

**INTERVIEW WITH DAVID FINE
NANCY BLASE, INTERVIEWER
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NB: This is Nancy Blase conducting an interview for the Washington State Jewish Archives Committee of David Fine in Seattle, Washington on Monday, November 10, 2014. David thank you very much for taking the time for this oral history. Would you please spell and pronounce your name.

DF: Sure. My complete whole full name is David Joel J-o-e-l Burstein B-u-r-s-t-e-i-n last name is Fine, as in things are just fine F-i-n-e.

NB: When and where were you born please?

DF: I was born in Detroit, Michigan at New Grace Hospital on October 16, 1956.

NB: Would you please provide the names of grandparents and parents and where they grew up and moved to. If their names are unusual would you please spell them and if you could describe your family, your parents and siblings.

DF: Sure I'd be glad to. So I was fortunate enough to get to know all four of my grandparents. My mother's parents were Samuel and Minnie M-i-n-n-i-e Smolnick S-m-o-l-n-i-c-k. Interestingly enough my mother's father was born in the States in Detroit and her mother was born, I don't know, but it was certainly in Europe could be Sevastopol, we're not quite sure, somewhere in the Ukraine. She came over when she was about 6 years old. My father's parents are Minnie, again M-i-n-n-i-e. Her maiden name was Shelansky S-h-e-l-a-n-s-k-y and Abraham, although as he was known to others M. Abraham Fine. He was born actually in Burlington, Vermont. And there's a whole story there. My father's mother likely born upstate New York, close to if not in Glens Falls, New York. My wife likes to tease me because my family has been here so long. My father's father was the first Jewish wedding in Vermont. And his, a little interesting fact, my father's father's mother, his paternal grandmother lived to be 106 and was the oldest person in Dade County when she died. My family, I grew up in suburban Detroit in Oak Park, Michigan, which was a very Jewish suburb. It was the first ring suburb, it was immediately north of 8 Mile. The schools were all closed on Jewish holidays as much for business reasons, there just weren't teachers or students who were going to be in class as it was to honor Jewish holidays. My family, my mother is Frances Gwendolyn Smolnick. And my father— it's quite a name, Fraidel Genendel.

NB: Would you spell that please?

DF: Smolnick S-m-o-l-n-i-c-k. And my father is Harland H-a-r-l-a-n-d. Harland Willard Fine he's Herschel Velvel to all who know him. Actually he's known as Sonny because his mother said no one should have to call a 3-year-old Harland Willard, even though she gave him that name. I have a brother and a sister. My brother is Robert who lives in

suburban Minneapolis. My sister is Sharon, Sarah Ruchel, Sharon Ruth. And she lives in suburban Detroit to this day, where my parents live as well.

NB: Would you spell Sharon's last name?

DF: Sharon Ruth Fine. She met, Sarah Ruchel is her Yiddish. Sarah R-u-c-h-e-l. My brother is Ruvain Baruch. So in that I have my complete Jewish name. And what's striking because my son is going to be giving a sermon on his actually about change, he, I was ordained in 1989 in Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. He was then 2, 2-1/2 years old. What that meant though was that his Jewish name changed when I became a Rabbi. It's the only way you can get your Jewish name to change. He was Avishai Ben David U'Bat-ami and his name became Avishai Ben Harav David U'Bat-ami. I am David Yehudah is my full Jewish name.

NB: And how do you spell that?

DF: Y-e-h-u-d-a-h. I am one of three people, my father's maternal grandfather, all of us became Rabbis. And at the bris they said his name was David Yudee but the moil said there's no such name as Yudee, it's Yehudah.

NB: And what involvement if any did your family have with the Jewish community?

DF: We always belonged to Temple Israel in Detroit. It's now one of the largest if not the largest Reform congregation in North America, there are over 3,000 households. She began teaching pre-school, my mother, at that congregation. And my mother never belonged to a congregation growing up. She played in the synagogue and in the alley behind the synagogue but never belonged. She figured that if she taught pre-kindergarten she would know more than those kids and perhaps know more than Reform Jewish families. Striking now that her son's become a Rabbi and her grandson, my son, is on his way to becoming a Rabbi, he's in his first year of rabbinical school. So we were very involved in the congregation. Very involved in youth group and that actually has significant impact on my decision to become a Rabbi. As my mother taught religious school, she always drove, it wasn't even a carpool, she just drove. And we have a lot of many, many a religious conversation during those car rides. In particular we would often, she would turn on broadcasts of Christian religious services so she could point out how Jews and Christians are different.

NB: Very interesting! Would you talk about your years growing up in terms of high school and your college years? Not including the religious school.

