschild calling me and saying, "Do you know a Selma Hirsh?" And I said, "I certainly do. I had great association with her during the War" and they said "We are thinking about bringing her to the AJC. What do you think?" And I said, "I think if the AJC ever got her it would be a tremendous contribution to the executive staff." I don't think it was only my endorsement of her but she did subsequently come on staff as you well know and is still making a tremendous contribution as associate director of the American Jewish Committee and one of the individuals who has done so much for oral history
because our William E. Wiener Oral History Library has been under her aegis since its formation.

Q: Oh, I didn't know that.

MK: Well over ten years ago.

Q: Well, why don't we get into the Oral History Library.

MK: OK.

Q: Well, just tell us to begin with, why is it called the William E. Wiener Oral History Library?

MK: When the Oral History Library was started over ten years ago it was an idea that had been suggested around this organization by a number of individuals particularly Nathan Perlmutter who was an associate director and his brother Phil Perlmutter who was in charge of our Boston office and he drummed for kind of an oral history kind of library and they worked at very peripherally. They had Lucy Davidowicz who was then on staff doing some special oral history pieces around the country, particularly in the mid-west and in California, but it was waiting some kind of special funding and Selma Hirsh and Bert Gold, Dr. Schlossen's successor and Mr. Gold has really been again a very strong support taking up John Schlossen for not only the radio and television work of the AJC but also for the Oral History Library. Both Bert Gold and Selma Hirsh to the Oral History has been kind of a special plum of theirs. They met with Walter Mendelsohn who was on our board of governors, a very active lay person here for many many years at the AJC and who is of the law firm, I believe, of Proskauer, Mendelsohn and Goetz.
and he was the lawyer and executor for William E. Wiener who was an outstanding realtor in New York and other areas. A large bulk of his money had been left in trust in Mr. Mendelsohn's hands for distribution to projects in which he, Mr. Wiener, would have been interested in. One of the items that Mr. Mendelsohn looked in canvassing the AJC interests was this fledgling idea of an oral history library. So a contribution was made from William E. Wiener estates through Walter Mendelsohn of $250,000 to start a library. That really gave us our send-off. We were fortunate at that time, too, to have an individual who was one of the outstanding or most important practitioners in the communications field in the person of Louis C. Cowan. Mr. Cowan came from Chicago originally. He was in the communications field. He was a packager of radio and television programs. Some of his famous programs were: Quiz Kids, The $64,000 Question and he was so successful in that field that he became the president of CBS Television and unfortunately, after he had been there a while, the scandal broke on the Quiz programs and he was an innocent victim of that whole area because he had given his program company over in trust to other individuals and he was tarred in that whole scandal and left CBS and so many of his friends were so unhappy because of that. I think it made Mr. Cowan pretty sad and unhappy because he began to lose his health at that point. The experience must have had a heavy toll on him but he did, from the moment that Bert Gold and Selma Hirsh talked with him, he felt that this oral history had just great potential. He had been up to Brandeis
University after CBS working as a consultant there and he was responsible for a lot of special projects that he worked out with Dr. Abraham Sackert (sp?) who was then head of Brandeis University. But in the years that we worked with Lou Cowan he was our national chairman and I was the director of the library and we worked very closely. I had known him when he was with CBS and we worked in tandem. There was not a day that we weren't on the telephone two or three times and he was responsible for a lot of the strong support and some of the innovative ideas that we had. Such as an oral history, for example. The idea of -- we thought that was something that all oral histories did. There are now, you know, roughly about 400 oral histories. At that point I think there were about 300, I think. There was an Oral History Association in America and the granddaddy is the Columbia University Oral History Library which runs over a quarter of a century, and I think the second oldest is the one at the University of California at Berkley in the Bancroft Library. The Butler Library houses the Columbia Library here. We started up a Direction paper. We wanted this not to be a hit and miss kind of operation, because a lot of groups had tried or had failed initially because there was not the proper kind of organization in planning this and that is something you know. Oral history requires a great, tremendous amount of planning and exploration and it's only by that kind of stay work can you get good results and that's what the oral history is all about. So we devised this idea that Mr. Cowan suggested of Direction Papers, that we wanted to do some kind of scientific kind of way not shooting arrows up in the air and now knowing where they
land. Everytime we got ourselves involved the objective of the library being the American Jewish experience in the 20th century, a very broad kind of objective and a very large canvas to work on. So we devised Direction Papers, or what we called road maps every phase of American life that we got involved in. Jews had made important contributions in philanthropy or law or sports or medicine or we any number of direction papers now in our library. These were prepared by outstanding experts in those fields and they gave us rationale why we should be working in philanthropy, or why we should be working law or why we should be working in business or sports and who were some of the individuals we ought to be thinking of, a priority list, and it was Mr. Cowan who coined the phrase "an actuarial imperative" which always draws a smile and a laugh. Anybody up over 80 is an actuarial imperative and we have had actuarial imperatives who run up to 100 and over that we have done, that we have secured oral history memoirs on. So these were some of the early ones. I had suggested early in the game and I always got a surprise how Lou Cowan reacted to this idea when I first sat down on one our early lunches and I said, "The Oral History Library" for us to really get going, to get attention and interest I think we first ought to canvas some of the name people. I don't say necessarily celebrities but individuals whose names mean something and when you get these names from people you will bring other people into the orbit." And he thought that was a great idea and we used that approach and you have to be careful in oral history not to
go after name people because you can then be accused of being an elitist type of organization. We have done not only the greats but the unknown individuals whether it was a Holocaust study or in our general biography area.

