

Dalia Handelman: [00:00:02] Okay, it should be on so if you were okay, so basically I just want to start by explaining the purpose of the interview. it's an oral history project through the University of Delaware and the Jewish historical society and it's really just a general overview of your life with a Jewish angle, but it can really go any way. [00:00:32] There's not a strict like purpose they can like I mean a strict Direction it can really go whatever way you want it to really you can please feel free to stop it interview whenever for whatever reason and I'm just so I'm just going to start with this is Daila Handelman interviewing Helen Gordon on Thursday, June 27th, 2019 at 2 p.m. So just to start can you state I know just did but can [00:01:02] You say your name date of birth and location of birth.

Helen Gordon: My name is Helen Gordon Citroen was my maiden name. So it's Helen C Gordon 30 32 baynard Boulevard Wilmington Delaware. I was born in Atlanta, Georgia and I was there until I got married and my husband moved to Delaware.

Dalia Handelman: So, can you [00:01:32] tell me a little bit about the place you were born?

Helen Gordon: Well, Atlanta, Georgia is a pretty big city now. I don't remember it as a big city. We were in a fairly rural area but I grew up there and stayed there for my birth till I got married. And [00:02:03] I think it was 1953.

Dalia Handelman: Is when you left? 1953.

Helen Gordon: Yes.

Dalia Handelman: So, how did your family how were your parents did your parents grow up there?

Helen Gordon: My mother was from Poland and my father was from Russia. They were first cousins. and uh [00:02:34] my mother came to stay with her aunt who was my father's mother when she was in her early 20s and my father and mother met for the first time. And they got married a couple of years later.

Dalia Handelman: Why did your mother leave Poland's it was a just a visit

Helen Gordon: Well, no, it was it wasn't very pleasant and Poland it was tough and [00:03:05] there was a relative in America and that's they said they would take her and so she.

Dalia Handelman: did you grew up with siblings.

Helen Gordon: I had one brother older than me

Dalia Handelman: right. Were you guys close? What was your relationship

Helen Gordon: Well, we were close. He was three years almost three years older than me and when he he was in the [00:03:35] army. and and when he got married he lived in New Jersey and we were pretty close. So I was friendly with his wife as well

Dalia Handelman: well. Do you remember any games you played as a child

Helen Gordon: marbles Yes.

Dalia Handelman: That was your guys go to game?

Helen Gordon: Well, that was my go-to game. My brother wasn't he was not. [00:04:06] interested in too many games he liked Talking about geography and where he was going to go when he grew up and he did

Dalia Handelman: can you describe your education as a child like growing up?

Helen Gordon: Well, I went to public school. I was a pretty good student. Um, I went through high school and then I went [00:04:36] to college at night at the University of Georgia night school. While I worked, however, I started working at 17

Dalia Handelman: Um wait just to clarify so you you went through public school to High school and finished high school and then you were working at 17 and taking night classes?

Helen Gordon: classes Yes, except for the summer. I did not take any night classes and summertime [00:05:06] took me six years. I thought graduated from the University of Georgia.

Dalia Handelman: Did you have any Hebrew education or religious?

Helen Gordon: Oh, yes. We went to Hebrew school in the afternoons.

Dalia Handelman: Did you enjoy it?

Helen Gordon: I did actually I know it's not proper to say that you did but I actually did.

Dalia Handelman: Did you have a bat mitzvah?

Helen Gordon: [00:05:37] There were no bat mitzvahs at that time, I mean it was 1950 something so they were just becoming into style. I think the rabbi's daughter who was about a year younger than me was the first bat mitzvah of that congregation.

Dalia Handelman: Was your family the only Jews in the area?

Helen Gordon: [00:06:07] No, no, no. No, sir. Big congregation, nice synanguage There were more than one synagogue. There were at least three there was uh one we belong to and there was another one with them within about three or four blocks, Sheriff Israel, I went to hacha minocem and it was also reformed congregation in town and

Dalia Handelman: [00:06:37] you were raised as conservative?

Helen Gordon: conservative know it was no not reform. It was more like Orthodox, but it was a conservative congregation.