DF: So I went to Oak Park High School, a public high school. It was always ranked very high in the State, one of the top two or three schools for academics. I really enjoyed high school. I was a swimmer in high school. I was the captain of my high school swim team and we were known actually for losing rather than winning. We lost 69 swim meets in a row! It was quite an event. My senior year we were 2 and 14. I remember the date, January 19, 1974 when we won our first swim meet against Hazel Park, so I remember it well. It again a fairly I want to say it was a large 4- to 500 members of each class. It was

still a growing community when I graduated high school in 1974. When it came time for college, really just thought about public institutions, the idea of a private school just seemed way too far away, economically and otherwise. I think my parents were afraid of me moving too far away as well. I'm the oldest of three children. So it's either Michigan or Michigan State, I was accepted to both. Most of my friends were going to Michigan so I had to be different so I went to Michigan State. In addition, I knew that there wasn't going to be a thesis that I would have to write in order to graduate and that provoked, inspired some fear. So it was Michigan State. Pretty normal. I lived in the dorm for really four and two-thirds years. I was a resident assistant and loved doing that, it also had an influence in my later choice of career.

NB: Um hum. How and when did you decide to become a Rabbi?

DF: My mother likes to say that when I was little, I'm not sure if I said I wanted to be G-d or if I wanted to be a Rabbi. But probably one would be apparent to be quite enamored of the other not so exciting. It sat there for years and really went dormant when in between my junior and senior years of high school I went to the Reform movements Camp Kutz K-u-t-z Kutz Camp in Warwick, New York. It's the leadership camp. And I went there on a scholarship because I had become the financial vice president of my high school youth, Temple Israel Temple Youth. That meant as the financial vice president that I ran the two fundraisers. On Mitzvah day which would be cleaning up houses and washed windows and raked leaves to make money. And then the Purim carnival in the spring. But while there Rabbi Danny Syme, S-y-m-e, who happened to be the son of my Rabbi at home M. Robert Syme, Danny told his father that he had spotted me and I should become a Rabbi. Which really surprised me because I felt that was I was a pretty shy kid, still got a lot of that introvert in me. He spoke to his father, his father asked to speak to me. We met in his office. He said "I think you should become a Rabbi." I said "I thank you very much and but no thank you." But it was sort of like putting the piece, the little grain of sand in the oyster. And it was that irritant that eventually formed the pearl, to use a tref example. It simmered in there for years. I would come home and meet with, all the college kids would get together at Thanksgiving, well not all but for me it was all, go to Temple and Rabbi Syme would say, "David, what do you think about this issue?" And I knew I was always being put on the spot. He also identified several others. Many of us have become in fact Rabbis, although plenty of my close friends did not. Years later I was working, I went through a Master's program in Industrial Relations at the University of Minnesota. I was working in a Jewish town in Rosenberg, Texas. Came home and Rabbi Syme, it was Rosh Hashanah, it was a sermon on the Akayda, on the binding of Isaac. And he spoke about sacrifice and we all have what to give and I ended up in tears. And I thought "This is it. This, it's time to do this." So I was by then already, that would have been 1984, Rosh Hashanah that year. I was working at Frito-Lay and doing well. At Frito-Lay I was hemming and hawing. Frito-Lay was promoting me and offers of someday, you are now what would I have been? 26 years old, so by the time you are 30 you will be in the home office and you will be a vice president long before you're 40, maybe by the time you are 35.

NB: And what kind of work were you doing at Frito-Lay?

DF: Human Resources. And they offered, I had two incredible offers, one was Frito-Lay said we would like you to go to this next plant in Casa Grande, Arizona. You will be our number two in Human Resources there. And then from there you'll go to Kern County, California and be the number one as we open up new plants. At the same time Compaq Computer contacted me, they were only a year old then. This is the spring of 1985 and they said we'd like you to come work for us. You choose your salary and you tell us if you want to be in the home office, which was they're in Houston, or if you'd like to be in a plant. Compaq. C-o-m-p-a-q. And that's when I had to say to both of those organizations "Thank you but I'm going to go to rabbinical school." Many a dropped jaw, I hadn't even applied. So it was kind of gutsy on my part. When I told my grandmother, my mother's mother, Grandma Smolnick, she looked at me and she wasn't always the sharpest person—the world kind of overwhelmed her. But she looked at me and she said "Don't you have a good job? Aren't you making good money?" Of course I nodded yes to each and she said "Then why do you want to be a Rabbi?" she said, "It's an aggravation and an obligation." And I smiled and I thought because I want to make a difference with my life. You're going to look back someday and feel like the world is that much better because I was here and I would have left a legacy.