Q: For your special studies, do you get special grants, is that right?

MK: Yes, we built on the original grant from the William E. Wiener Library, we got special grants from around the country to swell that first little fund raising shell and this was our root of fund raising beginning. We were able to get some kinds of contributions from individuals around the country like Walter Gilmor and Irving Engel and a number of others and early in the game we got a contribution from the family of Blaustein.

Q: Jacob.

MK: Mr. Blaustein, one of the greats in the American Jewish Committee, one of our presidents, was on the verge of doing an Oral History memoir for us and unfortunately died and so his family, because of his great interest in oral history, gave us a fund to do the story, to do an oral biography -- this was another one of our innovative ideas, an oral biography of an individual (in this instance, Jacob Blaustein) and we interviewed the family, prepared a list of almost 60 individuals who cut across Mr. Blaustein's life with his many careers, whether it was in the oil business or whether it was working for Israel, or the American Jewish Committee. He had so many interests -- oceanography to petroleum to Jewish organizational life, to Baltimore -- you name it. So these almost 60 individuals who
were from all walks of life in America and around the world included people like Ben Gurion before he died, Golda Meier, Teddy Kollek, Cardinal Sheean of Baltimore who knew Mr. Blaustein the Senator of Maryland, Senator Mathias, Mayor McGelden (sp?), Dean Rusk who had worked then as Secretary of State and -- oh the list could go on and on.

Q: It must be so rich.

MK: They are beautiful. We even had memoirs with his own games keeper on his grounds, people who had worked for him on a...

Q: Different people see the same man. These were people who were on his staff. His gardeners. So it's a fascinating project. It was done practically by one individual, Mitchell Krauss who's now at CBS as a commentator! He just left Channel 13 and he was at liberty so we grabbed him and he was able to do almost all of the 60 programs all over the world doing this project.

Q: How do you decide what kinds of projects that you want to get involved in? I mean, do you have people who write your position papers but, not position papers but...

MK: Well, you have to again think of innovative ideas and we have had some interesting kinds of projects that we have been involved in. We did a project, again with a contribution from Irving M. Engel (sp?), Theodore (?) Engel, who was originally born in Alabama in a little town. Then came up north and ended up as one of the great civil rights leaders of America. We had an Irving Engel collection on civil rights in America where
we interviewed blacks and whites alike who had been involved in
the early struggle of the civil rights freedom in America. We
had a project we did on Stetelleich (?). Mr. Frank Laughton
from New Jersey gave us a sum of money and we did the story
of life in Eastern Europe before World War II.