Dalia Handelman: Did your family keep kosher?

Helen Gordon: Yes

Dalia Handelman: and observe shabbat?

Helen Gordon: Oh, yes.

Dalia Handelman: Do you have any memory of what like did you interact with non-jews like we're or was it very secluded to?

Helen Gordon: [00:07:07] well, you know, yeah, I interacted with my whole classroom probably when I went to school was practically non Jewish. There were some Jewish kids in the class, but the majority of the kids were not Jewish it was in there it was It was just the school that was closest to the house.

Dalia Handelman: Did you growing up like childhood wise did you um face any anti-Semitism?

Helen Gordon: I don't [00:07:37] think I don't think I did and that seems a little abnormal. But if I did I didn't know it. I was not taught to look for it.

Dalia Handelman: Yeah how we're holidays celebrated in your family?

Helen Gordon: They were celebrated with when it was probably the candle lighting the Kiddush. [00:08:08] the proper foods for that occasion We stayed out of school. That kind of thing.

Dalia Handelman: You celebrate you observed all the holidays?

Helen Gordon: Yes.

Dalia Handelman: What was your connection to Israel growing up?

Helen Gordon: Not that much not that much in my early. Years are in my teen years, but later. [00:08:39] It became a lot more Interesting, and then the involvement was greater.

Dalia Handelman: Do you remember when Israel was established as like?

Helen Gordon: I do I do remember that I don't remember the date, but I do remember the event it was sort of historic.

Dalia Handelman: Yeah, [00:09:09] do you like

Helen Gordon: well, my brother actually went to Israel after it was first established. He went on a Kibbutz

Dalia Handelman: That's incredible. Do you know what kibbutz

Helen Gordon: I don't remember it. I did know but I really don't remember the name of it. Now.

Dalia Handelman: Did you go to Israel at the same time?

Helen Gordon: No, I didn't. I didn't go anywhere. I was I was routed to Atlanta [00:09:39] was a long I was I was in my 20s before I really traveled anywhere

Dalia Handelman: So kind of generally speaking. How would you describe your Jewish identity as a as a child like I was growing up, you know adolescence as well?

Helen Gordon: well as my mother kept a kosher home and she did all the ritual [00:10:09] of a Jewish housewife lighting candles and my brother made the Kiddush on Friday nights and on holidays. So I was brought up Jewishly. We ate only kosher food and so I was well entrenched in the Jewish religion.

Dalia Handelman: Did you feel very connected? Did you feel more connected to [00:10:39] your Jewish Identity or your American identity?

Helen Gordon: I think my Jewish identity because American was taken for granted. I mean, I was just I was Americanized. Didn't have to really do anything, too to show that I was american

Dalia Handelman: Is that what you mean by your American identity was almost taken for granted?

Helen Gordon: Yeah, you just didn't because it was just there Yeah. I had, you know,

Dalia Handelman: While your jewish identity?

Helen Gordon: the household had like candles that was different from other. Families that were American so it was it was a dual identity so to speak I stayed out of school on holidays.

Dalia Handelman: Yeah

Helen Gordon: so that really have really brought into [00:11:41] the idea that I was Jewish.

Dalia Handelman: So you kind of mention this before but I just want to clarify. Growing up the integration between the Jews and the non-jews in your community was was good?

Helen Gordon: Yeah, it was pretty good. Yeah, I mean people didn't treat me any differently

Dalia Handelman: You said you you had your first job at 17? [00:12:12]

Helen Gordon: Yes

Dalia Handelman: so, can you describe to me what that was like

Helen Gordon: Well, it was a summer job. I got a job when I was 17 and it was actually a federal office job and it was I think it was interviewing people which was weird for me at 17, but that's [00:12:42] what it was and it paid well. for 17 it paid very well. I think as I think when I graduated my first job did not pay as well as that summer job.

Dalia Handelman: What were you interviewing people about?

