

YETTA CHAIKEN TAPING HARRY DAVID ZUTZ
JULY 9, 1990
WILMINGTON, DELAWARE

YC: Would you tell us when you were born and something about your early days of your life?

HZ: I was born here in Wilmington, Delaware on December 12, 1917, to parents that were both immigrants, as most of our parents in those day were. My father had come from Odessa in Russia when he was about fifteen and my mother came from Kievev from Russia when she was about thirteen. She worked in a factory in Philadelphia until she met my father and they were married, I think it was about 1913. I was not their first child. They lost their first child and I was their second and I suppose they thought that they lived very elegantly. My father had purchased a new home at 1309 Orange Street in Wilmington and it was brand new and he paid about \$3,000 for it. They were very content. My father had a shop. This is under the heading of "It's A Small World". His first shop was next door to where Yetta Chaiken was born. It was 612 West Ninth and that was his first store. He was a tailor and he did cleaning and dying and repairs and anything that could make a few dollars. He was also the first valet of the Hotel DuPont. That was in 1912. He had been in this country since 1907 so I guess he was already about 19 or 20 years old. He kept those two jobs for a long time and had a little store and then he moved to Delaware Avenue at 315 Delaware Avenue and was on the same block as his brother, Max Zutz, who was at 311 Delaware Avenue and around the corner from his sister, Aglances who lived at 1003 Tatnall Street. All the Zutz's were tailors and that was their lifestyle. My early life was relatively uneventful except for illness. When I was about 3 years old I had an uncle, his name was Louis Caney, and he was a neighbor too, and he was very fond of me, he had two daughter, but I suppose he always wanted a son, and he bought me a bicycle for my birthday. Unfortunately, I fell off that bicycle and it was relatively a scene at the time a minor injury but it turned out be a thing called ostiomolitus, which incapacitated me until I was about 20 years old and to this day I have wondered if that is a problem. My early life was filled with relatively an affluent life, up until the time of, I suppose 1930, we lived very well. We had a home in Atlantic City. My father had a big car and we used to have a driver and I was an only child, albeit sickly, I really didn't suffer for attention. I did very well. I didn't go to school for a few years and they used to have people to come in to tutor me here and there, but I made out and I guess I was out of school for about 2 years altogether. I made up one and I was always 1 grade behind my time.

YC: How did your illness affect your future life?

HZ: Well, I really try to make out that it didn't really happen. The only thing was I could never do what the other kids did. I could never play baseball, football or run or do all the things other kids my age could do, so I filled them with other pursuits. I used to read a lot. I used to spend my days lounging in the library and I was busy. Later on I had all kinds of jobs and by then not turning out so well. As you know, in 1929 we had the beginnings of a great depression and money was very difficult and I sold newspapers. I did everything. I did everything that all the other kids did at this time to make a few dollars. Probably when I was 10 years old, my mother died. That was a very tragic part of my life. I had been an only child and she really doted on me. What happened was she became pregnant and she delivered my sister in 1928. I was then almost 11 years and she died, of what they called in those years childbirth fever but it was really periodontics. She died five days after my sister was born on November 1, 1928. Then we went to live with an aunt. They were the Coltons. We lived with them for about a year or year and a half and then my father remarried. He married, she was a lovely woman, but I really gave her hell for the first few years. I resented her which I suppose was the normal reaction but I came to love her and she was a lovely person. She really raised me and she raised Elsie, my sister. When she came back, Elsie was about 2 years old and then a couple years later, she too gave birth to a son, Teddy. who is 15 years my junior and 5 years younger than Elsie and we lived at 314 West 14th Street in Wilmington. Here was a house that my father bought and it was the last thing that he really bought because by then things were really bad and shortly after we moved into that house, he lost that house to a sheriff's sale. It was that last thing that he owned and emotionally he never did recover from the fact that he was affluent and now he was beholden to everyone. He worked and things got better and they managed well and after my sister was married, they ultimately sold their house and they moved to a little apartment on 41st Street, which was what I bought for them. In the meanwhile, in the intervening years, I was one of the very few that went to college.

YC: Did you want to go? Did your father want you to go? What was the scenario?

HZ: No, I wanted to go but there was no doubt that he too wanted me to go, notwithstanding the fact that the money was not available. But, somehow or other, I had a lot of jobs that didn't pay very much, but all in all, I think my father gave me in the four years I went to college, altogether, he may have given me \$1,000, maybe not quite that much. I worked on Saturdays and Fridays.

YC: You commuted?

HZ: I commuted, right. I worked in the Post Office, I worked

everywhere. I sold shoes, clothing, newspapers, magazines, and anything. I managed and I did alright. I delivered clothes, I did that everyday. I did that in addition to any painting jobs I had to do because that was for my father.

YC: So, when you came home from school you then went to work.