Q: Where did you get the interview with these?

MK: These were old people who were still in America here--in homes for the aged, social clubs and we have some up in
Schenectady at the Union College and down in Florida.

Q: So you had to have people who were fluent in the languages?

MK: Well, most of them speak English. They have been here since before World War II. Pretty bunch of oldsters
and they had fascinating stories. One of them appeared on our ABC Directions program on the Oral History Library.

Q: Now, how did that happen, the Directions Program on the Library? Did you go then and say, "Gee, how."

MK: Well, you know, I am the producer, or rather for the Seminary, on Directions and I had been telling them, particularly Mr. Sid Darion and Tom Wolfe who were the producer and director of that program about this great project that the AJC was running and they picked it by osmosis from me and they said one day, "Hey, how about doing a program on that?" And of course, I was just going to kick them under the table, you know.

Q: (Laughs). "Why didn't we think of that?"

MK: And they said, "Sure." And I said "great" and they came
over and fell in love with the kind of operation we were running. I was no longer the director at that point. My wife Irma Krents is now the director and she worked very closely with their writer, Brenda Shapiro and others on that to have that program come about.

Q: Well, now, is the American Jewish Committee the only--how do I say this--private organization that has an oral history library or do most of them, most of them through universities.

MK: Well, of the 400 there are all kinds of libraries. When you go to an Oral History Convention which we did back in October. This one was held at Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan. You get a thousand people showing up from 400 libraries from all over the country here and all over the world. We had people there from Germany, England, West Germany and that's the way we kind of rub elbows and interestingly enough for this last convention we ran off our ABC Directions Program which was the first time that any television network had done an oral history library so there was a great deal of interest in our project and very good reaction to it because it told quite a good story about our history and was something that they could use and a lot of their libraries are interested in trying to get copies of this program to be used locally.

Q: Well, what I am trying to get at, is it unique for an organization such as the American Jewish Committee to have an oral history library?

MK: Well, if you run down the list of who are those 400
members you will find corporations, you will find mostly academics and college universities. You will find some organizations like Mt. Sinai Hospital has an oral history library, IBM has an oral history library. It's an interest conglomerate kind of group but they are all interested in oral history per se. I think the American Jewish Committee is the one group that does it in depth for the American Jewish scene. Brandeis has been trying to do some of it but I don't think it ever really took off because it required the constant kind of supervision and exploration that we have been giving it all these years. So we are very highly regarded by all the libraries around the country for the interesting kinds of programs that we have done. Not only in the program field but Irma has done a lot in terms of print material that she has brought out. She has brought out an interesting brochure called "Sounding of an Era" (?) and the same logo is used on that and the companion piece which came out the past year or so ago was the first catalog of the William E. Wiener Oral History Library. An oral history library doesn't really come into being until it has its catalog. A catalog of all the items involved and all the people and all the transcripts of, all the summaries of those transcripts and what they mean. How long are they and when they were done and that's the meat and potatoes of our history.

Q: Did Irma come work at the library when you started with the library or did she come in at a later date?

MK: She came in after I left a couple of years ago.
Well, but she did a lot of homework with me. In the early days there was a lot of homework to be done, and she was just a natural for this because at that point she was working as a national public relations director for the National Council of Jewish Women. But I would bring home homework and she had formerly worked at the American Jewish Committee years ago. She's basically a professional writer and editor so she took to this like a duck to water. So when I left and she took over she knew everything from A to Z because we had this combination going. Team operation.

Q: Did you ever know Alan Nevins who had started the Columbia Library?