Helen Gordon: It was like filling in their applications for employment [00:13:12] and stuff. Yeah, it was it was secretarial kind of thing but not taking shorthand or anything like that. It was interviewing people who are applying for jobs. So

Dalia Handelman: that was your job when you were what was that your job when you were taking the night classes?

Helen Gordon: well, that was my job in the Summertime [00:13:42] Summertime. And when I went to school I went to night school for college

Dalia Handelman: right, And what were you doing during the days during college?

Helen Gordon: I was working

Dalia Handelman: at that at the same place?

Helen Gordon: I was working for the State Health Department and Atlanta Georgia,

Dalia Handelman: right? Wait was that the interviewing?

Helen Gordon: no the interview was that what went on in the summertime

Dalia Handelman: so sorry about that. So [00:14:12] during the school year when you were taking the night classes you were working for the state

Helen Gordon: the state health. Right. I was a I was an accountant.

Dalia Handelman: Okay. How did you get into those those two jobs?

Helen Gordon: Well, it's pretty good student that helped and and they interviewed for the job say. You applied and they interviewed you either got it or you didn't [00:14:42] it was a state it was a state job. It wasn't not public. It wasn't a private company or anything like that. So it was this. It was a state that employed me

Dalia Handelman: So what was how long did you do those two jobs for?

Helen Gordon: Well this I did it all during my college Years, [00:15:12] so it's about six years. I didn't work in the summer. I didn't go to school in the summer. So it took me six years to graduate. As a college graduated

Dalia Handelman: What was your next work experience?

Helen Gordon: Let me think.

Dalia Handelman: Or even [00:15:42] just like what was the next thing you did after it didn't need to be work experience You know the next thing?

Helen Gordon: well, I think I things like I worked always it was like from 17 to to the time I got married so and that was in my 20s. I worked for the state health department for [00:16:12] from 17 till I was about 27 because we call it decayed instead of a decade. We had our own terms

Dalia Handelman: . Can you describe like when the war was World War II broke out and was going on did life in America for you change at all, or was it kind of? Non [00:16:42] impactful.

Helen Gordon: Well it changed because my brother went into the service he went into he started as Officers Training they had a program and then when the war got bad quickly they put him in the Infantry. So that was pretty traumatic. So that's why I remember i'm sure.

Dalia Handelman: Do you have any memories from like writing him letters or how was it traumatic? [00:17:12]

Helen Gordon: it's traumatic for the family knowing that he was in quite a bit of danger because he was in the Infantry. That's what they did. They took all the officers candidate uh men that were studying and what am I a infantry

Dalia Handelman: and was he okay after the war

Helen Gordon: he was okay, although I think when later years when he developed [00:17:43] a problem with his feet that was from the war

Dalia Handelman: And he he went to the kibbutz after the war?

Helen Gordon: Yeah.

Dalia Handelman: So after you worked at that health department from 17 to 27, right said was what was the next stage?

Helen Gordon: Well, I got married [00:18:14] we had three daughters. And life took on its own

Dalia Handelman: so you got married at 27?

Helen Gordon: Yeah, 27 yeah

Dalia Handelman: How long did you stay in Atlanta before you guys moved?

Helen Gordon: Well, we moved pretty quickly because my husband got a job with Dupont. So we moved to [00:18:44] Delaware and actually we're still here. I'm still here. He died in 2010

Dalia Handelman: Was it difficult to leave Atlanta?

Helen Gordon: Well definitely was different. You do what you have to do. He got a job with Dupont. That was it?

Dalia Handelman: Are there like very noticeable differences [00:19:14] between even just like the culture from living in Delaware versus living in the south?

Helen Gordon: not really. You gotta do what you mean you do what you have to do and that it's in both places

Dalia Handelman: Did your work experience like at all connects you back to Judaism did it like You're working at the health department.

Helen Gordon: [00:19:44] Well, it didn't it didn't enhance Judaism. I mean I had I took off Jewish holidays, but that was not because I work for the health department. It was easier because they were more tolerant of granting those days off. But they were counted as vacation days.

Dalia Handelman: How did [00:20:14] you meet your husband?

