

Waldbaum, Rodney Oral History Interview

July 28, 2021

Brad Lowenstein: So why don't you tell me a little bit? I know you went to Garfield High. Um, but even before that, can you tell me about, like, where you grew up? Um, what your household was like? Um, starting starting way back there.

Rodney Waldbaum: Okay. I was raised on Capitol Hill on 20th and prospect, uh, right across the street from the, uh, Prospect Congregational Church. Um, my mother was raised on Capitol Hill on, uh, 15th. Um, my parents bought their home in, I believe, 1935. Um, and my mother lived in it till, uh, 1993. Um, so I was raised in that house. I was born in, uh, Swedish Hospital. I. was the son of Helen and Al Waldbaum, and I had two brothers. My older brother was Kenny Waldbaum and my younger brother was David Waldbaum. They had had a sister, um, who had died before of undiagnosed appendicitis before I was born. I went to Stephen's school, um, which was the elementary school in the neighborhood. I went to Meany Junior High School, where I was boys club vice president, and got the award for the outstanding student in my class. And then I went to Garfield High School, um, where I became senior class president and was a top ten student, uh, academically. And then I went to the University of Washington, where I joined Sigma Alpha mu fraternity. And, uh, was very active on campus, uh, particularly my first two years. And, uh. I majored in accounting. I was in Beta Alpha Psi, the accounting honorary, and Beta Gamma Sigma, the, uh, business school equivalent of Phi Beta Kappa and. I graduated number two male student in my class, uh, the university, uh, in the school of Business. Um, but those were the days where the grades weren't nearly as high. Both the guy who won and the. And I came in second. Uh, we had 3.4 something Thing averages compared to my high school average of 3.97. And, um, that was good enough. I see the grades today are highly inflated. Um, then I went on to, uh, the University of Washington Law School, where I was on the law review, and, uh, I graduated, uh, in December 1970. I had been after my first year in law school, the, uh, United States took away my classes deferments. It was the first time in the United States history, but that was the Vietnam era. And the class ahead of me was safe. But mine, they took away the deferments. So I got married right after my first year of law school. And the day after my, uh, I got back from my honeymoon, I enlisted in the United States Army Reserve, and I also joined Arthur Andersen, um, the international CPA firm, as I had my choice of which CPA firm to join. And then I had to go in the Army. The only slots were available was as a cook. Um, so I went through basic training and then I went to, uh, uh, cook school for eight weeks at Fort Ord, California. And, uh, it was, um, it was a great experience. I literally, uh,

when I graduated law school, they offered me a direct commission, and I turned out. I turned down the commission as a lieutenant because I would not give up the power of being first cook in my reserve unit, which was composed of about 125 soldiers, 57 who were majors and above, uh, with seven full colonels and 22 lieutenant colonels. We had more rank in my civil affairs unit at Fort Lawton, out in Magnolia. Uh, then probably the entire rest of the West Coast combined.

Brad Lowenstein: Oh.

Rodney Waldbaum: Would you like me to go on without more questions or just, uh, continue?

Brad Lowenstein: Yeah. Let's keep going. Yeah. This is great. And I turned my video off just for the recording.

Rodney Waldbaum: Okay. Um. I did start my, uh, tax career with weyerhaeuser's, uh, uh, state and local tax, uh, department when it was on 11th and a in downtown Tacoma. And I did that between the summers of my junior and senior year, and then my, the summer between my senior year and first year of law school. That was a great experience. Um, and I, I observed that to if you wanted to really, uh, be a success at Weyerhaeuser, it was easier to go back out and then come back in at a higher level than working your way up through the ranks. And so I purposely chose Arthur Andersen as my CPA firm because they were the CPA firm for Weyerhaeuser Company. And, um, I thought that's what I would do. But then I after the Army and I graduated law school, when I was in law school, I got interviewed by, uh, the IRS, and they told me, if you go with the IRS, you'll get to go up against such great opposition as Lassard and Patton, which was a local CPA firm. And I ended up check, uh, excuse me, a local law firm. And the reason, uh, I checked that out, and the former dean of the law school said, you know, I know, uh, The little firm. Let me make a phone call. And the next day I had an appointment there, and I was immediately hired. And I ended up, uh, my career with Lassard and Patton for over 47 years. It was a great experience. Um, my practice was probably the broadest of the attorneys in the firm, but it was a heavy concentration of tax, particularly tax. Controversy work. I became a fellow fellow of the American College of Tax Counsel, and I was president of the tax section of the Washington State Bar Association, um, in, uh, 93 to 94. I was also So actively involved in, uh, some community organizations. I was, uh. I was involved with Hillel Foundation out at the University of Washington, uh, for many years, uh, and, um, in late 1980s, uh, when I was president of Hillel, we, uh, Rabbi Jacobovitz from the Hillel Foundation was going to retire, and we had to decide on the new executive director of Hillel. And that was a very tough decision, because we had two individuals who on a grade of 1 to 10, the board thought both were tens. And so we had to decide. And, uh, fortunately, we did hire, uh, Danny Bridge. And, uh, he successfully led Hillel for the next 18 years, I believe. And, uh, uh, obviously they were able to rebuild the facility, and I was always very proud of that decision. I later became, uh, president of the tax section of the Washington State Bar Association. Between 93 and 94, I was president of temple de Hirsch Sinai. Uh, in the year 97 to 98. I was on the temple board for 14 years before I was president. I was treasurer for six years. And, uh, and, uh. We had been discussing for years how to get an elevator in the Seattle sanctuary at temple de Hirsch, and how to expand from the, uh, existing Bellevue location, which it resulted from a merger of Temple Sinai into temple de Hirsch