MK: No, I didn't. I knew about him by reputation. I think by the time we started he had died. His successors were very active with us and we of course went up for some of their input and kind of fashioned our library after theirs in style and Dr. Louis Starr has been his successor and director for the library and his assistant, Miss Elizabeth Mason is second in command and they form a good team up there, doing a great job.

Q: So there is a lot of rapport between the libraries everywhere.

MK: Oh yes. We work closely. We have friends all over the country. At the University of Vermont, an oral history library as well you know.

Q: Right. Charlie [Mdesiy (sp?)}
MK: That was your indoctrination.

Q: Yes.

MK: And Professor Sam Han who is Jewish who was one of the top oral historians in the country is stationed at the University of Vermont in Berkeley. Professor Morris Ustead (sp?) at Montpelier and then we have Wilma Baum, Mrs. Baum (sp?) is the Louis Starr of the University of California at Berkeley. She's one of the outstanding practitioners in the field. Then we have ongoing relations with the Waco University down at Texas. We could just go on and on.

Q: Is it possible that if you had to have some one interviewed who lived say out on the West Coast and it was -- say he was an actuarial or whatever she was-- and you didn't have anybody in the committee to do it could you trade off.

MK: Sure. We are doing one of those right now. We have Professor Charlies Morrissey doing -- Mrs. Levine of Rutland, Vermont who was one of the first Jewish at the turn of the century, a little back town in Vermont called Brandon, Vt. She and her husband ran the first general clothing store in that town. I remember when my wife went to camp there and I used to play in an orchestra up there that we talked about earlier, that Mr. Levine has quite an emporium. He died but Mr. Levine is in Rutland and Charlie Morrissey is doing her oral history. We have stringers all over the place.

Q: So it is a close knit group. Everybody helps everybody else.
Q: I suppose it's just young enough so that there's...
MK: Oh, sure.
Q: The competitive...
MK: Well, you see, we are the only Jewish -- you know. But they are interested in our projects and they come into our library and get excited in that magnetic tracking board that we have upstairs. We are the only library in the country.
Q: Well, now, how does that work?
MK: Well, it's like following a stock market report. It's in the library and you come in the library and it gives instant replay on what the status is of any memoir that we have of our almost a thousand people. Each project has a different color like orange is the Blaustein project. The Holocaust project is another color. General biography is another color. Engel is another color. Our project on the Study of the Election of 1972 is another color and when you go to look for the color from that magnetic tracking board on the transcript box.
Q: Oh, that's fascinating.
MK: And so several years ago I was invited to give a talk at the Oral History Association Meeting in Asheville, North Carolina and so I brought along a -- I had a large photostat made of our tracking board and I put it up behind me when I gave my talk. Everybody just went gaga for it, and as a matter of fact, one of the oral history librarians from Yale asked if she could have it so she was the first one to ask for it so she got it. But we also at that session, I had a videotape made, a copy of
a videotape that we had made of our Yearly Annual Oral History panel and that particular one was a real humdinger. We had Ed Newman interviewing theater people and Melvyn Douglas, Richard Rodgers and Joel Grey. So I ran a piece of that off and so of course Joel Grey just laid them in the aisles in our meeting and at the Oral History Meeting and I still have people coming up to me and talking to me when I go to a convention, "Hey, that was a great great tape."

Q: Well, tell me, some of the people that you have interviewed. Who are your favorite people that you have interviewed yourself.

MK: Well, everybody who gets in oral history, particular on the executive staff, get their feet wet and Selma Hirsh has been involved and gotten to know the process because the only way you're going to know it is by doing it as you well know. I had two great adventures in my life. One, well, the Eternal Light which came out of my American Jewish Committee experience where I had been one of the founders and still producer of it and so I had an opportunity to take people from the Eternal Life and reverse them and bring them into our oral history library and vice versa. I might find somebody on the Eternal Light and I could bring him to the Oral History Library so along the line I did an Eternal Light interview with Jacques Lipschitz, the great sculptor and so I knew him and I said, "Hey, we would like to do your oral history" and he said "By all means" so every Saturday for about six months I would go -- he wouldn't work on the Sabbath on Saturday and I would go up to his studio, Hastings-on-the Hudson and we would sit and talk about his life starting in Lithuania.
He could remember back to when he was five years old.