Helen Gordon: Um, I think there was so. Someone knew him and knew us from collecting charity at our house her name was Mrs. Sick row and she told my mother that she knew someone. [00:20:44] it would be appropriate for him to call me and that's what happened.

Dalia Handelman: Was he Jewish?

Helen Gordon: Oh, yeah,

Dalia Handelman: was that him being Jewish or you dating or marrying? Someone Jewish was that important?

Helen Gordon: I think it was important to my family especially

Dalia Handelman: did your brother marry someone jewish?

Helen Gordon: Oh, yes. Yeah. Yeah. He got married later. [00:21:18] But he was a lot more. What's the word I'm looking for? He was born to travel and stuff than I was. I was more of a homebody. but the person that I married Was from [00:21:48] I don't think was born in Atlanta, but he was from Atlanta his parents lived in atlanta

Dalia Handelman: Did you ever Even think about marrying or dating even someone who wasn't Jewish?

Helen Gordon: No.

Dalia Handelman: it was always like a given that you were going to be with someone who's Jewish right?

Helen Gordon: I would have broken my mother's heart. I never thought about anything else because it just never would have occurred

Dalia Handelman: [00:22:18] Yeah. As a kid, did you always want to work in the the like Health Department health field?

Helen Gordon: well we're really wasn't in the health field. It was an accounting job because the by professional was an accountant. That's what my education was.

Dalia Handelman: And is that what you always wanted to do?

Helen Gordon: Yes. Yeah. That was like What i was best at

Dalia Handelman: [00:22:51] So as an adult, can you describe your affiliation with the Jewish Community?

Helen Gordon: Well my parents belong to a synagogue in Atlanta. And we got married at that synagogue and we had the rabbi from that synagogue and the rabbi from my husband's synagogue. We're both there at the wedding officiating [00:23:21] at the wedding. So it was definitely a Jewish wedding.

Dalia Handelman: Yeah, and then so that was going up and kind of in your 20s your connection to the Jewish Community was mainly focused through your congregation. Would you say?

Helen Gordon: well Yeah, I'd say so

Dalia Handelman: right. We're other places. Were you did you just feel your Jewish connection?

Helen Gordon: [00:23:51] I didn't feel as... I was made aware of it sometimes but not wasn't a good thing. That was not done in a Pleasant way for the most part but my own progress through the Jewish religion was positive.

Dalia Handelman: So what do you mean by you were made [00:24:21] aware of that in an unpleasant way?

Helen Gordon: Well, sometimes when when you were in school people would tend to c to criticize they didn't really criticize they noted your absence from school on holidays and stuff like that

Dalia Handelman: in a negative way?

Helen Gordon: some ways. It was negative

Dalia Handelman: so [00:24:51] That was growing up and in your 20s your connection to Judaism was through the your congregation. Once you made the move to Delaware. Did you like look for a Jewish community?

Helen Gordon: yes we did we look for Jewish congregation. We found one. And we stayed there. [00:25:23] I'm trying to remember the same all I can remember is the one Atlanta right at the moment. It's funny. I'm not as young as I used to be.

Dalia Handelman: That's okay.

Helen Gordon: um and in atlanta lot of the congregations name was ahvat achem [00:25:55] Oh and and Wilmington it was Adas Kodesh.

Dalia Handelman: Is adas kodesh conservative?

Helen Gordon: No, it was actually orthodox.

Dalia Handelman: Did you raise your family Orthodox

Helen Gordon: to a degree

Dalia Handelman: Was once you moved to Wilmington and we're part of the Jewish community in this area was belonging to oddest kodesh your you know, [00:26:25] your main affiliation with any connection to the Jewish Community.

Helen Gordon: Yeah. Yeah. at one point, I was administrative director of the school and out of school - and my co-partner was Gladys courts, it was the wife of the rabbi. She was the educational director of the school and I was in Ministry of directors school

Dalia Handelman: [00:26:55] How did you get into that position?