um, which was on 1/24 in Bellevue. And we had been discussing it for years. When I became president, I decided we were going to do something, and so I got a congregational approval to buy the property of the current, uh, facility, uh, what is now the current facility in Bellevue for temple. And, uh, we also while I was Mr. President, we bought the land. We have got the approval from the congregation to have the fund raising drive, which did prove to be successful. And, uh, we were able to build on the raw land that we bought in Bellevue. And that was completed after my term was over. Um, but always very proud of my accomplishments while I was at temple, and particularly that the, uh, elevator finally got installed, uh, in the Seattle, uh, facility connecting the sanctuary level with the, uh, uh, Jaffe room down below. Um. My family has been the key to everything. I Met my wife Nina in 1960 as I was entering Garfield, and she was going to enter the ninth grade at Meany Junior High. Uh, we dated in high school, but we also dated with others in high school. Um. We were sweatshirt and lavalier, pinned and finally engaged and on her 21st birthday and got married after my first year in law school. Uh, we. We got an apartment on Beacon Hill, and in 1971, we moved to, uh, Bellevue. And we've had three sons, Brett Walbaum, Chad Walbaum and Erich Walbaum and, um, all of whom became Eagle Scouts. I've always been proud of that. And they all ended up being very successful and live independently, have their own homes. And, uh, we have four grandchildren. Uh, Brett and Hal and Hallie Brodeur. Walbaum have, uh, two, two daughters who are now, uh, turning 16 and, uh, 13. And Chad and Oreet have, uh, two children, a boy, uh, who is five and a daughter who is three. And Eric is absolutely fabulous. And, uh, he's still looking for the right gal. As far as interests, I'm very interested. Uh, besides professional things, I'm interested in, uh, bridge, uh, and, uh, family. We're doing a certain amount of family genealogy. Uh, we love to travel. We've skied, uh, we've played racquetball. Uh, we lived for over 30 years in Clyde Hill. Uh, and it was wonderful. Uh, I loved having Father's Day at our house for my extended family, which, whenever we would have an event, a major event, we had over a hundred people in the family. Uh. before I could invite my first friend. So, uh, but even the Father's Day, we would have 35, 45 people. And, um, the yard lent itself to that. And then, uh, 14 years ago, in 2007, we did downsize to a condominium, uh, in Kirkland, Washington, which we absolutely love.

Brad Lowenstein: Great.

Rodney Waldbaum: More questions?

Brad Lowenstein: Yes. Thank you. Um, that made my job very easy. Um, you just gave me the full rundown. I'm going to start over kind of at the beginning, if that's okay.

Rodney Waldbaum: Certainly.

Brad Lowenstein: Um, so going back, you said. And forgive me, I'm not totally familiar with Stephen's school. That was middle school or elementary school.

Rodney Waldbaum: That's that's elementary school.

Brad Lowenstein: Okay.

Rodney Waldbaum: On Capitol Hill, uh, it was, uh, on 18th, uh, Avenue between Highland Drive and

Galer.

Brad Lowenstein: And that was public. Nondenominational?

Rodney Waldbaum: Correct.

Brad Lowenstein: Was there any sort of religious studies that you undertook?

Rodney Waldbaum: Oh, yes. I, I started, uh, in Sunday school, I believe, when I was still two, uh, with, uh, preschool, uh, pre-kindergarten. Um, and I went all the way through and was confirmed. Bar mitzvah at temple de Hirsch, where my grandfather, I believe, was the first bar mitzvah at temple de Hirsch. My family had been, uh, my great grandparents had been founders of temple de Hirsch. Uh, and I was bar mitzvahed there. Uh, confirmed there, graduated there, married there. And, uh, ultimately, uh, had our kids named and there and had their bar mitzvahs there and weddings there. And it's been wonderful.

Brad Lowenstein: That's great. Um, do you have any fond memories as a child from temple de Hirsch going to school there?

Rodney Waldbaum: Well, I, I had a lot of fun at temple. I was always a year ahead of my public school grade at temple, uh, because I was a November baby. And the deadline in the Seattle public schools was November 1st. And it was, uh, December 1st for temple. So, um, I was always a year ahead. Um, when I was in kindergarten, in public school, my mother had arranged for me to be for me to skip in the public schools to first grade. Um, but the principal called me in the office and asked me what I thought of that idea, and I thought I was already the leader of the band in kindergarten, and I didn't want to, uh, do that. So I told her so. And to this day, that's probably one of the best decisions of my life, because I always excelled in public school. I was always, uh, through school, I was the second shortest guy in the class as it was without having skipped. And, um, I just think it was a very good move.

Brad Lowenstein: Great. I was very similar at a November birthday. So have a November birthday. So similar memories as well. Um, and growing up in your household, did you keep a kosher household or was it. Is there a form? Obviously. Yeah.

Rodney Waldbaum: Well, we belong to both my parents, I should say belong to both Becher and De Hirsch. My dad had been raised Orthodox in New York. Um, but he didn't serve, uh, kashrut. My mother did not allow any pork or shellfish in the house. Uh, but we weren't strictly kosher. It wasn't kosher meats and everything like that. Um, at some point, my mother, by mistake, tasted crab and found, so she liked it. And I even told this at her funeral. Um. You know, I don't think she ever tasted a shrimp. I'm sure she never tasted any pork, but she did like Dungeness crab. And, uh, that was the only exception. My dad would eat bacon in restaurants, but not at home. And we do not keep kosher in my home.

