

Interview with Art Gardenswartz, August 20, 2015.

NP: Noel Pugach

AG: Art Gardenswartz

NP: Today is Thursday, August 20, 2015. I am interviewing Art Gardenswartz about his family and their involvement in the Albuquerque business community, and the Albuquerque Jewish community as a whole. So Mr. Gardenswartz, I'll call you Art, give me your full name, date of birth, and place of birth.

AG: Arthur Elvin Gardenswarz, Albuquerque, New Mexico, April 18, 1942.

NP: My birthday is April 13th. And the names of your parents?

AG: Harold and Shirley Gardenswarz. My mother's maiden name was Spiegelman.

NP: And where were they born?

AG: My father was actually born in Durango, lived mostly in Denver. And my mother was born in Cheyenne, Cheyenne, Wyoming.

NP: OK First of all, could you tell me some more about when you family came to Albuquerque and why they came to Albuquerque.

AG: OK. The, I'll go back a little bit, and my grandmother Cook, there is a story how that name came up, any way they were a family that came from Russia, ten brothers and sisters, my grandmother was the oldest one. They came to Denver, originally had a bath house on the viaducts on the west side of Denver, eventually went into the pawn business and started lending money on different things, including fishing tackle and guns. That led to sporting goods, and this was in the 1890 when the first sporting goods store opened. And it was so good that there were several brothers, then two brothers went in concert with each other: There was Dave Cook and Max Cook Sporting goods in Denver, initially.

NP: And it was spelled

AG: C-o-o-k. Anglicized.

NP: Anglicized. [laughter] Was it originally Koch?

AG: No. Just to go back a bit, their original name was I think, Barg, coming from Russia. They couldn't speak English when they came off the boat, the Ellis Island people said: "Jewish? Crooks. So you're a crook. So their initial name was Crook. Three days later they found out what that meant and they changed it to Cook. They go from Barg to Cook.

NP: OK. Some story. B-A-R-G?

AG: So that was the Cook side. And Gardenswartz was a long time going back to Germany. That side held. But....

NP: And they always spelled it without a "t"? Right? G-A-R...

AG: There is no "ch", like Schwartz. But SWARTZ.

NP: So it was ARTZ.

AG: Right. It still is.

NP: I thought the 't' was removed.

AG: No. So anyway, the sporting roots started blooming around the first of the century, hunting was happening in Colorado and fishing was The stores were doing very well in hunting and fishing. And my father and all the brothers worked in the stores. So we had all kinds of uncles and cousins work in the stores. The bottom line of that is that everybody went into their own sporting goods store. So there were the Cooks, Al Cooks Sporting Goods in Grand Junction, there was a branch that went to Salt Lake, that was called Zinicks, which was part of Fay Cook Zinick, and my two uncles, my father's brothers, went together initially in Durango with a sporting goods store. Then their wives had a fight, so one went to Alamosa with a sporting goods store. And meanwhile my grandfather was a cattleman in the area understood that was a better profession than cattle. So he originally wanted my dad to go to Montrose, Colorado for a sporting goods store. But they wanted a bigger city and they came to Albuquerque. And so that was 1939 that he

came to Albuquerque to open a sporting goods store, having some background—and he was the only one of this whole group that graduated college. That was in Colorado, in Boulder. And that is where he met my mother, although she was at DU in Denver, he....???. But anyway he came down in 1939, opened a sporting goods store and used a similar name to the one in Denver, changed the first initial to H. Cook. Theirs was Dave Cook and so forth. Anyway it was a family business by that point.

NP: But he was only one who came to Albuquerque.

AG: Yes. The only one.

NP: Can we back up a little?

AG: Sure.

NP: When was your father born?

AG: Yah. He was born March 27, 1917.

NP: And your mother?

AG: My mother is still living. She was born July 1st, 1919.

NP: Can you tell me a little more, because I am very interested about your grandfather who was in the cattle business, because I started to work on Jews in ranching in New Mexico.

AG: Oh yeah.

NP: What do you know about his cattle operation? How did he get started?