HZ: Straight to the store. I delivered clothes until I got them all done. I had a super job at night. I used to manage a garage. All I had was wait until all the trucks came in and we used to sit in the managers office, I mean the owners office, and I used to do my homework there, until all the trucks came in. Then I would close up the garage and go home. I got five dollars a week and that was very important at that time. At any rate, I got all through school. I wasn't the normal type of...

YC: What did you study?

HZ: I wanted to take pre-law. I took pre-law but I knew that my odds of going to law school were pretty low. I didn't have any money and I will tell you an interesting story that has some names to go with it. Someone once told me that I should go see Mrs. Alfred I. DuPont and that she helped boys and girls, mostly boys, that were having a hard time getting through school. I went to see her and she said that she was really very sorry but that unfortunately, they were over their budget and she had just, just given a young man more money than they really had available but he seemed so deserving that she unfortunately couldn't help me. His name was Colin Sites. He turned out to be a federal judge. At any rate, I wouldn't contend with that. I went to all of kinds of other people, DuPonts, that my father knew and I couldn't get to first base and suddenly somebody sent me to see a man by the name of Harry Craig, who to me was a saint. He was a Vice President of Wilmington Trust and I went to see him and made an appointment for a future date and I came to see him at 11:00 AM one morning. I told him that what I wanted to do was that I wanted to borrow enough money to go to law school and that I would pay him back when I got through school. I had heard that they had done that and he said to me, "Son, I'm going to take you out and buy you lunch." He did. We went to the YWCA. He bought me a sandwich and dessert and he was a super guy. He said to me "You don't want to go to law school." And I said, "But, Mr. Craig, I desperately want to go to law school." And he said, "No, you don't, you really don't want to go to law school. And I said but why wouldn't I want to go to law school?" He said, well, it will break your heart. If you go to law school, and I am sure you are a good student, but they won't let you pass the bar. They haven't let anyone pass the bar in 20 years. The Jews in Wilmington, Delaware, went for 20 years without a Jew passing the bar examination. It wasn't that it was so hard to understand how they were able to manage this, the examination used to be oral. They said you

flunked, you flunked. There was no re-dress, there was no nothing, that was it. So I didn't manage to get through law school or even go to law school.

YC: It must have been a blow to you.

HZ: Yes, it was. I really wanted to be there. But at any rate, I came out of school, I went to the University of Delaware, graduated in the class of 1940, and the University of Delaware used to have a recruitment placement service and a guy by the name of Colonel Ashbridge, who I always thought was a vicious, violent, anti-semitic to begin with, he was in charge and the only two interviews he was able to get for me was for Panapac Oil Company to be a bookkeeper in the jungles of Venezuela and the other was to New York to work in Macy's and they called it a section management, but nothing more than a glorified stockboy. But, at any rate, they were the only two. I turned to another facet in terms of getting a job. The DuPont Company, and you know, I am very grateful to them to this day and they are certainly not the same DuPont Company as they were then, but as a matter of corporate policy, they did not hire Jews or Blacks and very, very, very few Catholics. It was purely a WASP establishment and that was the way they wanted it. While my father had a friend...

YC: A customer or a friend?

HZ: A customer, friend. He was very fond of my father. He was Special Director of Personnel. After I had graduated from college and before my father used to bug him everytime he saw him "Why can't you give my son a job? Why can't you give my son a job?" and that was it. Well, finally came June and I was graduated and had nothing to do and so I did what I had done all those years prior to that. I went to my father's store everyday. I used to get there 5:00 AM in the summertime because it was hot and we had a press machine that made it unbearable. One day, this man's name was Donald R. Morton, he called me. Son, I have very good news for you. And I said "What's that Mr. Morton?" He said "Well, you come up to the office. How soon can you be here?" Well, I'll tell you, I jumped in the truck and I ran home and took a bath and I put on a suit and I was in his office in twenty minutes. He was really beaming, he was really pleased with himself. He said...

YC: And you had already finished college?

HZ: Yes. Well, he said "We did it." And I said "What's that Mr. Morton?" "We got you a job." said Mr. Morton. "You did, that's wonderful. What kind of job, Mr. Morton?" "I got you a job in the cellophane sales division. You have to remember that in 1940 the cellophane was a brand new product and had great potential. He was going to take me from his office to meet my boss and I was literally on Cloud 9. Just

as he was ready to walk out of his office, his secretary whispered something in his ear and he says "Son, wait just a minute. I have to take a call." But he goes back into his office and shuts the door. I am left in the End Room. I am having this kind of a soliquate "Should I ask him how much?" "No" Don't ask him how much" You never ask him how much" You made it. You have a job with the DuPont Company and you are Jewish and you did it" But, won't they think I am dumb if I don't ask them? Don't ask, don't ask!" At any rate, I am still having the solidiquate when he comes out of his office and is walking down the hall. The first thing that pops out of my mind is..