Brad Lowenstein: Okay, great. Um, and were there any special circumstances for. Did you celebrate Shabbat or Hanukkah in any meaningful ways for your family?

Rodney Waldbaum: Yes.

Brad Lowenstein: Um, and.

Rodney Waldbaum: We always celebrated, uh. The holidays. Uh, my mother became the patriarch of the entire Rogers family, which we thought at that time was the largest Jewish family in Seattle with all of our relatives. Um, that was before we later learned about the some of the Sephardic families, which also tended to be very large. Um, but my my grandmother died in 1953, uh, and my mother, in her 30s, became the matriarch. She was the eldest of nine children. And, uh, so we had all these family dinners, um, and we did observe the all the holidays. The One difference was Hanukkah. My parents had founded Direct Buying Service, which was Seattle's first complete discount house. It was very it was small scale. It was probably, um, a lot of it, you name it, they could get it. Uh, my mother was quite the businesswoman, and, um. Because the Christmas season was the main part of their business, probably a third of their business in a month before Christmas. Um, we always really celebrated Hanukkah on the morning of December 25th, after the retail, uh, crush. And we never had a a, uh, A Christmas tree. I did feel as a child a bit like Dennis the Menace, our next door neighbours. We were raised in a wonderful Catholic neighbourhood and the next door neighbours who were more elderly. I got to go and decorate their Christmas tree, um, which we never had, but I always understood that was their custom and believe me, it didn't hurt a bit. But admittedly, my mother did hang, uh, stockings. Uh uh, on, uh, December 25th. And then we would have lots of pancakes and things like that to eat to remind us that we were Jewish. But we opened all our presents on Christmas morning, officially for Hanukkah.

Brad Lowenstein: Yeah, that's interesting, that it makes sense that I would do the same thing. Business comes first sometimes. Yeah. Okay. And while serving in the Army was there. Did it ever. Or as Army reserves? Did being Jewish ever come up in any significant ways there? Um.

Rodney Waldbaum: No. I was very fortunate in the Army. Um, the one trauma I had was when I was in basic training. Um, I was notified that my dad had a heart attack by the Red cross. And they, um. It was like the day after Thanksgiving. And that Friday night, they flew me home. And, um, we had the funeral on Sunday morning. Um, and they told me that I had to be back by the start of drills on Monday morning. Otherwise I would have to start basic training all over again. And, um, so I had to literally go from the funeral straight to the airport to fly home. But I was I was, uh, lucky in the Army. I never pulled KP. I. They asked for a volunteer, and I did volunteer to be in charge of the utility closet, uh, during basic training, which meant I was responsible for checking out all the mops and brooms and everything. And so I the army cared more about its things than its people. And so I, uh, never had to clean a latrine. I never had to pull KP. I got to be in charge of this, uh, utility closet. And then when I went to cook school for eight weeks, um, I had the, uh, I did go, I did. I should mention that during basic training, I did go to services on Friday nights and Saturday mornings. I had one friend who, um, in basic training who was I met and he was Catholic, but his former roommate from USC he knew was a couple of cycles ahead of him in at, uh, Fort Ord. And his his friend was Jewish. So he would go to the services with me for the Jewish services in hopes of seeing his friend. and this guy was very smart. And by the time we were done with basic training, um, I

think he knew more Hebrew than I did. He had. And he asked if he went to any congregation in, uh. In LA, in Los Angeles, whether they would know that he wasn't Jewish. And I said, no, I said he could fake it. And I do remember that the day after we got went to our first services in basic training, his name was Fike f I k e was his last name. His name tags for all his uniforms came back fike f I k e I know fink f I n k. So I, uh, anyway, uh, in cook school, uh, it was an was unusual time because we had normally the cooks were the lowest of the low in the army when they flunk out of school. Other schools, they'd make them a cook. Um, when I was there, there were a lot of reservists that were very bright, uh, that did have college educations. And I did have the highest scores, uh, in the cook school from the written test. I wasn't the best cook, but I, I could remember the temperatures to cook a roast or whatever it was. Also, I should tell you that our mess section was the best. We came up with original ideas. For example, the army required, uh, well-done meat on the serving line. Well, I came up with the suggestion and and implemented it that we could put in. If we were cooking 15 roasts, we'd put five of them in at one time, five of them in, uh, 20 minutes later, five of them in 20 minutes later. And we take them out at the same time and give them a choice of between rare, medium or well done. And as long as you had enough, well done. That was fine. And, um, I once had a major try to, uh, take me on in the, uh, and close down my mess hall to do work on, uh, our trucks was our second secondary mos, uh, assignment for all cooks in case you ever had to go go out in cars, uh, into the field. And I said no. Anyway, I he found out he didn't like, uh, baking soda in his coffee, and he never tried taking me on again. So it was a powerful position. I've been president of many organizations, but I don't know that I've ever been in a more powerful one than being first cook in the Army.

Brad Lowenstein: Oh, so you weren't. It wasn't a line cook. It was more of a managerial role. Sounds like.