Helen Gordon: I don't really know I became. involved and Mrs. Goertz was not into secretarial stuff. [00:27:26] So we sort of teamed up we became friends and I would never undertake the educational part of. Judaism I didn't think that I knew enough to be in charge of that area and I don't think she felt that she knew enough about accounting or scheduling or all that stuff. [00:27:57] So we made a good team The JG team Gladys quartz and Helen Gordon. We were a team.

Dalia Handelman: Did you so did you enjoy that work experience?

Helen Gordon: I did. Yes. I got to meet many people. and a lot of people I think or I was told join our congregation because of their interview with [00:28:27] me. I mean, they were not particularly Orthodox, but we were an orthodox congregation. But that's what I was told later. I enjoyed meeting the parents of the children. That would be coming to the school. I did that job for a long time.

Dalia Handelman: Do you know how many years that's it's not a problem. If you don't

Helen Gordon: I'm not [00:28:57] sure exactly

Dalia Handelman: so you said you interviewed people before they joined?

Helen Gordon: Yeah, I did they would come to see well mainly they join because of the school and gladys course was the curriculum consultant of the school and I was the administrative director of the school. So I did a lot of I did all the interviewing of the of the prospective parents [00:29:27] and I told them about the school and and I think it was quite successful.

Dalia Handelman: Were you involved in any other Jewish institutions? Like Federation or

Helen Gordon: well as i contributed to the Federation, but I was not involved in the activities. [00:29:57] um

Dalia Handelman: Did you mentioned that people would come to Odas kodesh because of the school did the other congregations in the area not have schools

Helen Gordon: they did have schools and many of I won't say oh my but a lot of people who join a congregation that joined it because of the school [00:30:27] and not because of the Orthodox. quote unquote

Dalia Handelman: got it. aside from being the administrative executive...

Helen Gordon: administrative director. We call it.

Dalia Handelman: :at odes kodesh were you part of any other groups or stuff like that

Helen Gordon: Money-ly i was if you know what i mean [00:30:57] I mean, I mean I contributed to but I was not actively personally involved in Federation or in Jewish National Fund it was a charity to me in terms of my contribution.

Dalia Handelman: Did your children go to odes kodesh

Helen Gordon: Yeah yes my youngest daughter called me. Mrs. Gordon. I taught one of the [00:31:28] pre Alaph classes one of the younger classes when she was growing up. She always good. I don't think people knew she was my daughter.

Dalia Handelman: Okay, so did they do that through at like Elementary School through High School participated in?

Helen Gordon: Not through High School through um grammars [00:31:58] program School through about sixth or seventh grades and then there was the Gratz program which was a high school program for kids who wanted to continue their Hebrew education and then there was a separate program called the be Karim program in the synagogue for those who wanted to continue their education, [00:32:28] but not through the Hebrew just through the um like a high school program

Dalia Handelman: was your husband involved in the Jewish community at all.

Helen Gordon: He called himself Mr. Helan Gordon. Not really not. Yeah, not substantially. He wasn't raised that way

Dalia Handelman: was he was he passionate about Judaism [00:32:58] or just his kind of you kind of took the lead on

Helen Gordon: he called himself Mrs.Helan Gordan I think that answers the question. He didn't mind

Dalia Handelman: Right, but he was still okay with you know, raising your children jewish

Helen Gordon: Oh, yeah, absolutely.

Dalia Handelman: What was your connection to Israel [00:33:28] as you got older

Helen Gordon: Mostly in the educational area my brother went Israel. He lived there for a number of years, but I've never been and I'm but then I didn't go many places at all. I was a stay-at-home type of person. I'd say [00:34:00] emotionally and to a degree financially we supported Israel all the way. But I never did go there.

Dalia Handelman: Did you ever want to go there or was it just

Helen Gordon: I would have liked to go there but I don't think Mendel would have been that interested in going there, and I'm not a [00:34:30] I'm not a yes. not the kind of person who will go somewhere on a whim so pretty much didn't go anywhere except New Jersey where my brother lived and my sister in law

Dalia Handelman: When you said was that you mandale is that your husband?

Helen Gordon: Mendel was my husband Ervin was my brother.