NB: Oh, that's so nice! So you liked rabbinical school?

DF: I don't know if I'd use those words. It was hard. It, I had the feeling, it's sort of like when you go to the zoo and you look at the map and you see you are here. And people have worn it out from touching that spot in the map with their finger. The part of my brain that was learning Hebrew was worn out. Because I felt just that one part of me. In the end I was pleased to become a Rabbi but I remember there was a poster on the wall, "Teach yourself to say 'I do not know' and thou shalt progress." And I thought, "That may be true but not in this room. Not in this classroom. I'm not gonna do well saying I do not know." Rabbinical school was a challenge. It wasn't an easy path and it's that much more striking for me now as I work with rabbinical students, I'm a mentor to a student. And have been with many student rabbis as they visited their pulpits. Were they trying to be supportive and to let them know while there may not be a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, the rainbow does end and life gets better.

NB: And tell us how you found your first position.

DF: So my first position as a Rabbi was actually in Glenview, Illinois, like in the northern suburbs of Chicago. There were many positions open. Beth, my wife, and I met in Israel the first year at the Seder. We met in April, we had our first date in June. I then went to Europe for 2-1/2 weeks. We had our second date in July. We were engaged by the middle of August. Beth came to the States that November, so she moved to Cincinnati so we could be together. And then coming out of school we looked at different communities. Glenview was very attractive because Rabbi Mark Shapiro, Mark S., Mark Stanley Shapiro was the senior rabbi. And I knew that I anticipated Mark being a wonderful mentor and he was. I wouldn't be the Rabbi that I am now were it not for Mark. It was interesting because later on the second position, Beth said "All right I came

to Cincinnati, I moved to Chicago. Now it's my choice. Let's either go back to Israel or let's look for Seattle."

NB: And that was a big congregation in Glenview, was it not?

DF: The congregation in Glenview was close to, if not more than 1,000 households.

NB: And you were an associate?

DF: I was an assistant and then an associate. I was there for four years. After the first three, and it was a limit of five years and out, I knew that going in. And after two or three years, I'm not sure, they asked if I would like to continue for the balance. And I said I would but if there was a congregation that opened up in the Seattle area I wanted to be able to leave early. And fortunately something did, Temple Beth Or in Everett was looking for a Rabbi and the congregation there was only 65 households. And the position was half-time. It was kind of scary. My favorite color was aqua, which was the color of water. I grew up in Michigan. It wasn't the color of the green of our firs and our cedars and the hemlock, which really has become a favorite color. I was the first resident Rabbi ever in Everett. The congregation's founding goes back to 1918. It brought in Rabbis from, some would say it was really just a lumberjack from Vancouver to lead High Holiday services. Many stories about that. The congregation rebuilt the building with work parties every weekend. Paul Vexler, who had been a contractor and a member of the congregation, grew up in Habonim D'ror, Socialist Zionist, but he believed in work projects. So he would bring in people each weekend and people to this day will tell you when they go there "You see that framing there, I did that!" "You see that wall, I painted that wall." Paul would challenge people to get involved and in the end he really built a congregation. I was fortunate enough to step into that and then working half-time and that was striking because I would work first it was half-time and then three-quarter time and then 100% and then the congregation said we can't afford this. And then I became 90% time. This took place over a few years, I was there for five years from 1993-1998. I watched the congregation grow in membership from 65 to have it more than double to 135 while I was there working with wonderful partners. At the same time it was difficult to well financially make ends meet. So during that first year I also was going to Bremerton, Washington, to Beth Hatikvah, also two Friday nights a month. I was there for one year. I was then had the good fortune to become the principal of the community Jewish High School, which was run by the Jewish Federation. And that grew also while I was there. It began it was 118 kids who were coming and when I left two years later there were 185 kids enrolled. Over time it was '93-'94 and then '94-'95 through '96, I also ran the, actually in December of '96 so next month it will be 18 years, that I've been with the Union for Reform Judaism, then of course it was the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. I began though December 16, 1996 at 13 hours a month. Which is basically 10% time. As they said to me, we'd like you to hold up the flag occasionally. But the Region was growing. There were then 21 congregations and when I, when the Region was dissolved in 2009 there were 35 congregations. So I helped that grow as well. When I first joined in '96, I was actually the Assistant Director and the Director was in San Francisco.