YC: And out of your mouth.

HZ: And out of my mouth is, "Mr. Morton, how much does this job pay?" I wanted to kill myself. He said "\$60 dollars." And I said "A week?". And he said "No son, a month, but that is only for three months. And then it is \$85 dollars and then you are on our regular incentive program." Well, that was \$85 dollars a month, \$20 a week. Now, I used to sell shoes and clothes and worked in the Post Office and I always earned more than \$20 a week. I had to make more than \$20 a week, I was supporting myself. He is walking fast and I am walking slower and he look back at me. He says "What's the matter?" I said "Mr. Morton, I am going to have to think about this because I am so grateful to you for all that you have done and I wouldn't want to disappoint you in any way. I have to go home and think about this.: At any rate, I did. I wrote him a letter that I really, really struggled over for hours until I told him how grateful I was, but in effect, tell the DuPont Company to take their job and stick it" I never went back. I always used to kid Irv Shapiro, "Listen, I could have beaten you there by years!" But, I didn't.

YC: Well, actually, was he there? Did you have to confront him at any time?

HZ: I have seen him since. He is gone now but I know his son and his son still works for the DuPont Company. He was a very nice man and I was very grateful to him. This is a fact, up until that point, to the best of my knowledge, only a man by the name of Groundward...

YC: William Groundward

HZ: He was Jewish but he had such a Scottish accent that they never knew that. As far as I know.

YC: How about Kuon?

HZ: Kuon was a different situation. There was another man. He didn't acknowledge that he was Jewish. His name was Able Klaus and he was lawyer, head of their legal department.

The major one was Milton Kutz and that was really a much later date. Milton Kutz owned a chemical plant in Cleveland. He had a product that the DuPont Company wanted and when they bought the company, he, of course, came with the package. The really wanted him. He was a very competent man, he was a charming delightful man. I must tell you something about how we in the Jewish community profited by DuPont Company bigotry and the bigotry that was provasive in this community. When Milton Kutz came to Wilmington they introduced him to all of the right people in the right clubs and they proposed him to the Wilmington Club and the Wilmington Country Club and low and behold, he was rejected by both. While he was a Jew, he really didn't practice Judaism and you never would have seen hide nor hair of him had it not been for the fact that the DuPont Company was not successful in introducing him into the polite WASP society. He turned out to be Wilmington's greatest Jewish benefactor. He was a charming man and I was very friendly with him and as a side for years we used to carry on about the fact that he was going to adopt me and I was going to change one letter of my name to make it all possible. It never quite worked out.

YC: Let's backtrack just a little bit and go back to the period of time when you refused DuPont Company but now you had to go make a living.

HZ: Well, I couldn't get a job. I couldn't get a job at anything that was other than very pedestrian type of employment. I could work in the store I guess but I didn't want to do that. I got involved in the Insurance business and it was originally through Lou Stat. He knew a guy that was a manager for an insurance company. They would hire anybody. They didn't hire you, you worked on commission. If you made anything, fine. If you didn't, you were out. He took me in to introduce me to this man. His name was William H. Fortna. He was a very nice man and they gave me a desk (it wasn't a desk, it was a table) in their office. I had on-the-job training. There was a guy there that taught me the insurance business, one kind of insurance policy a day. One at a time. After I had been there about one week to ten days, I thought I had enough training and I went out and was soliciting business.

YC: What kind of insurance did they sell?

HZ: They were USF&G, which is still one of the major companies in the world, and they sold fire and casualty insurance. So I went out and I hustled and I hustled and I hustled. This under the heading of nothing comes easily. I remember distinctly that in those years I didn't have any responsibilities.

YC: What year was this?

HZ: 1940. I started there the first of July, 1940. Just 50 years ago. My normal working day was I used to get there at 8 in the morning, before anybody else. I would run around like an idiot to see as many people I could in the course of the day. Then at night I would hang around gasoline stations, drive-ins and places like that. I used to sell some automobile insurance, or whatever was available, from time to time. After a year or two I started to build a small clientele. But I did the kind of things that either are not possible today or people are not willing. There is a row of apartment houses on Delaware Avenue in the 1500 block and every night after I ate, I used to go there, that was my normal beat. I used to start in the 1400 block on one side and work every apartment all the way down to the car barn and all the way back on the other side and in those years people didn't lock their front door. I would knock on doors. At 11:00PM I was still there and maybe I sold one, two or three, some of them were relatively insignificant but that was a beginning. The first year I was in business I made \$900.00. I want to tell you something, I really worked. I bet on the basis of hours, I must have put in 4,000 hours. But, that's the way it was. You know, it has been very good to me all of these years and I am grateful for that.

YC: How long did you work for them?

HZ: I never worked for them. I was an agent and after a little while, they were so proud of me they gave me a little cubicle, about 4' by 6' and I thought that I was Vice President of the United States. Then in 1946, I moved to 205 W. Ninth Street. It was small little office on the second floor over a home savings and loan.