Rodney Waldbaum: I. Well, when I was in cook school, because I had the best test scores, everybody else had to get up to cook the breakfast meals. In my case, I was assigned to the non-commissioned officers mess hall, which only turned out a noon meal. And I was really trained to give a nice tea because I was with a lifer who, uh, was 27 years. He did all the cooking. I put the bed of lettuce under each square of Jell-O. I put the parsley on top of each pad of butter. Those types of things. And, uh, I actually got a certificate hanging in my office here at home, uh, from the US. Army for my culinary excellence. But frankly, it was I was more the political liaison. When we would go to summer camp, I would work to have my cooks work double shifts on and double shifts off so we could go to the surrounding area and be off base, uh, because otherwise, when we weren't cooking, if we were on base, they there was a feeling that they had to find work for you. And so that worked out very well. But my the enlisted men were absolutely brilliant in my reserve unit.

Brad Lowenstein: Um, earlier you had mentioned that you never took KP. Could you just define KP?

Rodney Waldbaum: Kitchen. Police.

Brad Lowenstein: Kitchen. Police. Okay.

Rodney Waldbaum: Okay. Yes.

Brad Lowenstein: And. Yeah. Can you tell me about that?

Rodney Waldbaum: What? What kitchen police is.

Brad Lowenstein: Yeah. What what was that?

Rodney Waldbaum: Well, I mean, everybody else would have to go and, uh, clean up the kitchen and, uh, wash the dishes and, uh, um, peel the potatoes and peel the carrots and. All the grunt work. I never had to do that.

Brad Lowenstein: Okay. I see. That's great. Um, so.

Rodney Waldbaum: You did ask about, uh, discrimination. Um, I was conscious of, uh. That in terms of finding a law firm, and I was I did ask, you know, which law firms would be free of discrimination in which might I run into it? And, um, fortunately, even though I was the only Jewish person in my law firm when I joined it, um. I never had any discrimination. And I remember some clients would. Every once in a while, I would find a client that would make a derogatory comment regarding Jews. But, uh, I let them know immediately that I was Jewish and, uh, they never did it again in front of me.

Brad Lowenstein: Um. And that's interesting. You never experienced it in the military college. High school?

Rodney Waldbaum: No. God, Garfield High School's, uh, was fabulous. It was the greatest high school in the world. Uh, we were so far ahead of the rest of the country. Uh, Martin Luther King came and spoke. When I was in high school, uh, Quincy Jones had gone to Garfield. Uh, Jimi Hendrix was, I guess, at Garfield when I was there. But I don't think anybody knew him because he did not perform with the Garfield bands. Um, but there was no discrimination. All the parties were mixed. We were about a third black, a third Caucasian and a and a third Asian, primarily Japanese. Um, and the parties were mixed. I remember going, taking a group of guys up to an all city dance, and it was either in Queen Anne or Magnolia. And I took them after the Garfield talent show, which was the Garfield Funfest. And we walked into this room, and at that time, I all of a sudden I felt these eyes staring at us. And I just realized that all the friends that I had just brought happened to be black. And there wasn't one other person that was black in the entire room. Those were Caucasian neighborhoods at that time. And there was no problem whatsoever. Uh, they were great guys that I had brought and there was no no problem. I still remember, uh, you know, the parties were mixed. Three couples from my, uh, class up in Garfield married high school sweethearts. One black, one, uh, Japanese. And my wife and I, all three couples are still married over 50 years later. And, um, I think that's absolutely wonderful. One of those, uh, black guys ended up with the Harlem Globetrotters, but, uh, and he married one of my classmates from my elementary school. There were ten elementary schools, um, that fed into, uh, Garfield, including Stevens, which was my elementary school, and I ended up the senior class president. And my and the one guy that was shorter than me all the way through school was a black student, Larry Vallely. And he also had gone to Stevens and he became my vice president. And, uh, but at the ten year reunion, he had shot up and he became

like five, ten. I just couldn't believe it. He was inches taller than I was, but he was. He was still tiny bones, you know, thin. Could be. This could be, but.

Brad Lowenstein: Well, so let me ask, how tall are you now?

Rodney Waldbaum: I was about five. Six. I'm probably down to about five four.

Brad Lowenstein: Okay. But graduating high school about five six.

Rodney Waldbaum: Yeah.

Brad Lowenstein: Okay.

Rodney Waldbaum: But I was, uh, I was small. I was like £119 when I got married. And then I came back from the Army, absolutely buff at about 135.

Brad Lowenstein: Wow. Good food.

Rodney Waldbaum: If it if it was in my mess hall, it was good food. I mean, I could tell you lots of stories about the food in the army. They used to, uh, we would take the initiative when we were given steaks, and we were cooking for less people on a Sunday because a lot of people got the weekend off. We would out of our own pocket, go and buy charcoal at the PX, take the, uh, square head pans out of the ovens, take the oven racks out and charcoal broil the steaks. And if you were at Fort Ord, all the mess halls are in a row, and people could smell the difference. And so we would have hundreds of people in line for our mess hall, and we'd have to limit it to those that were supposed to be in our missile.

Brad Lowenstein: Yeah, that sounds delicious. That sounds good. Um, you had previously touched on. I just wanted to to, um, learn a little bit more about how you met Nina. Um, she was raised Jewish as well, right?