- NB: So you were the Assistant Director of the Pacific Northwest Region of the UAHC?
- DF: So we were actually then called the Pacific Northwest Council and it was kind of a subset of what was then called the Pacific Central West. There was Northwest, Central West and Southwest. Several years later in the year 2000 they split us off and we became independent. Excuse me, I don't know if that's correct. That's not true. I finally had one full-time job in 2000, that's what it was. We split off as a region probably in 1998 but then I was the half-time regional director. And at that time I was also the director of the Florence Melton Adult Mini School, also an adult education program of the Federation. So during those years I had two and three jobs at a time and I always owed somebody time, whether it was my family or one of these positions and that was quite a challenge.
- NB: Yes, sounds like it. And then when it became full-time did you still have other things going on too?
- DF: Well other things but thank G-d I could just have one job! It was so, so nice and that again in the year 2000, and it meant that I could really devote myself to growing the region and working on projects.
- NB: Could you give the parameters of the region?
- DF: Geographic? So the region, it's funny, I haven't, Nancy thank you for asking, I haven't been asked that for a number of years. My kid would always make fun of me because I'll probably do it today give it with hand motions. So it was Alaska, British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana. And we realized that to go from one end to the other, whether from Billings to Fairbanks or Ashland, Oregon to Fairbanks was the same distance as traveling, if we went west to east, all the way to the east coast. And there was the last year of that position from 2008 and 2009 the Union was experimenting with how can we serve congregations differently and at that point three of us, two in Los Angeles and myself, divided up the congregations that were in the Pacific Central West. So I had that many more congregations, including Honolulu, Hawaii!
- NB: We're back after a brief interlude there and David Fine was just explaining about the geography of the UAHC redistribution.
- DF: It was, what was striking though is this was a time for growth for congregations. People would be amazed to know that the Reform movement has had six congregations in Montana, four in Alaska. And as Jews actually were leaving the Rust Belt and the East Coast they were coming west. And they were eager to be a part of this larger movement that really had a lot to offer, and still does. It's my vice but I believe it.
- NB: Very interesting. Now I think, so under your leadership the growth and expansion of the region nearly doubled!
- DF: It's true, certainly in numbers for many years there was Congregation Beth Israel in Portland is really the granddaddy of Reform congregations. I'll bet they're close to 150

years old. And in Seattle of course it's Temple De Hirsch Sinai. I want to say we're now about 110 years, I think it was 1904 or so. As the region grew, it wanted to, well, do what other parts of the country have done. For many years the kids here would either go to Camp Swig, or for those who have known it for a long time Camp Saratoga, which was close to Los Gatos, California. I can't think of the city. The desire was could there be a camp in the Pacific Northwest. During the mid 1990s there was a move to establish a camp. Joe Shuster, alav hashalom, from Temple B'nai Torah was really at the head of that movement, brought many people together. Rabbi Allan Smith, again Smitty came out, we met at what was then the former site of Temple Sinai in Bellevue. And Smitty looked around, counted up the numbers of people in our congregations and said "Sorry, not enough people. We can't do it. There aren't enough kids in religious school, financially it's not feasible." And that's how it sat for four or five years.

NB: So you're going to tell us about Camp Kalsman now.

DF: Then the Kalsmans had not come forward with incredible generosity. Fast forward, actually the year was 2000. Lee and Red Kalsman then live in California. Through connections that they make, including those through their daughter Peachy. Peachy and her husband Mark have been very involved in the Reform movement in Los Angeles. Peachy and Mark have gotten to become good friends with Rabbi Lenny Thal. Lenny as it turns out is from Bellingham, Washington. Lenny had been their regional director for the Reform movement for many years. Actually before that he had been I believe the Dean of Students at HUC in LA. He becomes the regional director, works closely with Mark and Peachy. Red Kalsman is in the hospital. He is visited by an HUC student and is very taken with the pastoral care that he receives, also sees that it's time to think about his legacy. Speaks with Mark and Peachy and among the causes to which they would like to make their legacy are health and healing, and Jewish camping. From these conversations, \$5 million is designated to become the lead gift for a future camp in the Pacific Northwest. This is incredibly generous. I should mention as well that Mark and Peachy have three children. One of those children is an adult with two sons of her own, Janny Levy Pauli. And Janny and her husband Bill and their two sons Jeremy and Jacob live on Bainbridge Island. This gift though sets into motion a search for suitable land for a summer camp for young Jews. When they asked Lenny Thal where could that money best be used, Lenny thinks about the Pacific Northwest. I had been brought on staff. I became the point person. I was now looking at commercial real estate. What kind of properties could we find that needed to be anywhere larger than 15 acres where we could develop a camp for \$5 million. In the end, \$5 million allowed us to get started but it wasn't enough for a camp. The cost, we all saw the cost rising as it became real. I looked at 35 different sites. The parameters were that it would be within two hours of SeaTac airport; that it had a water feature—that is a river or a lake; and as I quickly learned, we had to be able to have access to water. Water is very precious in the Pacific Northwest. Would there be a well, would there be a city source? So land alone wasn't going to do it. I looked at sites as far south as McMinnville, Oregon, there was actually a horse farm. Or east toward Yakima. North, we really seriously considered a property at Baker Lake. That property was, actually we did some research on it, the problem was City Power and Light had a dam on the lake and if need be they were allowed to flood the