Q: Oh, my heavens.

MK: And one great story that he told that we keep in our files because we have little vignettes about human interest stories. And one that Jacques Lipschitz tells was about when he was five years old his father was a successful hotel keeper in Lithuania on the seacoast. His mother would make the Sabbath hola (?) bread on Fridays and here he was at five and she would hand him the excess he would begin to fashion little animals. And she would say to him, "Yankula, I love what you are doing but why do you always have to make pigs? Why don't you fashion and make little kosher animals.

Q: Oh, isn't that cute?

MK: He remembered that, way back when he was five.

Q: Oh, that's a wonderful story. Are there any other people that you remember particularly for one reason or other that you had occasion to interview.

MK: Well, I didn't do too many of them but what I did do I was very fortunate to .. that was one I particularly liked.

Q: You did Joel Grey, didn't you?

MK: No, Joel Grey has not been done yet, by the way. He's one of these people who did an Oral History for our panel but we still have to get him in black and white for our programming. He's been traveling at such a rate since we had him. I saw him only a few weeks ago. He did a special series, a children's series on the Eternal Light, radio series, and he said "I owe
you my memoir. I'll have it done the next time I come back from tour.

Q: So that, yes, and you keep running into these people you sort of remind them.

MK: He was originally an Eternal Light person. We brought him over to Oral History and they run cross-fertilization.

Q: Good, I like that. Are there any embarrassing moments you can think of.

MK: Well, one that didn't happen to me, but I happened to be present at because sometimes I used to sit in on these things and people would ask me to come and hold their hands. One of them was being done with Leonard Goldenson, the chairman of the board of the American Broadcasting Company, a really towering figure in the broadcasting field and he was being done by Ethel Phillips who has been a longtime AJC department head. A lot of times we would get these individuals only because of personal contacts. Her husband, Lloyd Phillips, and Leonard Goldenson were roommates at Harvard and they remained friends and so here we were doing this session in Goldenson's office and tapes and everything was spinning beautifully and she did a two-hour closing session with him. I guess they had had three or four sessions and she gave me the machine and tape to take back and lo and behold when I got back to the office it was blank. You know, he's just not the kind of guy you can call on the phone and say, "Hey, Leonard, can we come back?" Well, we were quite beside ourselves. What we did was we checked the machine out and
much to our amazement and something that doesn't happen anymore. You are supposed to clean tape machines after they have been in use ten hours or so, twelve hours because the residue comes off the tape onto the recording heads of the machine and in those days you used a Q-tip and denatured alcohol. But just to say what happened there was that Ethel Phillips, because of her association with him -- our faces were red, he did the whole concluding session over again and I must say we were very grateful to him. It's been one of our excellent pieces because ABC, as you know, is the Number One network and Leonard Goldenson had a lot to do with making it. But on this problem of cleaning we suddenly discovered too that part of the cassettes came out with self-cleaning cassettes. The cassette that you are using right now, Maxwell, that's why you have that five-second leader over the top. Everytime you use one of those cassettes it cleans your machine out.

Q: Oh, that's good to know.

MK: So I don't think you will have that problem. It won't be erased.

Q: Tell me, I saw the-- when I was going through papers downstairs earlier on I saw the original budget, the original proposed budget for the Oral History Department in 1968 and I think it was something about, I think maybe $30,000 for staff and everything else and I assume that today it is --

MK: Well, like all the departments in the organizational field and of course the American Jewish Committee have-- the cost
of living has brought everybody out of...

Q: But the Department has expanded.

MK: Oh, sure, also so have the expenses. We are paying the interviewer's charges. We don't pay out interviewees, but you do our interviewer's charges and our transcript charges and our cassettes and our machines and everything has just quadrupled.