Rodney Waldbaum: Absolutely. Her family also goes back. Her grandmother, and just like my mother, were among the first confirmands at temple de Hirsch Sinai. Wow. Uh, she was a Bardi. Um, her parents were Ted and Lois Bardi. My parents were Helen and Al Waldbaum. Um. And when I met her, because I love to go to Madison Beach, um, during the summer, it was the neighborhood beach, and, uh. There wasn't much happening. And a friend of mine, Art Kaplan, and I were there, and one of Nina's friends, Leslie Fisher, happened to be at the beach. And she said, well, you know, I have a friend with a swimming pool nearby. And so she took us over, uh, to what was Nina's house. And, uh, we went swimming. And Nina thought the other guy was with was cute. And he's still a good friend of ours, and, uh, and Nina and, uh, this girl ended up having a party about a week later and invited us. And so that's how I met Nina.

Brad Lowenstein: The rest is history.

Rodney Waldbaum: But she also was confirmed and graduated from temple. She became very active in the community as well. She was president of A.f.i. I, uh, she was president of Brandeis Women's

Organization, and she was president of the Jewish Day School. All three of our sons went to the Jewish Day School of Metropolitan Seattle, and we started that, uh, we were both public school committed. But our experience with our oldest son, uh, was not good. And he was very bored in the kindergarten and first grade. And, uh, when the, uh, at Medinah, when they told us that, uh, elementary that, uh, well, if you leave him here, you'll find that they all To graduate. They all, uh, congregate in the middle, and, uh, I, we decided to put him in the Jewish day school, which was only the second year of the Jewish day school at that time. And then all three of our kids, we had 19 years of Jewish day school between our kids. Then they did go to public school and graduated Bellevue High School and went on to college. Okay.

Brad Lowenstein: Um, jumping back a little bit, can you tell me a little any again, any anecdotes or, um, special memories from UW? Um, when you were in Sami Sigma Alpha mu fraternity? Um, a little bit about that.

Rodney Waldbaum: Sure. I ended up I was a townie because I couldn't afford to live at the fraternity, but I was rush chairman. Um, and one year, and that summer I did get to live at the fraternity house. Um, one of a couple of vivid memories. Um, the one of the traditions was that the pledge class would, um, have a a sneak, and, uh. After we you got caught, you know, they'd line up and they would you take a hack with a paddle? Uh, for your for your pledge, brother. And they'd go around and around and everybody would say, yes, they would take a hack. They they got to me. And I was, I guess, a smart ass. And I said, no, I said, but if you give me a hack or any of my pledge brothers hack, we will all walk out and in this fraternity will fold because it cannot survive without a pledge class. And they yelled and they screamed and they hollered and, um, but nobody got hacked. And another memory I have is we did kidnap, uh, a active member and, uh, sent him, uh, on an airplane at SeaTac airport with a beanie on his head, suspenders in shorts, and, uh, to Vancouver, uh, no passport, no identification. Um, we knew he would be able to talk his way back into the country. Can you imagine this? Since nine over 11, you never would have happened.

Brad Lowenstein: No way.

Rodney Waldbaum: Yeah, but. But they let us go all the way out, so we had no out to the gate. And, uh, and after that, of course, the actives had to retaliate, and so the actives kidnapped me and drove me around blindfolded. Left me on some wooded road in the middle of nowhere. I could hear there was another car and it turned out one of my other pledge brothers was, uh, dropped off. So we yelled and we got together. Uh, but we didn't have. It was like two in the morning. We had no idea where we were. It was all dark. We did see, um, uh, a mailbox. So we walked down this road and we were smart enough not to go and knock on the door at that hour, but we yelled and yelled so that the guy came out. He came out with a shotgun and he did not have a phone, but he, uh, did Try to, uh, he did decide to, uh, drive us into, uh, town Duvall. It was the nearest town, which was a long way. And, um, he swore his son, who was in high school age, would never be allowed to join a fraternity. And we, uh, called one of our fraternity brothers, uh, to come and get us. Uh, the first one I called was one of my friends from pre-kindergarten days and whose mother was one of my mother's best friends. She answered the phone at two in the morning and said, he's not allowed to take calls at this

hour. Click. And we again, this is when when they had payphones and we only had it enough to dial one more number, but we did find a fraternity brother that picked us up, and we got back, and we were at the football game the next day. And for the Huskies and, uh, the, the active who we sent to, uh, Vancouver, also got back in time for the Husky game, which.

Brad Lowenstein: Sounds sounds interesting. Very fun times.

Rodney Waldbaum: Very good time. As I said, I did end up getting the award for Best Active. I would not. That was one position. I would not run for president. I declined, I said, I. You know, I was, uh, I was a pledge leader. I was, uh, rush chairman and all those things, but I, I, the president had to make decisions, some of which would cost you some of those friendships. And I the friendships were more important to me than the power of being president of the fraternity.

Brad Lowenstein: And it is a Jewish fraternity as well. Are there any specific practices? Was it kind of more of just a social club and.

Rodney Waldbaum: No, it was a it was at that time it was a Jewish fraternity. And um, and we couldn't get into, uh, easily to any of the non-Jewish, uh, fraternities. I did have a cousin that did pledge non-Jewish sorority. Um, but it you know, we never I never even tried. I was a legacy both with the and Sam's. And I, um, was asked to join both. And I had gotten such a good rush from the these Sammy's that I just felt more comfortable joining there. Um, but those, you know, there was, uh.

SPEAKER_S3: The movie, the movie fun.

Rodney Waldbaum: Anyway, it was fun. My wife just interrupted me.

Brad Lowenstein: Okay. Um, great. And then moving on, I.