land nearby. That would have been a problem. So Smitty turned to me and said, "All right, David it's your job to find this land." I wasn't trained in finding land in rabbinical school nor anywhere else in my background. Smitty's comment was don't worry, you'll know you're there when you find it. We looked seriously at a property in Granite Falls, Menzel Lake Road. The property was gorgeous. On the property was the first sawmill in the county. The land, the owners of the land showed me, I have a copy, if I can find it I can share it. It was a land grant, somebody granted them 40 acres. And there it was in Snohomish County. The problem was because of flood plain restriction, what had been 90 acres was less than 15 acres of usable and buildable land. However, we did find our caretaker Randy Parsons who was caretaking for that property. I need to give Smitty full credit, he quietly said, "David this guy is wonderful. Ask him if when we find our property if he will become our caretaker." And he did and Randy was wonderful. We were proceeding with negotiations actually with a property Camp Berachah. But they called it Berachah because they couldn't pronounce the ch. They spelled their camp "Berakah." In Black Diamond, Washington. We found them through Grant Weed and others who we knew were land specialists. They're attorneys. The interesting thing about Camp Berachah, it was a camp that was fully built out. They were seeking to buy a second camp for themselves. The thought was that we would share the property and share the camp for several years while they built. It looked ideal, because it met their interests and ours. Therefore we could build up our population each summer as they moved out. The camp had a go-cart track; it had horses. It actually had kind of a hotel right on the site, in addition to cabins for kids. It had a pool that had been outdoors. It was now covered. One of the challenges was this community was, to put it mildly, conservative religiously. They were a Christian camp and we basically agreed not to talk about certain topics with each other. How conservative was it? The girls in the pool need to have shirts on over their bathing suits. Lest they become too revealing. We were actually, and while this was happening we kept up our search for land.

The first site I visited I should mention was next to Camp Waskowitz in North Bend, Washington. Temple De Hirsch Sinai had rented out the space for their Camp for Living Judaism. Part of the reason we knew that there was a market is that Camp Waskowitz was filled to capacity every summer with kids from Temple De Hirsch Sinai. B'nai Torah decided they were going to run a summer camp and they also rented space from Camp Waskowitz. The director of Camp Waskowitz, Roberta McFarland, was enormously helpful. She actually went out with me to the first couple of sites that I visited. But somebody who was, Jewishly we'd say mishpacha to their cook, owned property adjacent to Camp Waskowitz. We checked it out, it was beautiful, the price was good but it was built on a mountain and you can't play soccer on a mountain. And there was no natural water feature. We also considered building next to Camp Brotherhood. They really wanted us to come there. That was part of the goal for Brotherhood was to have a camp for Christians and Jews. But again there wasn't a water feature and the property we would have bought was occupied by people who were well I think it would have been a legal challenge besides actually it might have been a physical challenge to get them off the land. We also at one point looked at Camp Solomon Schechter, wanted to create a campus of camps. And we thought that it really wasn't going to work. They had a water feature and they had the land. So we had seen—

NB: Is that in Olympia?