Dalia Handelman: [00:35:04] so how do you feel about the current political climate and it's like potential effect on jews

Helen Gordon: Well, I think isreal will always exist. And I think Jews will always be interested in Israel, and I don't think anything will stop that no matter what the climate is

Dalia Handelman: And what about like anti-Semitism [00:35:34] take like the stuff in America or around the world like not even necessarily like Israel specifically related, but

Helen Gordon: well, I think it's sad. But I um don't really know what could be done programs don't really help that that much I think individual circumstances are [00:36:04] behavior will affect the people who are around that individual. as to whether they like or dislike Israel or that kind of thing. I think each person has to do, has to act so that people will look favorably [00:36:34] upon the Jewish state

Dalia Handelman: Do you think that what's going on with Israel like will reflect anti-semitism in the world

Helen Gordon: It could but I don't think it's necessarily true.

Dalia Handelman: Did you face any anti-Semitism like I know you said not really as a child, but like any time in your life?

Helen Gordon:[00:37:04] I don't think anyone displayed anti-Semitism towards me. Maybe I was naive but I didn't notice it

Dalia Handelman: Did anyone in your family ever experience..

Helen Gordon: I don't think so. No one ever mentioned it

Dalia Handelman: Were you close with your extended family?

Helen Gordon:[00:37:35] Well, I didn't really have a really extended family. I just had my parents, my brother and his wife. That was it

Dalia Handelman: You didn't have cousins or anything.

Helen Gordon: Well, I had cousins in Cuba, but they didn't come to America until they were in their late teens. They wanted to come to America to begin with but they weren't allowed in. [00:38:05] My mother was allowed and she had a sponsor of my grandmother took her in she and my father were first cousins so they were they sponsored her so to speak but they had to show that they could support her. So you couldn't get into the United States unless you had. Financial aid [00:38:36] so that you wouldn't be a burden. So that's that's what happened

Dalia Handelman:So your cousin's in Cuba, they eventually did come to america

Helen Gordon:Yeah, but they came on their own

Dalia Handelman: are you in contact with them?

Helen Gordon:I haven't been a quite a while. I was at first but they didn't live. Where we could be really in touch my cousin. [00:39:06] Came to New York. when she came to the United States and she got married there and and their children are we we did visit for a while, but you know times change

Helen Gordon: I just don't have not in touch with her anymore.

Dalia Handelman: And if you're you said your mother was from Poland. Yes, your father was Russia?

Helen Gordon: [00:39:38] it was from that area, but he came over when he was younger than my mother did

Dalia Handelman:So then how were you how did your cousin's end up in Cuba?

Helen Gordon:well I think they wanted to come to America, but they weren't allowed in and they settled in Cuba.

Dalia Handelman: So oh, so did they come from Poland?

Helen Gordon: Yeah , but it took years because first of all, [00:40:09] My cousin met someone that got married to have children, you know and after a long time they did finally immigrated to New York

Dalia Handelman: Did they were they there during World War Two?

Helen Gordon: Castro was in charge of the time. I don't remember if that was World War. [00:40:39] It probably was yeah,

Helan Gordan's Daughter: Can i just interpret for a second just to clarify, what happened is my grandmother my mother's mother and her brother tried to get to the United States. Her mother was allowed in and her brother was not and went to Cuba. So that's how the cousins ends up.

Dalia Handelman: Yeah,

Helan Gordan's Daughter: just to clarify

Dalia Handelman: No, thank you

Helan Gordan's Daughter: that was the mother and the brother okay of them her uncle. [00:41:09] Hmm, so they were separated and that's how a whole side of the family ended up being cuba And then were there during World War 2 right? Because they were there until Castro right took over. So that was in the early 50s.

Dalia Handelman: I'm sure yeah, did they did they um, I mean, do you know I know you said you weren't really in contact with him. Do you know if they had any like issues in Cuba, like during the war being Jewish?

Helen Gordon: I'm not sure

Helan Gordan's Daughter: s [00:41:42] you went to Cuba.

Helen Gordon: i did

Dalia Handelman: you've been to Cuba?