YC: And that was your own company?

HZ: Right. I paid \$35.00 a month for rent and I had one girl working for me who made \$12.00 per week. That was the beginning. Then it grew a little bit and I had to rent the third floor. In 1950, I moved to 905 Orange and that was really, by comparison, elegant quarters. In 1958, I moved to 405 Delaware Avenue, 405-407 there were two buildings which I had by then purchased. In 1971, we graduated to our present offices, which is the top floor of the Bank of Delaware building at 300 Delaware Avenue.

YC: Now, how many people work for you? What areas do you cover insurance wise?

HZ: Well, we are called a large regional broker. We have an office here in Wilmington and there is a small office in London. In Wilmington we have about 60 people now and in London we have just part-time people that actually I share space with someone else there. But that has been very rewarding. We do all kinds of insurance other than

Accident, Health and Life Insurance.

YC: So you cover every facet.

HZ: Well, yes, we do. We do a lot of business with Lloyds and that has been an exciting and fun thing as far as I am concerned. I was the President and my brother, Teddy, came with me in 1956 to go on to the University of Delaware and took ROTC to fulfill his obligation to the government. He had to go to England for a couple of years and served over there in the English airfield. This is long after World War II and after Korea but before Vietnam. Then he came with me and has been with me ever since.

YC: Any you have other members of your family...

HZ: One other. My son, Larry, I guess he was the academic star in the family. He was a very, very bright student. He went to the University of Indiana and earned a graduate degree. He was Phi Beta Kappa. He was a road scholar candidate from the University of Indiana. He ultimately went to Yale Law School and after he graduated he presented us with a real dilemma. He said he didn't know what he wanted to do. He thought he wanted to be a professional golfer. He was good golfer but I didn't think he was that good. At any rate, he went down and stayed with Bob Tasky, in Florida, for two years. Ultimately came back, having given it a fling and he took the bar examination in the District of Columbia, that was the first one that was available without any prior preparation and passed it. Then he came to Delaware and he took a cram course for a couple of weeks and took the Delaware bar examination and passed it the first time and went to work Bayard, Brill and Handelman, a large local law firm. I always said to him that becoming a lawyer is a means to an end in itself and I would suggest that he think about it and if one of these days he would like to come with us, we would be delighted. Five years later he called me one day and he said that he would like to consider that. And he has been with us now for fifteen years, he is President of our company now, but in addition to that he runs a facet that is entirely different and it is a tribute to his training. We have a company called Professional Liability Insurance, Inc. that writes malpractice for doctors, but primarily lawyers. He conducts seminars throughout the country on Lawyers' Errors & Omissions and Malpractice. He built a very, very significant business.

YC: Let's backtrack again. Let's go back to your marriage and your family.

HZ: Well, I'll talk about my marriage first. I knew Gladys Rich from, I guess, at least high school days. She is almost four years younger than I am. I courted her and we were married in 1943. I have to digress for a moment and tell you about for people who are my age and older, those years

are critical because those were World War II years. When I was at the University of Delaware, there was a land grant college and I had to take R.O.T.C. But, when I was graduated and the war started in 1941, I tried to get into the service, but they wouldn't take me. I spent all of 1942 trying to get into the service. At one time, I did make it. They opened up a thing called the Army Special Service Corp. I thought I was in. I ordered uniforms and everything. I was all set to go. Then they discovered that I had to be 35 years old, which I wasn't. So, I was reconciled to that fact that I was going to be the last able bodied man walking around in Wilmington, Delaware. I really felt terrible and I really wanted to be in the worst way and I never made it. At any rate, I turned to more romantic things.

YC: Yes, but you did a lot of things. You were air raid warden.

HZ: I was chairman of war bonds and all that kind of stuff. But that was not very satisfying. I wanted to be in the service. I never really made it. That was a great disappointment in my life. At any rate, I was married to Gladys in March of 1943. She was still going to the University of Delaware. We lived in Newark, Delaware until she was to be graduated. Unfortunately, she was very pregnant just before she was close to graduation day and she never did get her diploma. But, we were married and in June of 1944 our daughter, Marsha, was born. By then, I was relatively comfortable then what I considered an adequate living, that is compared to my peers. We lived in a little apartment and we ultimately moved to a house. Then our son was born in 1946. From there on, things improved significantly financially and we moved to a very nice house in Brandywine Hills. We lived there for 17 years that were probably the best years of our lives. We moved to Greenville in 1976 and we still live in the same house today.

YC: What about some of the activities you were involved in in those early days?