Rodney Waldbaum: Will mention one thing I just thought of my freshman year. We got to go to the Rose Bowl. The Huskies. Oh. And so we rented a bus and took guys and gals down to LA and I. We stayed at the UCLA Sam house. The guys did. And, um, it was great. And I go to A Jewish delicatessen near the UCLA fraternity house with two of my pledge brothers, both of whom were Sephardic. And I was absolutely shocked that I just didn't have any knowledge of the differences of food between the Ashkenazi and Sephardic. They didn't know about gefilte fish, they didn't know about chicken matzo ball soup. And then, of course, I didn't know about half of their dishes. So that was very enlightening. And of course, now I have nephews that are married to Sephardic girls and everything. It's all it's a lot of our best friends are, uh, Sephardic. Uh, and it just. But at that time, it was just different when my older brother was a CVT. Uh, he graduated high school in 1954. His was about the first class, I believe, at CBT that actually admitted Sephadex before then. The CBT house did not admit Sephardic Jews. You had to be an AEP or Sami.

Brad Lowenstein: Mhm. Interesting. Uh, were there any just speaking of food, were there any Jewish restaurants that you would go to or most of the cooking? Jewish cooking was in house.

Rodney Waldbaum: It was in house. Uh, I, I mean, we had, uh, Brenner's, uh, bakery, and there was bloomies there were, you know, there was some the delicatessens. Uh huh.

SPEAKER_S3: You pick it up.

Rodney Waldbaum: Yeah. But you'd pick up the food there. But you didn't eat, you know, you didn't eat there, I think. Brenner's in more recent years as they developed, ended up having some, uh, dining inside. But, uh, it originally it was just all takeout.

Brad Lowenstein: Great. Right. Mostly catering. Classic deli style.

Rodney Waldbaum: Classic deli style? Uh, not so much catering.

Brad Lowenstein: Okay.

SPEAKER_S3: That time.

Brad Lowenstein: Okay.

Rodney Waldbaum: Everybody cooked.

Brad Lowenstein: Mhm.

SPEAKER_S3: Yeah.

Rodney Waldbaum: I mean the the family dinners were huge and there were you know my great my, you know my grandmother, you know the big family dinners at her house before she passed away. You know as I said she had nine kids. The Rogers family was huge. She was a Protestant and, uh, was her maiden name. And that was a big you know, we had the Protestants had the seats in the front row of the home. Uh, yeah. We would always go to the home, uh, on the High Holidays as well as De Hirsch until the until they moved to the South End. But while they were on 17th and Yesler, we always did that.

Brad Lowenstein: Okay. And yeah, it's a great transition. I'm curious about a little bit of those leadership positions you held, uh, how you became involved with the UW Hillel, um, as well as De Hirsch, how you initially became treasurer and then went on to become president? Um, yeah, just to expand on that.

Rodney Waldbaum: Well. The, uh, you know, I was raised in temples, so that was a natural. My uncle, uh, Fred Rogers, had been a past president of. He had been president of the temple, and one of the real perks for the temple president was the president of the congregation would sit on the bema during services. And so whenever your kids or your nephews or whatever, um, had a bar or bat mitzvah or a Simca, you could you could always be up on the pulpit. And, uh, so that was a real incentive to me. Unfortunately, when, uh, uh, Rabbi Wiener became the head of temple de Hirsch Sinai, he discontinued that practice. And, uh, I the president does not typically sit on the bema. I mean, I've been asked to be on it from time to time, uh, the holidays and things. But not. I haven't

had the. Benefit of that past tradition, um, of sitting on the bema as far as Hillel. Um, uh, you know, I'd gone to Hillel all through college. Uh, always went out to Hillel for the Seder lunches. Um, my wife had become particularly close to Rabbi Jacobovitz. In fact, she and two other ladies ended up going and cleaning his Rabbi Jacobovitz apartment and, uh, organizing it. Not, she says, not cleaning it. They were cleaning it and organize trying to organize it, which was probably impossible, but he was a wonderful guy. And, uh, so we became close in that respect, too. So, um, I knew a lot of the prior leaders of Hillel, and I too, became, uh, a leader of Hillel. And I was always very proud of the fact that, uh, um, I was able to create a great transition from Rabbi Jacobovitz to Rabbi Bridge. One other thing I guess I could mention is, uh, that was unusual when I was just 13. Um, I carried on what had been a, from time to time, a family tradition of selling hats and horns in downtown Seattle on New Year's Eve, and I. I picked up my, uh, materials, my hats and horns and everything from Benji Mayer and Ace Novelty. And I got I would go to the owners of the storefronts on Pike Street myself. I was I had just turned 13, and when I looked young, I really looked young. And I got written permission from Ben Bridge, uh, jewelers. I got it from Friedlander and Sons. Chris, uh, Foreman and Clark, all up and down the south side of Pike Street. And I got a I could only afford one business license, so I picked that for the fourth and Pike, uh, location, and, uh, I had to I. I had as my salesman. Fifth and sixth graders from Stephens School, which I had just graduated from. And I had trained them on the prices and I had them all on commissions. And my parents dropped us all off downtown. And I, um, I stalled the police into as long as I could, and eventually we had to consolidate to the one location that I had a business license. It was it was you can only buy an annual license, and it was too expensive to have it for just one night for each location. And we did make it till midnight. Then we took the bus home and I took everybody and gave them their commissions and hot chocolate at our house, and I spent New Year's Day rolling the quarters and things for the that we got from the sales of hats and horns. But I only did that one year because it was a lot of work. And, um, you know, it was at that time considered safe. Um, there was a curfew and we were far all younger than 16. So that was the other thing. I had to stall the police from making us go home before, uh, before midnight.