AG: He flirted back and forth on different things. At one time... Somehow, I don't know how he started in the cattle business. He loved it. They never actually had cattle farms. He was the broker who bought in from the ranchers and took it to market. And there was a cute story about that. He was boom and bust. He made money and lost money all the time. And one time he tried to open a hardware

store in Durango with my two uncles in their early twenties. But he couldn't stand it. He couldn't stand not being outdoors. He left and the boys ran, they ran hardware store and the sporting goods store. Anyway, he just loved the negotiations, the market idea of the cattle business. And the cutest story is one tie he had just committed to buy a hundred head of cattle for \$110 a pound cause...

NP: It couldn't be a \$110 a pound.

AG: \$110 a head of cattle.

NP: OK.

AG: \$110 a head of cattle. And the market in Denver was \$130 a head of cattle at that time. But overnight the market dropped to \$90 a head. He was going to lose a thousand dollars, a lot of money on this thing. He couldn't figure out what to do. He decides to go to the guy store from whom he bought the cattle and said he needed another ten head to fill out this order from Denver. And I just paid your neighbor, Mr. whatever, a \$100 a head. But I am making a killing. If you don't tell him I'll pay you \$110 a head of cattle. Of course he did and went and told him. And the guy said, "You dirty Jew you're trying to screw me. I want my money back. So he got his money back. That is what he wanted in the first place. So he got his money back. [laughter]

NP: Well you know the Moises were in the cattle business...

AG: Yes.

NP: And the Gottliebs, do you know, from Cubero near Grants were in the cattle business, and the Wertheims, Fort Sumner. A lot of Jewish families were in the cattle business. Weiller had a ranch near Carizozzo for a while.

AG: Yes. Someone told me there is a Jewish section in Las Cruces, the merchants who sold the farm implements to the cattle people. There are all Jewish merchants who were selling the equipment, the hoes the tractors, and whatever it was, and there is a segment in their museum devoted to

NP: The Farm and Ranch Museum.

AG: Yeah.

NP: I have to look that up because the Society is having its Fall meeting in Las Cruces this year.

AG: That's right.

NP: All right. Let's get back to your dad, Harold who decides to move to Albuquerque and he opens H. Cook, and the address was?

AG: 523 Central, which the corner of 6th and Central. And the Franciscan Hotel was across the street then.

NP: So what can you tell me about the operation of his store, and what happened during World War II.

AG: Yeah. Well first of all because he had a child by then he avoided the draft. So I was the child. Somehow, I think, he avoided the draft. And I think it had to do with me. But he started the store with very little money and he used to tell the story about advising to keep the boxes of the empty merchandise which we kept on the shelf, which looked like they were full. They were really empty. We had the empty boxes underneath, like shoes, different things like that. But he started with hunting and fishing, but he really led into a lot of different things. You know we got into the school business, competing with this guy M&W, tennis racquets initially and you know he branched... skiing started with the Nordhaus family and all that in the early Fifties. So we got into that. You know it just became a multi-store thing. And we were part of the community, on both sides. The Gentiles of course loved us because they loved outdoors. In New Mexico a lot of scientists were around. At one time we carried Geiger counters, there was a big run in Grants and the Uranium thing, and we sold a ton of Geiger counters. He ran into this guy Carl Wheeler who was a very nice Gentile man and eventually made him a 25% partner in the store. But Carl could fix anything—a fishing reel, a gun, whatever. One time I remember my parents needed a new furnace, so they got a new furnace and Carl asked what was wrong with the old one. "I don't know." He sent and took it from scratch and rebuilt it for his own furnace. He was a very

handy man, very honest person. My dad felt so lucky he had a partner in the store. But at the same time, this was when Albuquerque was just starting, early forties, and the Jewish community was starting. I think we always were B'nai Israel people, and they had a small building like on 10th and something downtown, close to where the Temple is, and then they purchased, they were involved in the purchase of the building on Cedar and Coal and the Temple eventually followed them. We were involved in that. I had my Bris there, had my Bar Mitzvah there, had everything there. So...,

NP: That was by the time they had moved to Lead and Cedar.

AG: Right.