DF: It is in Olympia. We had seen this property that became Camp Kalsman. It was then occupied, people were living on it. It was the Love Israel community. Now some would call it a commune, others would call it a cult. I'll leave that off the table for now. The Love Israel family, the name came from the words Love Is Real. Their legal name, and I have their charter, is the Church of Jesus Christ at Armageddon. Formerly on Queen Anne they had moved to the site in Arlington, just outside of Arlington, in the early '80s. Technically that area is called Jordan Village. There was a community there in the 1800s, there's actually a Jordan cemetery as one drives up, what else, Jordan River Road, which is one of the ways of going, well one has to drive it but Jordan is just south of the camp. The Israel family was bankrupt. They were headed for legal proceedings in bankruptcy court that took place in Seattle. I was actually at the court. Smitty heard this and said, "Unfortunately it's just a matter of time." The asking price they wanted for the property was too high for us. I think they wanted 5 or 6 million. It was just richer than what we could afford. There were 18 parcels at the camp. Sixteen were held onto by the Love Israel family, two by a member of that group. Part of the problem was some of those parcels were in foreclosure, others were not. In addition, there are close to 300 acres, 298 acres at Camp Kalsman. There is a flat area and a sloped, there is actually a mountain on the site. As it got closer to the bankruptcy court, which took place in December of 2003, the last weeks of December, the banks, there were several people who had secured loans who could stop a deal from going through. The bankruptcy judge appointed Max Lohn. We could see as the countdown was headed towards bankruptcy court, the Love Israel family had hoped to put the land up for sale. They even parceled it out hoping that people would buy vacation spots, but they were not successful. As it got to bankruptcy court the judge appointed Max Lohn, who happened to be Jewish, to see if he could find a worthwhile financial agreement. We went to visit the camp, Smitty and Lenny Thal and I, with Max Lohn and decided we actually could make a deal. So we left the camp and went into the parking lot, I think it's called Forest Village—it's in the largest lake in Snohomish County and I lose the name of it right now. But we met in the parking lot and worked out a deal. Here's what we could present to the judge. But it turns out that things could not go through until the bankruptcy judge cleared it and there were again several people who had secured loans. Two were banks and they agreed for a certain amount on the dollar.

NB: What does that mean?

DF: So if I have a secured loan it means that you've written me in saying it's like a lien on your car. I have ownership, any deal you make on it I have something to say. There was one person who had loaned Love Israel, really given but it was a loan, \$90,000. It was the inheritance when his parents had died. Love took him in. He had since left the commune. He was living up in the Okanogan, the far corner of the State of Washington. He then wrote a letter to me telling me that he was owed money, that Love Israel owed him money. I called him, turns out he was living in a cabin, this was all the money that he had. And he said to me, "What should I do? Love has offered me \$30,000 from the proceeds of the sale. If I take it I'm going to lose \$60,000. I gave Love \$90,000." And

he asked me what he should do. And I knew that if the deal, if this wasn't resolved, the judge was going to put the land up for auction. I had to say to this guy "If you accept it you will have \$30,000. There are many people who have loaned greater sums of money who are going to get nothing." He accepted it and that allowed the deal to go forward and that meant that the Union of American Hebrew Congregations could buy that land. But it came right down to the wire. Actually there were two court dates and it was approaching the end of the year and the banks did not want to have this go into the next year, into 2004. So in late December 2003 we became the purchasers of the land. The Israelis were still living on the land and they were kind of a well, in some ways regular folks and in many ways not. Each one had a virtue name given by Love. So if Love had a dream, or if you had a dream, Love would then designate your new name. So there were people by the names of Love and Serious and Noble and Won and Honesty and Ammishadai, and a whole list of names—some biblical, some based on virtue. Then we had to make arrangements for the Israelis to leave the land. Smitty quite wisely said "If you clean it up and get it in good shape you will then get your full share of the money. If you leave it trashed you're not going to get it." But there were trailers on the sites and there were, at one point there was a bus that had been backed into a hill. They were hoping to make a root cellar out of it. Only it didn't work so well, so now there was a bus half buried by dirt and covered by blackberries. There were old car batteries. There were all kinds of trash. There was a giant barn. Many of the images that we see from those days are of a giant barn, the sanctuary which was attached to Love's bedroom was right upstairs in the barn. And a whole warren of rooms that went, again in this main building. Because it wasn't earthquake safe and it would be very expensive to retrofit, that building was taken down. It was quite something building the camp. There are still, the maintenance building and an adult retreat center still exist from the days of the Israelis. They were builders and hoped to make money doing building. There is also a house immediately north across the street built by the Israelis.

NB: Wow! And so sometime in the negotiations, well once they happened you got your caretaker Randy Parsons?

DF: So we did. So Camp Berachah we had to say to them, we were very close to signing a deal with them. You know we're very sorry but we're not going to go through with this. We need to reimburse for your losses so you're made whole. And they were very generous. It was in the thousands of dollars, it was not a huge amount. Randy Parsons came and became the caretaker. He occupied the camp beginning in April of 2003.

NB: 2004?

DF: I'm sorry, 2004. And then it became we were raising money. And then at first it was raising money for air because we didn't have a camp, it was only an idea of a camp. The question for the local congregations, for De Hirsch and B'nai Torah, was when will this camp be built? Will it be the summer of 2005, 2006? In the end, we had hoped for 2006 between permitting and building costs and bidding it out. It wasn't real. So we ran Camp Atid, atid means future, at Camp Waskowitz. But it was run by the Union for Reform Judaism, it might have been the Union of American Hebrew Congregations at that time.