Brad Lowenstein: That sounds fun. Yeah. As a as a young 13 year old.

Rodney Waldbaum: Yeah. I was also, uh, my sophomore year at Garfield. I was charged the money making, uh, committee or something like that. Yeah.

Brad Lowenstein: I'm sensing a theme there.

Rodney Waldbaum: Yes.

Brad Lowenstein: Um, and you mentioned this earlier, but I'm curious to hear a little bit more about the purchase of the land in Bellevue, as well as the elevator construction, US construction for temple de Hirsch.

SPEAKER_S3: Two sites.

Rodney Waldbaum: Yes, there are two different sites. Um, the Seattle site, which is what I was

raised in, um, and of course, I remember the old sanctuary on 15th and Union. And then when they built and the wonderful sanctuary on 16th, um, that, uh.

SPEAKER_S3: I was the first.

Rodney Waldbaum: And my wife said she was the first confirmation class in the new, uh, synagogue. Um, mine was still in the old synagogue, but, uh, I've lost my train of thought. My wife is toxic, and I lose my train of thought. Um.

Brad Lowenstein: Okay. Hi, Nina.

SPEAKER_S3: Hi. He's doing great.

Brad Lowenstein: Yes. He is.

SPEAKER_S3: The site's right.

Rodney Waldbaum: Oh, these. These sites. So in in after they had, uh, merged with Temple Sinai, the, um, temple had a location on, uh, 1/24 in Bellevue, just south of, uh, northeast eighth. And, um, but they had clearly outgrown it. Um, and so we looked for lots of different properties. Um, Larry Broder was the executive director, um, of temple at that time. There is a story there because I was, I believe president or at least on the board. And, um, Larry's daughter ended up marrying, uh, uh, my oldest son, who she first saw when we hired Larry, who had been a younger fraternity brother of mine at the Sam house. Um, they had come to a temple graduation, and that was the year my oldest son, Brett, had, was among the graduates. And he was carrying one of the torahs down the aisle, and she thought he was cute and she managed to go out to he became a CVT and she went out to the CVT house and eventually they got married. But and we announced, uh, at the temple board meeting, the first engagement to our knowledge of the temple president and the, uh, the the son of the temple president and the daughter of the executive director. And then they were married at temple.

Brad Lowenstein: Yeah. It's only natural. Um, and, yeah, I just wanted to ask a little bit about raising the three boys. Um. The decision to become Eagle Scouts. Is that something that you had enforced and it was something important to you or them or.

Rodney Waldbaum: Well, I. It they were all self-motivated in a certain different ways because each child is different. Mhm. Um, I had been in scouts and I was an extremely active Cub Scout, and I was going to Boy Scout meetings before I was 11 and eligible for the Boy Scouts. But then they changed Scout masters. They thought I'd become the first Eagle Scout in that troop. Uh, and but it wasn't the same once they changed Scout leaders. Brett is always who has been on the temple board. Uh, in. He just finished his, uh, six year term. Um. He, uh, he was always very methodical. And he liked the the merit badges and the accomplishment. And so he was self-motivated. Chad, our second son. He loved the camping and the outdoors. And he was the he was the the real scout of the of the three. Um, but of course, since his brother became an Eagle Scout, he had to become an Eagle Scout. And then our youngest, his older brothers have become an Eagle Scout, so then he had to become an

Eagle Scout.

SPEAKER_S3: So his own mind.

Rodney Waldbaum: In his own mind. But I had a couple of uncles that had been scout leaders. My uncle Sid Rogers had gotten the Silver Beaver Award, which is the highest award for the adults in scouting. Um, and. You know, I always thought scouting was wonderful. Um, our kids, I ran track in high school. Uh, Brett ran. I had to choose between debate or track in high school, and I chose debate. Um, my older brother had been a track star at Garfield. Uh, Brett did track and wrestling. Uh, Chad did wrestling. Uh, all of them skied and played little league and soccer and all the those things. Eric played little league and and soccer and all those things too. So I you know, I'm a big sports fan. So great.

Brad Lowenstein: Great, great. Um, and I'm just reviewing the last of my notes here. Um, you said you're involved in bridge family genealogy. Um, and you enjoy to travel, ski and play racquetball. Um, I'm curious if. Yeah, that those are more recent pursuits or those are lifelong pursuits.

SPEAKER_S3: Well.

Brad Lowenstein: I guess it varies.

SPEAKER_S3: Pickleball.

Rodney Waldbaum: Um, I I've played, I learned bridge. Nina's parents were life masters. Um, Um. Where? Life. Masterson. Bridge. Uh, Nina's mother was considered the best, uh, female bridge player. Uh, in the northwest when they chose when she was young, uh, they, uh, chose a northwest team to play the American team. And she was the only woman selected to be on that team. Um, so Nina's parents, when we were in high school agreed to give us lessons, I think, for a dollar each. And, uh, just so that we would maintain our interests. And so I. I learned to play bridge. Then I've played it much more since the last ten, 15 years. Um, and now I'm, I'm playing, uh, The tournaments and getting master points and enjoying all that. Uh, we had. I did play a little racquetball, but not much I did. We had a pickleball court at our home in Clyde Hill. And so we did play a lot of pickleball, and I played pickleball with some of our friends rotating, um, you know, and our kids all had ski lessons, and we went skiing and things like that. Where would you like to travel? We we've traveled. That's our thing. And we love to travel all over the world. We particularly, uh, we go and crash in Mazatlan, Mexico.