Q: How do you select your interviewers?

MK: Well, they are very carefully selected because every-time when you select an individual to do his oral history you are talking about an investment of a thousand dollars because to do a good oral history in depth requires quite a number of hours. Then you get your interviewer's fees and your expense fees and your transcript's fees and your indexing fees and your binding fees and I could keep on going. So with our office expenses. So very carefully on the selection because you know we can't just be cavalier about it. And so those are very worked out and program planned where we have the individuals. Some of them come under the rubric of projects like I don't think we talked about the 20 Age Project which I would like to mention.

Q: Oh, please do.

MK: Are you running out of tape? Are we running out of time almost. I could go on and on. Once you get me started on Oral History I could go on forever.

Q: OK. I am going to flip it over so we don't have to worry about it anymore. OK?

End Tape Two, Side 2.
Q: This is Tape Three, Interview Three with Milton Krents. Tape Three, Side One. We were talking about how you picked the interviewers to do these oral histories.

MK: They were picked by board selection because as I say it is so expensive to develop an oral history memoir and they were picked by a board, an advisory board and then we had a small working board which consisted of Lou Cowan and Selma Hirsh and myself, Bert Gold and that was kind of our policy. We pretty much still work that way.

Q: Do you try to pick an interviewer who has particular expertise in the area with the field of the interviewees. We found two approaches: (1) We have found that you can get the best interview sessions of oral history memoirs from an individual who has two elements. One, he is an expert in the field in that particular field whether it's medicine, law, social sciences. One who is an expert in that field and one has already a built-in rapport with his subject or her, be it man or woman. So that's the best, but if you can't get--what's the best way is someone who has expertise in the field. It requires, as you well know, a lot of preliminary research about your interviewee, your subject before you sit down and talk.

Q: Well, tell me, just -- I know you could go on forever about the Oral History Library. I have one more question about the Library which is what do you see the future of the Oral History Library? Where do you think it's going to go, new
MK: I think the Oral History Library is going to get another name. It's going to be called the Oral and Visual History Library because we have been working in one dimension here and that's the audio. But we have the ear to think about too, the ear and the eye to think about, you know. There's so much going on these days as you know, the electronic revolution with videotape and videodiscs and video cassettes and a number of oral history libraries around the countries have tried experimenting with cameras.

Q: How is it doing?

MK: They have had a fair amount of success but it's expensive, very expensive and some have found that it may be a good idea as whereas you did a bulk of the memoir in the regular oral history style and then maybe for the last session or part of the session that you tape that session so that you can have the individual on film, videotape as well as audio tape. You see, you have a problem/when you go to set up -- in the old days with film you come into a man's room or a woman's office or whatever you have a film crew it would have kind of make it rough but these days they are getting these new machines down to practically pocket size. In television right now you have what they call the mini-cameras. They are used by the news departments. They use 3/4" tape and you've got these Beta-Maxes. You know everything is really very much miniaturized, and I think the day will come when we will have all videotaped. You would have to call it the hearing and seeing process, but I
always remember a wonderful story that Lou Cowan was telling me. You know, Lou Cowan died several years ago, he and his wife tragically. They are sorely missed. Incidentally, we do have his family and his friends set up a fund of - a grant of money to do a project on the broadcasting field, views in broadcasting. The Cowan Collection of Broadcasting we call it and Lou Cowan always told me the story of when he was president of CBS they were terribly anxious to get -- this is the early days of television too, to get a television interview with President Truman. They had been trying to get every kind of avenue to convince him to do this one-hour conversation program. He kept turning them down, Mr. Paley down. The answer was "no" always. Finally they used one last resort and Lou said to Ed Murrow "Why don't you take one last crack at this" so Murrow had gotten an appointment with President Truman and went down to see him and said "Look, Mr. President, we would love to have you do this conversation, television, etc." and Truman said, "Gee, I am sorry, Mr. Murrow, I just can't have the time," etc., etc. As he was practically being ushered to the door Murrow had one last iron in his fire and he said, "Mr. President, just think for a moment. Supposing you are involved in some crisis of state and you could sit here and push a button and on would come Andrew Jackson talking about what happened to his administration where he had a certain crisis and he said 'It might be of help to you'" and Truman said, Mr. Murrow, when do we start.