HZ: Well, I guess part of it always stems from the fact that I have always had very strong feelings that we owe a responsibility to leave a little something here and not be takers and I was involved, in terms, in organizations that had a purpose and a motive. Not just on the basis of a social activity. I was very much involved. The first organization I was involved in was called the Avota Club. That is a Hebrew word that means service. It was business professional people and we were dedicated to providing aid in many, many different kinds of ways. It was a super group. I became president of the Avota Club. I was very much involved in B'Nai B'rith. One of the great things I think, in my lifetime, that we accomplished is that we sent car load after car load of used clothing to the people that were coming out of the camps.

YC: After the Holocaust.

HZ: After World War II. Then I was very much involved in Jewish Community Center. I was president of it.

YC: You were president of B'Nai B'rith also.

HZ: Yes. I was president of the Jewish Community Center. They were difficult years because there was the transition in terms of the community. The Jewish Community Center was located at 5th & French in Wilmington, a poor location. We struggled very hard to try to get it to move. Milton Kutz, who I had mentioned earlier was a very good friend of mine, really was a fabulous guy. I carried around his signed check for \$100,000.00 for years. It was conditioned only on my raising \$300,000.00 to match it. We never could raise the money. One of the things I thought was a great, great achievement in my time is I originally owned the sellers property were the Kutz Home is now located.

YC: You mean you personally owned it.

HZ: Yes. I gave it up on the basis of we originally hoped to buy it for the Jewish Community Center and then when it couldn't be bought, there was a guy who was really difficult at the time, who really prevented it. We only came to terms. I just turned my contract over. I wasn't even a contract. It was an auction. I relinquished my right and John Kaine bought it supposedly for the benefit of the Jewish Community Center, although we thought at the time that it was a philanthropic gift. It wasn't, but it was still fine because we wound up with a great piece of land. That was where the Kutz Home was built and I was very much involved in the Kutz Home. I was on the building committee and I was vice president of the Kutz Home and saw it come to fruition from a little, horrible place we used to have on Second and Washington and that was a great, great achievement. That was probably one of the most satisfying things that anybody has ever been involved in. Then in later years when I was president of the Jewish Community Center, we started fund raising drives and that ultimately culminated in a lovely building we have in Wilmington as of this date.

YC: That is the present site on Garden of Eden Road?

HZ: That is right. These have been very worthwhile endeavors and I have really enjoyed all of them. I have been involved in lots of other things. Hypothetically, I will tell you a story about a man who really deserves much more credit in this community than he receives because it was different time. There was a man in Wilmington by the name of I. B. Finkelstein and he passed away many years ago. While he was an ardent Zionist, to the best of my knowledge he never

belonged to a synagogue or a temple, and he was a non-practicing Jew. He was the zionist of zionists. One day he came to see me and he said, "You know, I picked you for a young man who is going to go places. What I would like you to do is I would like you to get involved in those activities that are not Jewish.Â Well, maybe those are not the words he used but what he said were too peripheral. "We really ought to branch out and I would like you to do is become a member of the Delaware Historical Society, the Delaware Art Museum.Â and he had a whole list of organizations that he wanted me to join. To begin with, while the dues by today's standards are not very much, it was \$15.00 or \$20.00 for each of them, I thought that was a lot. But, I did join them.

YC: What was his purpose?

HZ: Well, he was the man who was largely responsible for bringing the Jews in Delaware out of the ghetto that they had formed for themselves. He personally deserves all of the credit.

YC: And so he wanted you to be one of the people that would fan out into the community.

HZ: Right. And that was what he did.

YC: So you took that as your motto.

HZ: Yes I did. I really had great regard for him and I did do that.

YC: What were some of the non-Jewish organizations that you were involved in?

HZ: Well I became very much involved in the United Community Fund. I'll tell you a very interesting story about that because I think that it bears repeating. When the United Community Fund, the Red Feather Agency then, decided that they were going to take both the Catholics and the Jews, and up to this point, they had not had either one. I am not positive in my own mind that they really wanted the Jews but they became a package deal. They took both of us in at the same time. One of the conditions was, and I. B. Finkelstein was a big factor in this, that we supply personnel in terms of the fund raising. So, they volunteered me as a chairman. Whoever was chairman then, I have forgotten his name, called me and asked me to be a sub-chairman for Banking, Real Estate and Insurance. It was a highly structured organization and the fund raising was going to be in Autumn but the meetings started in early Spring. God, there were meetings, after meetings, after meetings. And on day I came into a meeting an my goals were set. They have a goal of 15% over their prior year's efforts. That was what they wanted. Those of us who were chairman to inculcate the

workers that we had to the fact that we must get 15%. I said to him, "Yes, but you are starting with 15% against a ridiculous base." He said, "What do you mean?" "Well, if the Wilmington Trust is only giving \$500.00 and they give 15% more, we would only get \$575.00. Shouldn't they be giving \$5,000.00?" He looked at me and said, "What you propose doing? Tell them how much they should giving?" That was one that I stayed involved in for many years.