NP: Coal and Cedar. I remember that building. I came in 68. I remember that. Tell me about your education and how you started to get into the business,

AG: Sure. First of all, I had a Jewish father. He was as hard as Jewish fathers can be. My biggest disappointment in my life were 1. I remember striking out in a Little League game, when I was ten or eleven and he basically said don't worry about it Artie I didn't expect you to do much better. So that kind of stuck in my craw. And then as I became a teenager I developed a very severe stutter, and that was tough growing up as a teenager. My Bar Mitzvah I could hardly get out. So back in high school drifted toward athletics. My parents sent me to a speech camp, a stuttering camp in Michigan. I hated going initially, but eventually I loved it. A lot of athletics, a lot of encouragement. And when I got back from camp I was a better athlete. And I learned that you didn't have to talk much when you are an athlete. So one of my experiences was experiencing failure and striking out and compensating for that. And that's been some of my history in general. Basically that's where I got, I was a good runner in high school, I held the state record for 39 years, I had several scholarship offers and I chose Arizona, went on a track scholarship. My grades were so poor the first year, I only got....I had to do laundry for my room and board, I remember that. My parents were so worried about my failing in college that they were giving me spelling lessons on the way to school. So all that turned out all right. I wasn't that good in college, I met a wonderful woman there, Judy, married, we had children, went back to Albuquerque. But I always felt because of my speech pattern I couldn't do much except go into my dad's business. So that's kind of my history. I came back, we got married in

December of 63, and I graduated on time in 64, went right in the business, kind of liked the business. My dad gave me the Winrock store; he had three stores at that time.

NP: Where were the other stores?

AG: One was downtown, the original store. Then we had one on the hill in....

NP: Nob Hill.

AG: Nob Hill. I ran the Winrock store, did pretty well, didn't agree with my father on a lot of things. Then we had an offer to sell in 1969 to Zale Corporation. And I encouraged my dad, I said this would be a change, good things, all that happens for the positive. They gave me a raise....

NP: So you worked for

AG: Zale's. I worked for about six months for them and they bought the stores in Dallas. So I moved to Dallas for two stores, Collum and Boren. I did really well in Dallas on my own. So much so they wound up with five more stores in Dallas, which we did. Then my dad moved to Dallas from Albuquerque and ran the division of Zales Sporting Goods Division, and I had my cousin involved. Over a period of time, I specifically opened 37 stores for Zale Corporation from 1970 to 1975. And then my dad left, so I got sideway with my new boss. But anyway, I came back to Albuquerque and opened my own store, Gardenswartz Sportz in November of 1976. And in effect in competition with my dad's old store, which was still called H. Cook and was owned by Zales. And I did pretty well right away, and so much so that Zales decided to sell it to Oshman's. And then in the intermediary, my dad and I together bought the team sales that we had once owned. Over time, I had the stores for 19 years, I had as many seven store in El Paso, and Santa Fe, and Farmington, and we had a team sales thing too, so we did OK too. I got worried about different things in the mid-90s, a lot of chains were coming in..... So one them....

NP: Big 5, Sports Authority...

AG: Sports Authority. A couple more that never made it, Garts which was here once. And So I knew the guys at Big 5 and I basically sold them the store in 1995, and we kind of carved out a restrictive non-compete, and I had three golf stores, and an Internet golf business for a few years till 2001. Then my son Seth started what was Sportz Outdoor specialty cycling , running and ski shop. And then he decided to go to law school, so I got that back in the interim.

NP: And what was the name?

AG: Sportz Outdoor. It's now called Sports Systems. And so I had that for thirteen years and I sold that to a local fellow doing well. And so that's kind of my history. I have had all of these different aspects of sporting goods, on a general sense and what we call the specialty sense, which is going out to the avid person with professional golf. As a matter of fact I recently, last year, opened up a specialty tennis store. So to some extent I am back at it in a small way.

NP: In Albuquerque.

AG: In Albuquerque, called Tennis Ace. There was no specialty tennis store. We had a shopping center, we had the space. Meanwhile, the people that I originally partnered with are gone, they were business people, and my new stepdaughter and I are running it together And we are having a good time.

N: So let's back up a bit, what was the business climate like when y our dad started and to what do you attribute his success? And by the way, what did you major in at Arizona?

AG: Business. General business, yeah.

NP: So to what do you attribute it and what was the climate like in the 40s and 50s?