Interestingly enough, what added to the cost of building the camp? Katrina. Why? Laborers and plywood were all going to Louisiana. So that in the middle of everything, as the camp was being built in 2006. The camp had its first summer in 2007. We had 90 camper beds. This summer there are 240 camper beds. It's been a wonderful process of filling the camp. It's been just great. It's great to talk with kids everywhere I would say. I was just this past weekend in Burnaby, British Columbia. One girl said "I love camp! Of course." she said to her parents, "And I'm going back next summer." And that's the way it's been across the region and it's a gorgeous, gorgeous site.

NB: Great. Once you'd bought the property, you had to bring in people to design it and that kind of thing. Were you able to, was it still your prime responsibility?

DF: For me? So I think part of what has characterized is my work at the Union for Reform Judaism and I've always been involved in three or four big projects at a time. So no, there was no camp director but that was what I was doing, in addition I was working to grow the region and to work, really not just to grow the region but to strengthen those congregations in the region. Deal with conflicts, help strengthen boards and make life good for the Jews.

NB: So did somebody take, you hired a director then?

DF: So the director arrived, I know the date well, on October 16, 2006. How do I know that so well? That was my 50th birthday. And David Berkman was hired to become the director. And David is the director to this day. He had been the assistant and associate director at several URJ camps, and he was the assistant director of camping for the entire movement when he was hired.

NB: Wonderful. Is there anything else you want to say about Camp Kalsman before we move on to another question?

DF: Only that for me I go, I visit the campsite and I see the ghosts. I think there was a yurt over here and this is where, between these filbert trees, this is where Hiram lived in a bus. And where the dining hall is, that was an enormous greenhouse. So I see those kind of things. I look at the lake and we call it, there's an island on the lake now. Well there wasn't always an island. Love enjoyed using a backhoe and so he cut out the backside of the lake to turn it into a lake that would have an island. There are, I guess I know all those stories, working with Love and with Serious, who was the number 2. And it's very striking to me to think that at one point there was actually a large, I don't know what to call it, kind of a large hole that had been dug out, kind of a conical shape. And it had plastic liner in it because Love had built a pool for himself there. But there were all kinds of again things of interest from the site.

NB: Wow! Wow! A lot of memories for you.

DF: There is. And there's one more, there's a knoll that's actually protruding bedrock. And for the Love Israel family, that was the place that was to be one of silence. If two people were having a dispute, they would walk up on the knoll together and just be quiet

together. As I was explaining this to my brother-in-law, he took a look at that, at the hill, and he said "Aren't these all going to be Jews?" I said "Well yes." He said "How about no interrupting hill."

NB: Very cute. Your current title is Rabbinic Director of the Small Congregations Network of the URJ. What does that entail and how do you do it being based in Washington State?

DF: That's a very good question. So most of my time is spent on the phone, whether it's a cell phone or voice over internet. And I work with congregations across North America. I also travel a great deal. This year I hit gold flyer status with Alaska Airlines in July.

NB: How many miles is that?

DF: It takes I think it was 50,000 miles. But they're just flying buses. So what it entails is helping doing my best to strengthen congregations to help them become better at being themselves. In addition, I work with new congregations trying to bring them into the Union and helping them to grow. And I also work with, at one point my business card said Congregations in Transition, which was a euphemism for many things, often it's places that are in trouble. I now also work with congregations that are looking to merge with each other or to find alternatives to merging with each other. So the good news is I'm busy. The bad news is I'm busy.

NB: Yes! It sounds like a lot to keep juggling.

DF: That's true.

NB: What other organizations and/or interests do you have? And any awards that you have received over the years?

DF: I think the two awards that I am most proud of, I'm a lifetime member of NFTY Chicago. And just pleased to have been recognized by the teens, having been the rabbinic advisor for three years while I was at the congregation in the Chicago area. This past year I received an honorary doctorate from Hebrew Union College. Lest you be too impressed by that, those of us who are ordained, after 25 years if we're still involved in the active rabbinate, we receive that doctorate. It was still very powerful though and I would say somewhat redemptive to go back to Cincinnati with many of those same professors and to be treated I don't know if respect is the right word, but almost as with recognition of you know it's nice to have you making a difference in the Jewish world. And that was really a delight. Interest, I think outside of the Jewish world? I've really, I wear my fleece proudly: I hike, I still swim but not as often as I would like to. I kayak, I bicycle, I snowshoe, I skate ski, I like spending time outdoors. As much as I like spending time with people, it's a good way also to balance that.