YC: And you helped them raise the

HZ: Any I was chairman for the Jewish Federation drive and I have been involved in that for many, many years. Fund raising is an intricate part of the Jewish psyche. That's us. So, I have stayed involved in that.

YC: What about your political ... Well, before we move into politics, how about the Wilmington Board of Education?

HZ: I really miss that. That was really a fun experience. The State of Delaware, you know, is composed of three counties of which New Castle is the largest in population, but Kent and Sussex the larger in area. Now, the State Board of Education in Delaware is really run by the lower two counties because they have the majority. When Albert Carvell became governor of the State of Delaware, he called me one day and asked me to come down to see him in Dover, and I did. He said he wants to put me on the State Board of Education. And I said, "Bert, you know I would do anything you say, but you know what they are going to do. They are going to burn me at the stake. They don't want me. They don't like me. They don't like my kind." He said, "That's what I want you to do and that's why I want you to do it." Well, he appointed me on the State Board of Education. I was the first Jew. I was certainly the first liberal. I was a terrible combination for them in terms of the Board of Education and I had all these wild ideas like equality. They didn't believe in that. I will just tell you one little story to illustrate too. One day, Irv Morris, who is a sensational guy and has been involved in my kind of causes all of his life, he has been active in the American Civil Liberties Union (incidentally, I have been a card carrier for 40 years and I hope all of my Republican friends hear about that), he called me up one day and said, "I'm entering suit against you." And I said, "What for, Irv?" He said, "Because of the way you are treating the Blacks." I said, "Irv, I plead guilty. I plead guilty. You are right." This was long after Brown v. Board of Education.

YC: What date is this? When did you go on the Board?

HZ: I went on the Board in 1958. Brown v. Board of Education was in 1954. At any rate, I took this assignment very seriously. Although it is not a non-paying job, I used to take a day off each week and go visit schools. One day, I

got up early in the morning and drove down to Lewes, Delaware and went into the high school and somebody took me to the principal's office. I told him who I was and that I was on the State Board of Education and I had come to examine his school. Well, I thought the guy was going to faint. Nobody from the State Board of Education had ever been to his school. I looked at the school. Brand new building, beautiful building that has all the facilities in the world. I mean, it was a model for it's time. I get all done and I said, "You know, I don't see any blacks in your school." He said, "They've got a school. Down the road." Well, after I left there, I went to the black school. You know, in those years they were called colored not black. And I went in there and met the principal who was also a teacher. He was a teacher/principal. A nice man. It was a four room schoolhouse with a great big pot-belly stove right in the middle and that was what heated the whole building. That was their school. The very next meeting I went to, I raised this as an issue. We used to have our meetings at night in Dover. I want to tell you something. I was scared to walk out of that place after I got done. The Delaware State News used to assign a reporter to cover our meetings and the guy was a cartoonist. While I admittedly have a prominent nose, it doesn't come down to my knees. But that was the cartoon every single time we had a meeting. I must have here dozens and dozens and dozens of cartoons that they did of me. They loved me. I was the best copy that they ever had. But, I thought we were making great strides. One great accomplishment in my tenure on the State Board of Education, try as I might, I could not really make much headway in terms of their teaching or their bigoted practices. But one situation occurred that gave us the opportunity. The state superintendent was scheduled to retire. His name was Miller. I wasn't a matter of choice. He had to retire. They guy who was chairman of the State Board of Education appointed me as chairman of the Search Committee. The state legislature had a guy that they were pushing. His name was Madden. They wanted him in the worst way. He came from Cape Henlopen. He was one of theirs and that was who they wanted. I was determined he was not going to be the guy. Well, parenthetically, we had on the State Board of Education in Bert Carvell's term, we had a black. He was a dentist in Wilmington by the name of Woodrow Wilson, who was a super guy and who I related to. He appointed a woman from Smyrna. Her name was Jane Ennis. I never could figure out why I made this kind of impression on her, but whatever I wanted, she agreed. Well, we started interviewing people. This Search Committee took 6 months and that was after we had hired a professional. We finally got down to 8 finalists. We had a meeting and we interviewed each finalist for a whole day. We had dinner with them and then let them go. Then we got down to 4 and we interviewed 4 all over again. Then we got down to 2, and of those 2, the guy that I knew right away that I wanted was a guy by the name of Gouchet. You were probably teaching

school.

YC: Yes. I was.

HZ: He was a fantastic guy and I wanted him desperately. Well, they started throwing roadblocks. One of the roadblocks that they put in our way was, they reduced the salary of the state superintendent to no more than a principal's salary. They did everything under the sun to kill him.

YC: They meaning the legislature?