AG: Sure: I think it was very interesting, the climate, it's postwar in America, of course, people were just coming out of that environment, they were hungry to be successful, and buy goods, and have business and all that. It was a good time especially in Albuquerque and New Mexico, we were fortunate because we were weapons developers. Obviously we all know that the atomic bomb was developed

here and that led to all these weapons development and scientific people moving to the community. And these were great customers, for everybody but particularly for sporting goods. These were people who worked for the government, had the weekend off, loved the outdoors, and were very avid sports people in every sense. So it was a great... but they were adding jobs all the time. Everybody was doing well, there was all these Jewish merchants were, all pretty close. As you know Albuquerque always had this integration issue that was easy. Being Jewish meant you could be Jewish but you were also very well accepted in the non-Jewish communities. So that worked beneficial for business, we had Simon's Departments, we had Kleinfeld, we had American Furniture, we had Zork Hardware and all the Ifelds, and the all wholesale distributors and all those kinds of things, all Jews. Simon's Department store was a great story with the Goldmans.

NP: What was their specialty?

AG: He was kind of Western Wear, but really his big business was service uniforms. He had all uniforms for all the maintenance people and the city people and all that. Of course there is another great story about Henry Hillson, his whole thing, and he made tremendous connections with the indigenous Indians and had all their business. Yeah. He was big in Window Rock, made a lot of money. He sold the business. But he was big supplier to the whole Navajo nation, Henry Hillson. Yeah. And there was a brother in Las Vegas who still has the store in Las Vegas, a retail store. So you look at the environment. And everything was downtown, there was a good community with the Italians, the Mateuccis and the Paris Shoe store. There was a lot of Italian kind of people.

NP: The Franchinis....

AG: Yeah, the Franchinis. A lot of Greeks had the restaurants. There were all close. I have very warm memories of it all. Dave Spector, Zeon Signs. It is still is, his son Lionel. Lionel is not too identifying, but Dave was very...he was president of the synagogue and always ran our seders. And then internally, there was a group called the "Sewing Club."

NP: I never heard of it.

AG: Oh yeah, they were very, very close. My mother is the only living one left. But it was every Tuesday or Wednesday night they would meet, the women would sew and the men would play gin. I have fond memories of them playing cards together, talking over the events of the day. That was Kleinfeld, that was Cooper, that was Mendelsberg

NP: What was the name of Mendelsberg's business?

AG: Liquor store. Jack's Liquor on Central. Yeah

NP: OK. I knew Jack, from the Shul.

AG: Yeah. Osoff....

NP: Murray Osoff.

AG: Morrey. And then there was Rothman too. Jay. They were in insurance together. Jay Rothman. He had an accent, he was from the Old Country. That it all.

NP: So your dad was able to capture this particular time, this business.... Was there any major competition in sporting goods?

AG: There was... in the team area, There was Iggy Mulcaly of M & W Sporting Goods. He was a UNM graduate and there was all that selling to the University on equipment and all that. There was no sponsorship in those days. It was called the school and institutional business. You sell to school institutions and leagues. But he had a lot of the University and school business. He was a UNM graduate. He was definitely Number Two in that. In the hunting and fishing, I don't think he did have a lot of competition.

NP: Charlie opened later?

AG: Charlie [Domenici] worked for my dad. Charley opened up only after he sold. Charley ran the fishing department, he was a wonderful person. I was there last week. So yeah, Charlie worked for Harold very well. He would still be working if Harold had not sold it. He was a great guy. In those days I can remember a couple

thing was when the fishing licenses came out say on April 1st people lined up around the block. A busy life. When the hunting season started, we had a hunting contest and gave away ever year. It was a huge thing. So there was a lot of activity. On the other side of it, the indigenous community loves guns, loves hunting. They're even more into the culture of animals and hunting. And they used to love trading guns and 30-30s and Winchesters. There was a whole culture in of itself of that ethnic community of hunting. So it was all integrated: Jewish merchants selling to indigenous people, Hispanics, selling to the White Sandia guys. So that's New Mexico, but that was a catapult of things in those days.

NP: Did you father speak Spanish?

AG: No. Did he have someone who spoke Spanish?