Q: Fabulous story.
MK: And there's our oral history story.

Q: I think that is and unless there's anything else that you can think of to say the oral history department, I think that would be it.

MK: Well, it's such a great field to work in. Of course, I want to talk to you about the work of the American Jewish Committee.

Q: Oh, yes.

MK: Because I think the American Jewish Committee is a very unusual, very unique kind of organization. I have spent a lifetime here, over, almost 42 years. Came here as a greenhorn kid from NBC and they gave me carte blanche and always have. In all those 42 years they have said "Look, radio and television and oral history" and evidently they had confidence in me to give me these tremendous assignments and projects and I have always hoped to deliver the results and I guess maybe they were pleased with the kinds of things we did. It's been always a place, though that welcomed creative thinking and working and while they have supervisors who have watched over their projects very carefully they always had a sense of great freedom and working not only with the heads of our departments, in other words, John Shlossen or Bert Gold or Selma Hirsh or Dick Rothschild, or some of the others, the organization itself, the individuals here who make up the team are all unusual people in their respected fields and there always has been a great feeling of comraderie and of cross-fertilization of ideas whether it was in public relations...
or in working with inter-group relations people or working in the children's field, civil rights -- there has always been a very close relationship and affinity with all those people and when you work for the American Jewish Committee you are getting an education, you truly are, and it's the kind of thing that stays with you while you are working and all your life.

Q: Did you ever, was there ever a time when you didn't agree with the policies of the committee and if so, how...

MK: No, really. My life has been pretty much. I felt that they handled standing up to the other groups, Jewish groups when they wanted to do their own fund raising and the whole Israel situation they had with Ben Gurion, where Blaustein and Engel and some of those early people really stood up for their ground, maintained their principles and that's what made the American Jewish Committee.

Q: Yeah. What do you think the most important contribution that the American Jewish Committee has made during your tenure here? I know that's a hard one.

MK: Well, that's a tough question. I mean I could give you a half a dozen like (garbled) personality was a landmark project. I thought all the various fields that we have been involved with, starting Commentary Magazine and working in the children's field, in the labor field. You can just go on and on / the American Jewish Committee as you well know

Q: Is there a particular event that stands out in your memory?
MK: Well, of course, the establishment of Israel was something that capture everybody's imagination when it was formed. It caused a lot of problems but on the other hand it was a historic event. And that's been a project that the Committee has been very much involved with working closely with the Israel crowd (?) in America.

Q: This is a hard part for me. I just don't know where to go. There are so many questions here now. I know that you consider that your lifetime here has been fulfilling.

MK: I feel that way. If I had to do it all over again, I would certainly want to do it that way.

Q: Chosen this path?

MK: It's been a great opportunity to be involved in communications on the pioneer level and also on the day-to-day as the media proved.

Q: Well, has your affiliation with the American Jewish Committee changed your feelings about your Jewishness?

MK: Well, it strengthened it considerably. Well, you know, when you work with the American Jewish Committee as I said earlier you get an education and it's the kind of thing you know that lives with you in your day-to-day living and you are able to have more perceptions in terms on stories, human relations, projects in human relations, incidents that break.

Q: I know you feel your Jewishness a lot but I also get the sense that you are not a religious person in the sense that you don't go to service every week.
MK: Well, I started that way because you know I started way back in Springfield as a choir boy in a synagogue and I still retain that very close feeling for my tradition and of course I carry a form of each program which is...the major Jewish religious series in the country.

Q: I wonder whether you would be... No, you wouldn't be the same person if you hadn't had these experiences. You couldn't have been.