HZ: Yes, the bigots. Oh, it was awful. So, the guy who was president of the State Board of Education was a very nice guy. His name was Jay Oram Small. He had been a DuPonter. He was a charming, delightful man. At any rate, the 2 of us went out and we raised the money privately to subsidize Gouchet's salary. He stayed here for 3 years. We saw to it that he was subsidized. Why would a guy want to do that? Well, on a career basis to say that he was state superintendent is a great, great resume.

YC: Looks good on your record.

HZ: He was fabulous. He made very significant changes in the educational system in Delaware and that was something that I really enjoyed.

YC: You mentioned anti-semitism in your early days, but being Jewish had an effect on your life in terms of your activities. Can you tell something about this in relation to your career?

HZ: Well, I think it is really hard. I know that I have had these discussions with my kids, but there is no way that the current generations could understand. They have enough trouble understanding the Holocaust if they do, and not all of them do. But they certainly can understand the pervasiveness of anti-semitism in this city and state and the years prior to 1946, because that is a high water mark. Maybe not a high water mark but that is the year in which things changed. It wasn't until Harry Truman's administration that things really did change. In terms of anti-semitism, let me just remind you that, more than anti-semitism, I never went to school with a black. There were not very many clubs and things such as that were totally closed to Jews. I know that when I went to the University of Delaware, we had hazings and we had three Jewish boys from New York City that are probably walking around to this day scarred with nitric acid of a swastik on their forehead. These are the kinds of things that are just hard to believe. But that was the lifestyle then.

YC: And it was accepted.

HZ: Of course.

YC: Were you involved in any way when the Jewish Community began to get united in some way.

HZ: Yes. I think that this was a very interesting experience. I was chairman for the Anti-Defamation League for B'Nai B'rith. There was a guy that used to come to Wilmington every year that was a convert. He had been Jewish and now he was a Baptist. His name was Heiman Applebaum. I will never forget that man or his face as long as I live.

YC: He had a beard, I think.

HZ: He was incredible. And of all things, there was a church right across the street from where my father's and your father's place was, Delaware Avenue Bethany Baptist Church, and he used to come every year for a revival meeting. They used to come here to Wilmington in two chartered Greyhound buses. They really put on a real, real show.

YC: They meaning this Applebaum plus others.

HZ: Right. They came to Wilmington and they used to run it and they filled the church. I went to the church to listen to him. I wanted to die. He was doing so good they moved to the Armory, which was then at 10th & DuPont Streets, in Wilmington, Delaware. It was the biggest hall that we had and he used to fill the hall. I went with Harry Bland who was a court reporter and he took down his sermon verbatim. And that son of a bitch, he was absolute the pits. He saved his closing sermon, his last one, which he raised the most money, was entitled "Why the Jews really did kill Christ". I want to tell you something. He used to run full page ads in newspapers. The radio stations used to carry his programs and we were totally stopped.

YC: What do you mean you were totally stopped?

HZ: We couldn't do anything about him. We finally sat down and came up with a great idea. We went to Harry Braunstein, who owned and major department store in Wilmington, and we went to J. M. Lazarus. We had to go to them independently because they didn't like each other. But they were both big advertisers in the newspapers. We went to see an editor at the paper with first one and then the other. We let it be known that these major advertisers vitally objected to being so described. A guy by the name of Abel Klaus, he was the editor of the Evening Journal. He agreed that they would not accept inflammatory ads. Well that was a great big step in the right direction. Then we went to the radio stations and they agreed finally, after we really, really threatened them with fates worse than death unless they did this, that they would not accept a sermon from him that was inflammatory or he deviated from his script. They would cut

him off. I'll tell you something. The newspaper lack of publicity hurt him tremendously. Then he got cut off from the radio stations because he deviated. His attendance started slipping. When he came in here the following year, he went back to the Bethany Baptist Church and he had a relatively small audience. After three nights, they pulled up their stakes and they left. Well, we were so elated that two of us went on the train the following day to New York to the Anti-Defamation League and we told them what had happened. They sent a whole crew down to Wilmington. They interviewed everyone under the sun and, to this day, I don't know where Heiman Applebaum is but he doesn't preach anymore.

YC: He doesn't come to Wilmington anymore.

HZ: He doesn't preach anywhere anymore that I know of. For then, we had the same situation with schools. People think that these were new problems, but they weren't new problems. We raised enough, I did myself with no great shakes, almost enough money to put in all new schoolbooks. We put in all new songbooks in the schools.

YC: What do you mean? When you were on the Board or Anti-Defamation?

HZ: Anti-Defamation. We don't have songbooks in the schools in Delaware anymore that have all of the Christmas carols or religious songs.

YC: They do sneak them in.

HZ: They sneak them in?

YC: At least you made an effort. As you look at the various activities you have been involved in, you have been involved in a lot of politics.