AG: Yeah, yeah. He had lots of Spanish people. He had several Blacks, the gentleman who ran the warehouse. He learned the business from the ground up, the intuitive Jewish merchants: Buy low, buy deals. I remember a lot of Jewish salesmen came through. One interesting thing: after the war there was a huge amount of Army surplus—all Jews in Kansas City and the Midwest bought all this stuff. And you know we followed the Jewish business re-selling stoves and camping tents and ultimately ran out and making it initially in Japan, they copied the product in Japan. Now China, but Japan is more expensive, but at the time it was all made in Japan. They copied the Coleman stove, they copies the tent, they copied all the camping supplies. Camping was huge then. Trekking started, it was a whole new thing.

NP: Do you remember the earlier generation, any of those people like Paul Dreyfuss and Mandell, Joe Mandell and Julius Mandell?

AG: I didn't know the Mandells real well, but I heard the name a lot. And there was the Bells, jewelry people downtown and all that, Saul Bell and the Mandells were jewelers too, weren't they?

NP: The Mandells no. They were in clothing, women's, white goods.

AG: Right.

NP: Paul Dreyfuss had his own store on First, I believe, there was one with Benjamin earlier, before your dad came. And the Joe Mandell moved the store to Coronado. Part of that exodus because of first the chains came in, Penney's and Wards and the competition was pretty stiff.

AG: Yes.

NP: They couldn't compete.

AG: Yes. The competition there was Sears & Roebuck. They were at Fourth and Central. And they were very big in the community then, my dad was friendly with the manager. And all that. And they part of a national chain but got to bridge the gap a bit. They were part of the community too.

NP: I am going to ask you a couple of things involving the Jewish community but would you saw a couple of words about Judy, and I know that she was so involved.

AG: Sure.

NP: Did she ever get involved in the business?

AG: Judy ran the personnel department at Gardenswarz Sportz for three years. We also started a separate travel agency that didn't quite pan out. She was involved a little bit in my business later on, like as a personnel manager. But Judy was... Judy and I got married in 63 very quickly and she got pregnant very quickly, and we connected to the community, and we were one of the first of first of my age group that were married. She was a very polished woman from Arizona.

NP: She was from Phoenix?

AG: Phoenix.

NP: And I gather her family was very much involved in the Jewish community.

AG: Yeah. Her family was very much involved. Her father was president of the synagogue at the time we got married. They were very ... They landed in Prescott

first, had a foundry. They were very involved. Judy was very involved here. She loved the fact that she could make a difference here. She started the Gan, the first Jewish Day School; she was good singer, she sang at a lot of Jewish events. She was an actress, a little bit. She acted in the Little Theatre. She was very involved and she was President of B'nai Israel.

NP: She was President of the Federation.

AG: Yes. I was president after her. But she was president first.

NP: OK, so it was Judy and then you.

AG: Then me. I was president in the late 80s, she was president in late 70s, probably early 80s.

NP: After it was Harold Albert.

AG: I can't remember. But my father was actually president, one time too.

NP: Oh, really. When was that?

AG: Yeah. I can remember him giving a speech. It was probably, I was still in high school, something like that. It was in the late 50s early 60s, something like that.

NP: Then it was still the Jewish Welfare Fund.

AG: Yeah. Right. Rana Adler.

NP: Rana Adler. Where did she come from? Do you know?

AG: No.

NP: I heard a lot about Rana. I met her when I first came here. And then, she died I think. I don't remember.

AG: Yeah. She one was of those people who were so dedicated. Never took salaries, almost. They had to force her to take money because she felt she was

taking money away from Israel, and Jews. Her husband had a job. She didn't need the money.

NP: What did he do?

AG: He had some kind of government job. Lee Adler. I remember that. He had some kind of government job.

NP: Did they have children in town?

AG: Yes. Les.

NP: Les Adler.

AG: Les Adler.

NP: OK. Tell me about your family's involvement in Zionism. I know it was pretty strong. And when you or your dad came here, there were very few Jews who were Zionists. Most of the people at Congregation Albert were non-Zionists or anti-Zionists.

AG: Right. Yeah, the German Jews.