NB: Oh yes. Yes. You know I wanted to follow-up on something you said early on that you met Beth—let's go on to the next question because it relates to that. Would you please talk about your family including what Beth was doing in Israel when you met her?

DF: So Beth had made Aliyah when I met her in April of 1985. I am the third generation where the husband has brought the wife from Israel back to the States. My in-laws Mordy and Chaya Burstein met each other in Shomer HaTazir. They were part of the gareen, part of the starting seed for Kibbutz Sasa in 1948 and they have many a story to tell. But after less than a year and a half on the kibbutz, they came back to the States so my father-in-law could get his education with the GI Bill. And they stayed in the States until 1985 when they moved to Israel to start another mitzpeh, an outlook settlement within the green line near Carmeil. So at that Seder Beth announced that her parents were moving to Israel only that seven months later Beth had moved back to the States. So it pained me and Beth's grandparents had hoped also to move to Israel, World War I broke out. It sounds like such a passive way of saying it. Her grandfather went to Palestine. The Turks kicked him out. He then went to the States and her grandmother didn't get to go to Israel until much later in her life and it was a much, it wasn't the easier transition that it would have been had she gone in the teens. So that's how Beth and I met was at that Seder. She had been a social worker working for the City of Jerusalem. And at that point actually was working for Young Judaea Year Course in Jerusalem, again a Zionist family, striking that my son who's now, he turns 27 this week, also developed that love for Israel. He also went to Israel for a gap year after high school. He also went back for a year in Israel after college. Interestingly enough he has Israeli citizenship and came oh so close to, he was drafted by the Israeli army. And that's a longer story as to how he had to make the case that he was actually an American on an American program. But he has Israeli citizenship and an Israeli passport.

NB: And his name?

DF: I'm sorry, he is Avi or Avishai and our daughter Naomi, Naomi Meira, though she chooses not to use her middle name, who is 24 lives here in Seattle. I am very proud of both of them. She also has spent a great deal of time in Israel. They both went to the same undergraduate school, to Carlton College in Minnesota. And as I like to say it was wonderful not only that they got to be with each other and strengthen their relationship as brother and sister, but I saved a lot of money on T-shirts and sweatshirts.

NB: Great. And you had said that he is in first year of rabbinical school.

DF: He is also at Hebrew Union College, the full name Hebrew Union College Jewish - Institute of Religion, with his first year in Jerusalem and next year, actually the following four years will be in Los Angeles.

NB: That's nice to be on the same coast.

DF: It is and it makes it very easy with frequent flyer miles.

NB: Is there anything else you'd like to say about your family?

DF: That I love them dearly. And I have been very fortunate and very blessed to have them. I'm truly blessed.

NB: David, what advice would you give to young people growing up today?

DF: This is a dangerous question. Here I am, age 58, and like all right tell everybody else what they should do! What I think though is, it's a wonderful open ended question though. I think I'm recognizing that we live in an age that I'll call the New Enlightenment. People have increased access to information that is wonderful. But I think the Internet mentality has been I want what I want, when I want it, how I want it, and I want it for free. So it's certainly been a challenge I think for religious institutions. But what does that mean for individuals? I encourage people to I'm going to speak more to Jews as a Rabbi, look for the meaning in Judaism. Look for how it can enrich your life, look for how these texts, these ancient texts, these rabbinic texts are both ancient and timely and timeless. It isn't about observance again as much as it is about meaning and answering life's great questions. There's a temptation to reject outright just because and I would discourage that in the same way I would discourage just saying accept all those texts because they've been around. But investigate and look deeply and you'll find the richness in them. Much beyond what's at the surface. The only other advice I'll probably give my own children but others are while one can live a life with an orientation towards self, devote yourself to the common good. And again I have confidence in my own children and where they are in life, professionally and personally. But there's that greater good. I think that community organizing has it right even though many would like to cast aspersions on it. Wow, I do mean that.

NB: That was very interesting. Would you like to speak about anything else?

DF: Well I'm going to go back to the last question for a second. And that is your sense of humor will take you far. I see that again in my own kids but it's really, the world's a serious enough place.

NB: What an excellent interview this has been. You've told us so much about your life and about Camp Kalsman and you've had good advice at the end. And I so appreciate your being here to give us all this information.

DF: Thank you, Nancy. It's really a joy and it's an honor. And it's hard to believe that after 21 years it's, this has really become home. I think that home is if you would have died yesterday where would you be buried? And I feel like this is home and I'm glad to have been a part of this, a part of this conversation. Though no one may know my name, part of conversations that continue long into the future.

NB: Thank you again.

END OF INTERVIEW