HZ: Number one, I think that Jews were attracted to the Democratic Party. We had a common denominator, we had a bond. Jews that came from Europe were socialists by inclination even if they didn't know what socialism really meant. The Democratic Party was, more so than the Republican Party, the Party of the people. Even from the earliest days when the first started talking about things like Social Security, that was a Democratic platform and it was a view. So, I guess it was natural that, like a lot of others, and I think that at one time, probably in my earlier years, I think that the Jews probably voted 90% Democratic.

YC: Certainly during Franklin Roosevelt.

HZ: Yes. So it wasn't until they got very rich ...

YC: My father voted for Wendell Wilke.

HZ: He was one of the few. But at any rate, we were attracted to Democratic politicians. I guess I am precarious by nature and I got involved, although I never ran for office.

YC: Would you have liked to?

HZ: No. I never wanted to run for office. I had lots of opportunities, but I did run a lot of candidates and ran their campaigns and paid for one whole campaign. I paid for Sam Sloan when he came back as a World War II veteran. I ran his campaign. He almost won. He almost became the first Jewish member of the House of Representatives in Delaware. At any rate, I was very much involved and I have always stayed involved and I was very friendly with all of them. I was very active with Burt Carvel's time. Carvel, to this day is still alive, and I say this without fear of contradiction, he is one of the finest, kindest, most considerate men I have known all my life. He is a fabulous man. I was very much involved with him and he did some things for which we are grateful. He appointed Dan Herrman as the first Jewish Chief Justice anywhere. He took incredible flak from his constituents in other places but he stayed with it. Others that I was very fond of and I knew real well in terms of Wilmington City Government. We only had one Jew that I knew of that was involved in politics and that was Joseph Green. He was a republican and a member of the City Council in Wilmington. Then he was a member of the State Senate. He did very well in that respect. But, it was the Democrats that attracted me. I was friendly with all of them. But I guess the greatest pleasure I have had is Joe Biden. I was very much involved with him from the very first day of his announcement of his candidacy and went through the trauma of his wife's death and the death of his child, etc. And to this day, I am very friendly with him and I see him frequently.

YC: Did you help finance him?

HZ: Yes. I have been a political supporter. You know that new book that is coming out that I got a little publicity about? Did you read the thing in USA Today?

YC: No, I didn't. Tell me about the book.

HZ: A guy called me recently from USA Today, a reporter. He said, "I am doing a story on a book that is coming out in a couple of weeks on June 27, and it lists the 50,000 American Millionaires." And I said to him, "The fact that you are calling me does that mean I am listed? I hope I am next to Donald Trump or something." He said, "Well, you are. But it is an alphabetical listing." It was a result of political contributions, community involvement. I said, "Wait a minute. I thought you were pulling my leg. You are

for real. He said, "Oh yes." I said, "I want to tell you something. I resent that. Whether I am a millionaire or not is not very important because a million dollars these days is not a very significant amount of money. It was twenty five years ago, but when they say there are 400,000 millionaires, that is ridiculous. There are probably 400,000 in the Mafia that are millionaires. So that is not a big situation. But I resent it because I get enough telephone calls now from every snake oil salesman in the world that I will probably have to change my telephone number." So the guy, this is hard to believe. 50,000 names in the book and I am the only one he mentions. He says, "Mr. Zutz grumpily said I'll probably have to change my telephone number." At any rate, I have stayed involved in politics and I am involved with everybody. We are very fortunate. We have some very nice people involved in politics. I just talked to somebody about Charlie Oberly the other day and I suggested to him that they make a whole big piece about him. He has one thing that goes against him and it is not defensible. It is his integrity. You can't defend integrity and that is what he has most of. We have a Jewish County Executive, Dennis Greenhouse. Very nice gentle man. I see him, I've helped him. I've helped him financially and in other ways.

YC: He's gotten a lot of flak though.

HZ: Well because what he is trying to do. I had a man visit my office today from New Jersey who is connected to Florio. Florio is getting unbelievable flak from all over. He inherited an incredible mess. He's smart. He's going to raise taxes in the first year of his administration and the people are having a fit. They have to do it. As an example, the JUA, the Joint Underwriting Association, came up under the prior governor with a plan to insure all those people who were uninsurable. That plan is in debt to the incredible tune of 3 Billion Dollars.

YC: This is New Jersey.

HZ: Yes. It is incredible. They say, Oh we're paying too much for Insurance. Well, I'll tell you what, the State won't provide the insurance for them.

YC: Well, obviously you haven't given up. You are still in there pitching. Now let's look back. You are now three score and ten and some and now you have to look back and think in terms of some of the things you are most proud of.

HZ: Well I am blessed with a lovely, extended family. That is one of the things that I am really, really proud of. I am obviously pleased with the fact that we have, most of my friends, have started with nothing except a very strong desire to succeed, achieved some material wealth but more important are sharing with others. That is what I am proud

of. These are the kind of things that I think we get pleasures out of and will get pleasures out of for as long as we live. Watching people helping others.

YC: Thank you, Harry Zutz.