NP: Your family was from the start very supportive.

AG: I think a couple of things about that. For one, we had relatives in Israel right away that needed help, so my dad was in contact with them and helped them financially so he had a connection on that side of it. But even more than that, one of the most interesting stories is that Israel needed guns after 1948, and he was a distributor for Remington and he had other contacts in Europe too. We actually had bought some direct German Lugers from somebody in Europe. He, a couple of times, at least twice, was able at that time to sell guns to Israel. So he became an intermediary diverting firearms to Israel.

NP: From Europe.

AG: From Europe, right, to Israel. So that made him pretty connected.

NP: That certainly is. OK. Did your family talk a lot about the Holocaust when you grew up? Did you talk about Israel? By the way, where did you live? What part of town?

AG: Originally we lived in the Nob Hill area, where until I was five years old. And then we moved to 3939 Mesa Verde, right at Lomas and Carlisle.

NP: At Carlisle.

AG: Yeah, right in there. Between Carlisle and Washington. And then we moved when I was seven or eight years old for twenty years to 4104 La Resolana, which is right in front of Twin Parks area so everybody lived there. There was Cooper and Taylor and Kubie, and Goldberg, and Schonberg, and Osoff....

NP: What High School did you go to?

AG: Highland, Highland High School. And it was a very successful class.

NP: So I asked if there was a lot of discussion about the Holocaust, about Israel.

AG: I don't remember that much about it. I remember the Federation connection, we had to give to the Federation. Other people made the impression that we had to give and we had to support Israel. And of course, married to Judy, she was really launched into it. Her and her father went right away, after we got married, say in 65. I actually went in 61 to Israel, and ran in the Maccabean Games. I got two silver medals in the Maccabean Games. But Israel was thirteen years old then and you got a whole feel how devastated Israel was and isolated it was. I think, there are a couple of things I want to say about that. I was very nervous about being too involved in the Jewish community cause of my stuttering and I had a lot of trouble with Hebrew. And I was a little standoffish on that. And then Judy came in and in our relationship I was the business person and an athlete always. And she was the face of our couple as in the Jewish community. I was the supportive of her in that endeavor and she was supportive of me in the business side. So that is how that evolved. It was interesting that when we separated in 96, I got a lot more involved in the Jewish community. And really one of the things I believe in very strongly now is, it is so interesting to me that we were so integrated in the

Jewish community that when I went to college and I had to join a Jewish fraternity, I couldn't join just any fraternity. I went to Arizona and people wanted me because I was kind of a jock. But I could only join a Jewish fraternity.

NP: Which one? ZBT or ...

AG: Tau Delta Phi. I was recruited heavily, but I liked Tau Delta Phi. But anyway, that was a shock, you know, for I came from being well accepted, without any blemish, really feeling it. So that was interesting. But moving back to Albuquerque, there was always this feeling that we were integrated. And the JCC comes along. And myself, some like Dave Cooper didn't want the JCC. It called attention to the fact: Jewish Community Center! That's on the back burner! But over these last fifteen years I have been on the board, it's the opposite. We are respected more for standing out rather than trying to fit in. So I see it as a total reversal that our culture, our heritage, our success is an example for the community. And the JCC is the focal point we use. So we're really... my sporting goods store is gone nearly twenty years now, but I give a credit card some place or wherever, "do you have something to do with that Jewish community center?" I love it they say, I love it, I work out there, I play basketball there. We are really doing a lot of things there. So all that has reversed my participation in the community. And the interesting thing right now is that people are not worried about being identified as Jews. The JCC was in real trouble when I became president. The people who founded it did a good job getting it done but they weren't good business people, hired the wrong people. And we straightened it out. We have no debt right now, we're really rolling, we are taking more space with the school closed. But given the lesson that I have learned about the growing respect for Jews, I have taken the role of incoming president of the newly created endowment of the Jewish Community Foundation of New Mexico. My goal is to work together with members of the general community to solve the many problems we face as small state rally the people of New Mexico behind our efforts. I believe our Jewish leaders can help all sides. And from zero almost we have over ten million in commitments, and we have four million dollars in cash. I welcome the opportunity to speak to successful people of my generation to take action on the values we share. So I am having good success realizing that we're better than standouts, as an example in the community. We do a good job managing money, better than some other people. But it's still a long way to go and it's so different than the bigger cities of Denver and Dallas, Phoenix where the

wealthier families are always leading the charge. In this community, particularly the Federations failed, there are hardly any founding families, in fact the opposite. When someone moves to town, they make him president of the federation [he laughed]. They really evolve. It is really very interesting to me now, I really do feel a passion for the success that we have had in the community because of the community and the support ...and the financial success should be reinvested to propel the Jewish culture and history of Albuquerque and the example for your children. So any way...