Helen Gordon: Yeah. Yeah, the one the one foreign place I've been to but we did go to Cuba. They did not have wonderful housing conditions. I mean they were not in the good section of Cuba, but we did visit them

Dalia Handelman: When did you visit them?

Helen Gordon:[00:42:12] It was before I got married. Paula?

Helen Gordon's Daughter: yeah. Yeah and just to visit was there ya know just to visit

Dalia Handelman: How long were you there for?

Helen Gordon: About a week. We didn't stay with them. They did not have great housing conditions. They had a communal kitchen, but the people that lived in that building shares which was you know, but [00:42:42] we were in the hotel.

Dalia Handelman: was that experience positive?

Helen Gordon: it was positive that was interesting it was my first meeting with with my uncle and his wife and my cousins

Dalia Handelman: [00:43:13] Did they practice Judaism in Cuba were they active Jews?

Helen Gordon: Yeah.

Dalia Handelman: do you was that do you know if there was like difficult for them at all, or Easy?

Helen Gordon: I don't think they had any any problems with practicing Judaism in cuba

Dalia Handelman: Did all so you have three daughters?

Helen Gordon: Yes

Dalia Handelman: did they all [00:43:44] like live their lives as active Jews?

Helen Gordon: No, I don't think so. My oldest daughter lives in Washington state and My middle daughter lives in New Mexico. And my third daughter lives here

Dalia Handelman: How did they end up in Washington state and New Mexico?

Helen Gordon: That's a good question. [00:44:16] well

Helen Gordon: Yeah, maybe you can answer that puala.

Helan Gordon's daughter: That's right. And then I don't know if she ever even worked in Oregon, but she got work in Seattle. Mmm, and she moved out there with her boyfriend and they're still together. So that was [00:44:46] I think right around the time that I went to call that was 40 years ago. Hey, buddy. Hard to believe and Zelda my middle of my the middle. Yeah of us. She went to school in Boston at Emerson and hooked up with somebody there and at a certain point they just got sick of the cold and [00:45:16] drove across country visiting friends and good friends of theirs lived in Albuquerque. And

that's where they landed they still live there. So right around the same time right now, huh? And and what after I graduated from college, I moved to New York City and worked in theater. And from there at a certain point. I moved to Boston and Herzegovina [00:45:47] for a while and I'm back here from there when my parents started needing Assistance or probably not when they started needing assistance, but at a certain point it they really need it. Yeah,

Helen Gordan: even if they didn't tell you when my dad yeah

Helen Gordon's daughter:: exactly. that started getting ill and

Dalia Handelman: when you said that you don't think they're practicing Jews. What do you mean like your is it the two older?

Helen Gordon: Oh, I don't think they are.

Helen gordon daughter:No, [00:46:17] they're not they're not practicing or observing at all actually, and probably I wouldn't be had I not move back here. I mean, I'm observant in the sense that I facilitate I could say I facilitate my mom's observance

Helen Gordon: Thank you Paula

Helen gordon daughter:to take her to take The synagogue and stuff but if Mom doesn't want to go to I don't go to shul right? It's not I mean, it's not like, okay. Well, I'm going yeah it whether you want to go or not. Yeah, and so [00:46:47]

Dalia Handelman: even I don't like being like being an observant Jews can mean certain things. It's have to do you think you and your sisters have like do you have a connection to Judasium or is it not really like even not necessarily doing the lighting the candles and stuff like that? But just like identity wise is it? Something that's part of your lives. If you know for your sisters, are you?

Helen gordon daughter: I'm thinking maybe for Zelda more so than for my oldest sister, okay. [00:47:17] because of the upbringing self-identification I would say Does that sound right mom?

Helen gordon Yeah.

Helen gordon daughter:I think Aster is our oldest sister is kind of not at all interested. I mean she's respectful

Dalia Handelman: did she marry someone Jewish?

Helen gordon daughter: No, no neither neither of hem that did that. [00:47:47]

Dalia Handelman: How did you feel about that?