MK: Well, having these experiences is kind of... most changed my life and I think helped me to bring light to individuals of Americans both Christians and Jews alike.

Q: As the Committee grew in size, did you grow stronger, more practical identification or did your feelings become less personal. What were the changes?

MK: Well, I don't think the American Jewish Committee ever became that large that you felt you were losing a personal touch because we don't have a gigantic staff but we have a good staff and everybody knows it's one big family. Whenever anybody retires it becomes a national event.

Q: (Laughs) That's great. How did the American Jewish Committee change over the years in its staff lay people relationships? Were there changes that you could feel?

MK: I have seen Jewish organizations where lay people have come in and kind of run the organization and I could name the organizations but at the American Jewish Committee it's been the lay people who have looked up to the professionals and to the staff
and where there has been a great combination, great respect on the part of the lay people. If you travel around the country and talk to our area directors and directly meet the people out there in the hinterlands and the cities around the country, in urban and rural areas, and meet them at our annual meeting you know that there's quite a tie of affinity between them, the professional and lay levels.

Q: What do you think was your most important contribution to the American Jewish Committee?

MK: Well, I think the most important thing I was involved in and where I feel I made a contribution was in the field of communications in radio and television where I was able with the freedom of support that the American Jewish Committee gave me to be able to develop pioneering techniques in these very important communication fields that you know are today are our backbone of communications in the country now in the world and when AJC hired me way back 40 years ago from NBC and radio was just a crystal set just coming out of the crystal set stage that they had a feeling that one day broadcasting was going to be a very important medium in this country and of course they were right and I am glad I had an opportunity to be right in the middle of it and meet so many fantastic people and made such a wide circle of friends in broadcasting and organizational-wise and the American Jewish Committee and it's just been, as I say, a great adventure.

Q: I have one last question which is looking back over your life what difference do you think it's made that you were
a Jew?

MK: Well, I don't think we could have done the kind of things in broadcasting, and that was my main concern. There are groups who are working in this field who are non-Jewish and of course they had a different kind of dedication we had but I feel the fact that we had a tradition and a background that people of the Book that we brought to my particular field, broadcasting, we were able to do a certain amount of creativity in terms of program ideas, developing this whole idea of drama, dramatic programs for radio and television which in those days were kind of looked at in askance. So I feel that that was a great contribution in terms of our being able to develop these techniques which today are commonplace, but nevertheless play an important part in our public relations work and I must say that Morton Yarman (sp?) and his staff have picked up similar areas that I have been involved and developed new ideas as well and it has been a good kind of continuity that keeps on going and I am sure it will be going on for generations to come.

Q: Oh, I hope so. Is there anything that I have left out that you would like to say.

MK: I think you have been pretty comprehensive. You have covered everything. You did a good job of crystal ball research before we came...

Q: Well, I had a good source, your wife.

MK: Well, you had the best. She has been a great partner; I must give her great credit because whether it's been good working here in the American Jewish Committee in the older days
or whether it's been living now in the Oral History Library and of course she has worked with me in broadcasting even to the point where she has been a script writer and a script editor and she has been the great strong backbone, straight strong partner in this combination and I can't give her enough credit because I am not talking from the family-mother operation. I am talking perfectly professionally. She is a professional from the very word "go" as you know from your own experience. She is very much admired and respected by everyone who has worked with her. Of course I have a special love for her.

Q: You do feel that the Oral History Library is in good hands.

MK: I think so.

Q: Is there anything else that you want to say?

MK: No, I just want to thank you for the opportunity of having this.

Q: Well, I want to thank you for being so gracious and bearing up under these three different times.

MK: Well, I think we got a very good (/) going with the history of the America Jewish Committee with its staff and people and I think it's going to be a very important addition to the library.

Q: Some interesting aspects...

MK: Particularly as we come up to our 75th Anniversary in 1981. Thank you.

Q: Thank you.

End Tape Three, Side I. End of Interview with Milton E. Krents.