NP: It's fascinating the way you are talking about it because I have done some work and that fact that it was true in the 40s, 50s, and 60s...

AG: That's right.

NP: The old-line Jewish families did not want to stand out at all. As you said, they never wanted a Jewish lecture series like the Experiment in Jewish Learning, they didn't want the Gan because we can send anywhere, we can belong to the Country Club. And they did, and they were among the founders of the Country Club. And were active in the Symphony and were prominent there. And you get respect that way. I remember speaking to Mike Sutin and he was so frustrated about trying to get money from the well-to-do in the community. And you couldn't get them to serve on the Federation board.

AG: Right.

NP: They did not want it. They gave a nominal amount, all right, and that was it.

AG: That's exactly right. Blaugrund would write a nice check. I used to get \$10,000 I guess from Ernie Blake. But we don't even get that from the children. So they gave a nominal amount compared to their success. But it was significant to help the community. Now most of the children are not even... setting a bad example to my contemporaries. For a number of reasons.... And it has been a great experience.... Now it's, I look at it as an opportunity to bring them back in.

NP: To what do you attribute the fact that generation, your generation, just wishes to get involved—and contribute.

AG: I think it's left over from what happened in Germany. It's that whole German Jew thing, where we wanted to distance ourselves and prove that we were successful in art, the opera, the symphony. And all that. We don't need to spend our resources and time on the Jewish community. I don't get that, there is something about the recognition that's important to the non-Jewish community, it's not important to them in the Jewish community. And it's some derivative of the old German thing, if I try to fit in I'm good, whatever. It's hard to pinpoint.

NP: But some of them weren't from the German, but the East European community.

AG: Right. And on the other hand I think when Israel was in real peril and our parents, grandparents had just come over, we're getting further away, Israel is not in trouble and the distance of the generations is such that you don't remember, you don't hear the stories of how bad it was and all that. We are more Americanized.

NP: It's a good point. OK. Is there anything you would like to add about insights into the Jewish community (you said such interesting things) that could help us. If you have photos of H. Cook....

AG: I've got them some place.

NP: In Winrock.....

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NP: That would be very helpful because visuals are very important. And what we might do is put together clips from the different interviews, including yours, and have, so people could appreciate what the Jewish community was like and what it contributed.

AG: Yes.

NP: In different ways.

AG: Sure. You know one story I like to tell, Dave Cooper liked to tell, was that my dad was instrumental in bringing in that great family, the Cooper family. You know Roberta and Barry had great success. You know he did go to the service and they were fraternity brothers at CU, my dad and him. And they were close.

NP: I didn't know that. And then he got out of the service and he didn't know where to go. So he came to Albuquerque and he worked for my dad initially and then he opened his own store, Kilroy's. He didn't have any money. So my dad signed for him at the bank, my dad in effect guaranteed his loan. And he was always very gracious about his start. So his start came from their friendship and my father. And I think it is really a compliment to my dad that he put his own resources at risk.

AG: And then he went from Kilroy's to Western Wear. And he sold it once and bought it back. He owned it twice. And then he sold it again. He sold it a few times. Very successful, a very smart guy. But another footnote was that what happened to me is that retail is very tough. In the old days having your one store and all that is kind of fun, you own more stores, you get more of the problems, legal issues, But I have resurfaced as a real estate guy. And it's really tough... But all my skills were honed in the first experience working for my dad and Zales and then having my own stores and being a business venue branch out. So I'm a kind of guy who gets bored after too long, so I move on. But I love the real estate side of it. You don't have employees. Can't steal your inventory [we both laughed]. The value seems to go up because the replacement costs of real estate are higher, so what you own is going to be worth more, not less. It's been an interesting experience. It all came from the experience as a retailer first.