Helen gordon: Well, I wasn't invited to the wedding and I don't know that they had a public wedding did they

Helen gordon daughter::Zelda is officially married. She did get married, but but it was sort of a her they've been living together for years. So her invitation or actually maybe announcements that finally married instead of just married. [00:48:20] It was not a secret right now. But but they they had been the kind of opposed to the just the institutionalization of it and then realize that actually made sense to get married because of the various benefits and the right, you know as an administrative issue it ? you know they were like why do , we have to have the State sanctionit [00:48:50] and at a certain point it's like well if we want The function better, you know, it's we just started going to do it. Yeah,

Helen gordon: they're free thinkers.

Dalia Handelman: They're free thinkers, you said how do you feel about that?

Helen gordon: I'm used to it.

Dalia Handelman:: Yeah.

Helen gordon: I am now right?

Helen gordon's daughter: I'm walking away now mom.

Helen Gordon: I mean, I like [00:49:21] their spouses

Dalia Handelman: Do you how do you feel about them not like continuing?

Helen gordon: Well, I think if they had children that would bother me, but it doesn't bother me.

Dalia Handelman: Oh neither of them have children. So do you think they would raise their children Jewish?

Helen gordon: [00:49:51] I doubt it. Yeah, that's my old hand answer. I really don't know. I doubt it though,

Dalia Handelman: and it's so that's where it like the shifts between like where you would really really care is comes from if they were to have children. Yeah, so then living their lives the way they do. how do you feel about that?

Helen gordon: it really doesn't affect how my attitude toward them is [00:50:22] I respect their choices I know both spouses I know Jim and Frank and and neither one has children and that's the way it is

Dalia Handelman: did your husband have any opinions on your daughters?

Helen gordon: He wasn't raised that Jewishly either. [00:50:52] I mean, he was Jewish. He had a Jewish mother and a Jewish father, but he wasn't sent to religious school and I told him the blessings for being called to the Torah. So I don't think he would have been any different. He wasn't any different.

Dalia Handelman: Did you girls have bat mitzvahs?

Helen gordon: [00:51:22] Well, I don't think they had them when astero is-

Helen gordon's daughter: Yes she did

Helen Gordon: Oh that's right she couldn't say the aleinu cause she had a cold. I remember that she had laryngitis. She couldn't finish she did everything till she got to the very end and she couldn't talk. Zelda's a vegetarian so she doesn't eat non kosher meat. [00:51:56] She doesn't eat any meat. Yeah. And they're very respectful when they come here. So it's all good. It is what it is and no grandchildren.

Dalia Handelman: [00:52:26] so What do you think the biggest threat to Judaism is today?

Helen Gordon: I would think that it would be. [00:52:57] A disregard on the part of the individuals to their own identity. That would be my guess. I don't think it's from outside the community. I think it would be inside the community.

Dalia Handelman: So you think the threat to Judaism today really come to come from within the rather than the outside

Helen Gordon: Yeah, I don't think that's much threat from the outside. [00:53:27] I think people are very lenient about what you are what you believe what you practice

Dalia Handelman: Yeah to you is Judaism a religion or culture? There's lots of debate on on what people think

Helen Gordon: I think it's both

Dalia Handelman: I know some people are like it's a lifestyle and so there's there's [00:53:57] all this debate on like how you would Define Judaism and to you. How would you define?

Helen Gordon: Well, I would define it as religion. It has his cultural aspects, but I think it's religion.

Dalia Handelman: What would be one piece of advice you would give to the Jewish people [00:54:27] like of modern day?

Helen Gordon: Well, I would say be understanding of your neighbor. Of your co-religiousness and of the world

Dalia Handelman: Do you think that's the like like what's the the main value you have [00:54:57] like learned and lived in your life that came from Judaism?

Helen Gordon: Well, I think that probably is so it's what the Jewish people had to contribute to civilization in other words, I think. Jewish people are an example. [00:55:28] four observant people of any faith that you know, it's worth while

Dalia Handelman: Is there anything else you want to mention about Judaism or your life?

Helen Gordon: Not really? No, I don't think so

Dalia Handelman: [00:55:58] Thank you. You're welcome. Thank you. You're welcome.