SPEAKER_S3: Yeah.

Rodney Waldbaum: Um, and where we have a timeshare and it's. But we love to travel all over the world.

Brad Lowenstein: So it sounds like Mexico is a favorite destination for your family.

Rodney Waldbaum: At least for us, and certainly for our youngest son. Um, uh, we absolutely love it.

That's the one place where we just crashed, and we don't. It's not sightseeing. It's not educational. It's just great food. It is the best. The beach is like velvet. The surf is just perfect for body surfing. The food is great. Everything is so inexpensive. You have these wonderful breakfasts on the beach. Uh, for 5 or \$6. Which is your \$25 breakfast in Hawaii? Uh, you know, so it's it's wonderful.

Brad Lowenstein: Sounds beautiful.

Rodney Waldbaum: Yeah. But we love we've done both land and river cruises. Uh, ocean cruises.

SPEAKER_S3: Land tours.

Rodney Waldbaum: Land tours. All whole sorts.

Brad Lowenstein: Have you been to Israel?

Rodney Waldbaum: Yes. And we want to get back to Israel. We went back on the Federation young leadership. They had a thousand people. It was about 1982. Wow. Um, and it was through Federation, and we had, like 20 some odd people from the Seattle area, 20 couples. And, um, it was wonderful. And we I thought Jerusalem is definitely one of the two cities that most impressed me. Um, our middle son, Chad, married a sabra, uh, who was obviously born in Israel. And they live here. But, uh, her parents still live in Israel, although they're here about half the year. And, uh, we're trying to figure out how to get back to Israel and see it. But, uh, we loved our trip to Israel. We did the whole thing. But, you know, it was like ten days or something. It was all too, too short. We did get down to a lot, and, uh.

SPEAKER_S3: Everything.

Rodney Waldbaum: Everything? Everything. It was just wonderful.

Brad Lowenstein: Great. That sounds great. Um, so we're coming to the close here. I just want to ask if you have any closing thoughts or, um, reflections on being a Jew in Washington state. Um, anything about the community or, um, just what your life has been. Any reflections?

SPEAKER_S3: Wonderful.

Rodney Waldbaum: It's been wonderful. I've been blessed. Um, it really has. Uh, I haven't had to face real discrimination. Um, and my family has been wonderful. The, uh. And it's been close. Uh, when my older brother passed away, uh, in 2001, it was the largest funeral I've ever seen at temple. Uh, I, I figured there was over 800 people. Uh, Larry Broder, who was executive director at the time, thought there was at least 1100. And it was on a Tuesday, not a weekend. And it had not even been in the paper until that morning. So, um, it was quite a tribute. Yeah.

SPEAKER_S3: No, I should as.

Brad Lowenstein: Well. Rod, I have to say, it's been great hearing from you. It sounds like you truly had a beautiful life growing up. It's truly a rich experience with your family. Um, both elder and

offspring. Um, a a model citizen, I have to say, um.

Rodney Waldbaum: Thank you. I did forget to mention two, two awards that I'm very proud of. Yeah, one. And one is that I was admitted to the Garfield Golden Grads Hall of Fame. Uh, the first person I graduated high school in 63, and I was the first person from any of the classes of the 1960s to be admitted to the Hall of Fame. So I was very proud of that. I was I've been very president. I was also very active in the non-Jewish community. I was a town town council, a town councilman for the city of Clyde Hill. I was also a King County judge pro tem and the tax section of the Washington State Bar, which I had been president of, honored me in, uh, 2004 with the Roger Stauder Award, which, uh, is in recognition of your dedication to your community, uh, exceptional skills in the field of taxation and, above all, display of professionalism. So that was quite an honor. It's the only award that they give. uh, it's in essence a lifetime achievement award. And I was proud of that. I was, uh, president of the liaison to the IRS for the Western region of the United States. Um, I've had a great career, lots of interesting clients, including the Seattle SuperSonics. You mentioned the one book by the Washington State Jewish Historical Society. I also have a page in the book about the sports things, but it's really because of my representation of the Sonics, not because of my own athletic prowess. But it's been a wonderful life, and we've been blessed with wonderful family and friends. And and that's what I'm most grateful for.

Brad Lowenstein: Great. Um, yeah. Well, this has been this has been great. It's been, uh, really great hearing from you. Um, I think it's going to be a great addition to the archives.

Rodney Waldbaum: Thank you. And sometime we will, uh, get into the family's history, because it is does go all the way back. And I'd be happy to share that with you. Some of it's in writing, and we will be sharing some of those documents, uh, with the historical society.

Brad Lowenstein: Okay. I'll have to talk to the people, um, on the staff there who are more familiar with how to take care of those documents and ingest them properly. Um, but yeah, we'll definitely, definitely want to take a look at those.

Rodney Waldbaum: Thank you.

Brad Lowenstein: Great. Thank you. All right.

Rodney Waldbaum: Thank you for your time. I hope of course, I hope I'll get to know you better at some point.

Brad Lowenstein: I would love to. Yeah. I'd love to meet you sometime. Um, yeah. This is really great.

Rodney Waldbaum: Thank you.

Brad Lowenstein: Inspiring story. So. All right, I'll stop the recording.