NP: Would you reflect also on the political atmosphere in New Mexico? What changes you noticed and how it affected Jews?

AG: The biggest thing about New Mexico is that it is so easy to get involved here. And you can have such access to your leaders. I have always been on a first name basis with all our senators and support them and five hundred or a thousand bucks a year is a big deal to them, where in New York it wouldn't even buy you a seat at the table. So it is a small state, and politically active, and we are well respected. I think it's good. Governor Bibb was a Jew, he was very good to the tribe. I really enjoy that. Actually one of my closest friends, Governor Gary

Johnson, we took him to Israel, we still ride bikes and ski together. I am doing a benefit at his house this year. I have had really good access to see how the government works. I don't know, I think it's partially being Jewish and interested in those kinds of things. It's partially being able to write a check. And it's partially being politically important. Some people don't think it's important.

NP: I know how much the Hesses were involved in politics, Democratic Party politics, Ed Romero and Harold Albert. And Ed Romero and their relationship goes back from the start. And it's really helped. But also people like Yale Weinstein....

AG: Oh yeah. Yale was a prince of a person. Cause I know his children still, Margie and the other daughter's name. But Yale was a really good guy. He worked for Duke City Lumber, he was a forester, got along with kind of hard Jewish bosses. A prince of a man. And his wife too.

NP: Lorraine. And they were devoted to the Experiment in Jewish Learning. And he was very close to Joe Montoya. He helped....

AG: Right. I think we understand intuitively to be close to decision-makers, power brokers that sort of thing. [We both laugh]

NP: Well. He's a very interesting guy. Honest...

AG: One of the interesting things too. I was talking about the success of the Jews, what is really interesting to me that they love to fly under the radar—the Greveys, the Blaugrunds, the Coopers. They pretend to drive...they don't show it off at all. It's nice on one hand. On the other hand if they would be more visible, to the leadership... they would set an example to other people. It's kind of my job now is to shake that box a little and to explain to them how important they could be. This is not the case in Denver, Dallas, or these other communities. Jews love to portray their success. But New Mexico is different. Right?

NP: It's interesting how much Jews have taken on the culture in New Mexico.

AG: That's right.

NP: They are not too visible, knowing how to getting involved and pull some levers and when they are successful.

AG: Right.

NP: OK. Would you talk about your second marriage, to Sonia, since you have already told me about her. Tell me about her, how you met her, when you got married, and... What's her full name?

AG: Sure. Sonia Fay Priestly. I will just tell you a quick story about her. You know I got separated, divorced, Judy left me in the fall of 1997. And I took three months off of dating. I started dating Valentine's Day of 1998. And that first year I actually had several women. But, anyway, I really wanted to talk and talk and see their experiences. But meanwhile I met Sonia, about three or four months in, but I wasn't ready for her because I was still out there. Well, anyway, we kept in touch, so we started dating about a year later and it just went great, she is fantastic. I remember one of the dates we went to a Woody Allen movie. I thought, a non-Jewish [woman] I would have to explain the movie to her. She wound up explaining it to me. She loved Woody Allen. She was from Silver City. She has always been entranced with... you know she is a very bright lady. She was always fascinated by the Jewish psyche and all these kinds of things. So, we hit it off very well, we didn't rush into things. We traveled, she worked for me and we lived together. We got married. And meanwhile she converted and she is definitely Jewish. She does the holidays. We have good discussions about everything. But it pushed me into becoming a Zionist. She probably can't identify quite as much with Israel, although she has been with me. We spoke for IDF and some of their programs. She has been a wonderful mate. She totally believes in me. We have a terrific marriage, and she keeps me on the narrow. I can't BS her on things. But that is what you want in your partner. She reflects when you get off base. It has been a wonderful thing. I would say this. My children love her, the grandkids love her. In every case, all of my children and her children have named us the guardians of their kids, and they have other relationships. We are a good couple and really good grandparents. It has been a wonderful experience. And I am doing well in my stuttering and in my business, and in my leadership because I've got her support.

NP: That's wonderful.

