

Daniel Jacobs: Well, on the behalf of the crossroads to freedom project, thank you so much for sharing your time with us and letting us ask you some questions. I guess starting off this morning, could you tell us your full name and when you were born?

Marilyn Weinman: It's Marilyn ~~Leah~~ Goldman, was my maiden name, Weinman, and I was born in Memphis in 1937. My mother was originally from ~~Wolven~~Louisville, Kentucky, but my dad came to the United States when he was about ten from Russia.

Daniel Jacobs: Okay. And what were your parents' names?

Marilyn Weinman: Rebecca ~~Branstein~~Brownstein Goldman and Louis Goldman.

Daniel Jacobs: Okay. And what were their occupations?

Marilyn Weinman: My father owned a store on Beale Street, he was a merchant. And my mother was a – then it was, she was a housewife. Today she'd be called a homemaker.

Daniel Jacobs: Okay. What were your parents like? What was your dad's store like?

Marilyn Weinman: It was a – it was called Beale Avenue Department Store but it was a dry goods store.

[1:02]

You know, they carried clothing and shoes and sheets and things for the house. It was a small store at – it was 181 Beale. And the front of the store is still there. They've torn down everything on Beale Street, but the façade of my father's store is still there propped up.

It's kind of strange.

Daniel Jacobs: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

Marilyn Weinman: I have a brother, Harold.

Daniel Jacobs: Okay.

Marilyn Weinman: He's five years younger than I am and he lives in Philadelphia. I mean, in New York now.

Daniel Jacobs: Okay. Can you tell me – I guess we’re gonna talk a little bit about your experiences growing up. Can you tell me a little bit about the neighborhood you grew up in?

Marilyn Weinman: Yes, I grew up in midtown Memphis. We lived on Stonewall between Court and Poplar. It was a very you know, it felt very safe growing up in Memphis.

[2:03]

I think it really was a very safe time. We used to go out of town and my mother wouldn’t lock the doors because the neighbors would come in and water the plants and take in the paper. So you grew up and you felt safe and secure.

It was – you know, and you grew up in Memphis at that time and it was an all white neighborhood. But in midtown, behind the streets, there were alleys, and African American families lived in houses on these alleys. And a lot of the women, I think, must have worked in the homes.

You know, on the street in front of the alleys. But I had a very happy, what feels like now like a very normal, boring childhood, probably.

Daniel Jacobs: What kind of activities were you involved in?

Marilyn Weinman: I was definitely not an athlete, and there was nothing really for girls to do then.

[3:03]

You know, there were no organized teams. I think the only teams then were for boys. There was no softball for girls and there was no soccer or anything. But we used to go down, there was a neighborhood park, and we would go down and play there.

My mother’s family were very musical, so I started taking piano lessons really very young, and I went with my mother, because my dad didn’t like serious music. I would go with her to – before the Memphis Symphony existed, there was the Memphis ~~Symphoniette~~Symphonietta, and we would go to those concerts.

And the Beethoven Club would bring performers to Memphis. Really, world class performers for three or four concerts a year. And once a year, the Metropolitan Opera came to Memphis for a

week. There was a man in Memphis who sponsored it, and they would put on two operas, and we went to that. And we belonged to **Barenhurst** Synagogue, which was downtown then, but it was close enough that we could walk on the high holidays.

[4:05]

And you know, just played in the neighborhood and went to **Maury** Elementary School. My husband and I both went through the same schools.

Daniel Jacobs: Okay.

Marilyn Weinman: But to Maury to elementary school and then Snowden to junior high and Central to high school.

Daniel Jacobs: Okay. And what was – did religion play a large role in your life? You just mentioned going to the synagogue.

Marilyn Weinman: You know, it did. My mother kept a kosher home, and it was interesting. The neighborhood that I lived in was not – we were the only Jewish family there, and at Maury, by the time I got to Maury, I was the only Jewish child in my class until Frances Peters came when we were in fifth grade. So I had a really strong feeling of being different.

[5:01]

My best friend growing up was Catholic, and I can remember that I could go to church with her, and I would go for like Christmas Eve mass and I went when she took first communion, but she wasn't allowed then to go to ~~synagogue~~ Synagogue with me, and that's all changed, but that's just a real clear memory.

Begin Segment #2, 00:05:25

Daniel Jacobs: Did anyone ever treat you differently because you were Jewish? Or did you ever experience-

Marilyn Weinman: You know, I never felt like I met any real overt anti Semitism, but when I was an adult, I realized that a comment that was made to me all the time really was pretty insulting. People would find out I was Jewish, and it didn't make any difference whether it was friends or their parents, and people would say, "Oh, you don't look Jewish."

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And I knew that I was supposed to say thank you. That it was bad to look Jewish. But somehow as a kid I was just too dense and I was just kind of glad that I didn't look Jewish, whatever that meant.

[6:04]

And I was never really sure because everybody in my family looked different.

I remember one friend who belonged to a big Baptist church here who told me one time that I was gonna go to hell because I didn't believe in Jesus, and I went home and asked my mother what hell was, because it's not a real Jewish concept, you know, of that as a punishment.

And I just – you know, I just thought it was just really sort of strange. But my best friend growing up was this child who was Catholic, Donna Magda, and we used to do everything together. I used to go to her house and decorate her Christmas tree and help and she would come when it was Hanukah at my house and we shared Hanukah present and would eat potato latkes with us.

So I always felt different, and you were totally not in the little readers that you used in elementary school.

[7:07]

You all didn't have the same kind of books that we had, but we had these little readers, and it would go through the year and be Christmas and Easter, and there was never any Jewish people in the readers.

And what I found out later was in the black schools of Memphis, they were using these same readers, only they were the old readers, you know, when we all got new ones, the old books that we had went to the black schools, and they were using these same readers with all white kids.

So I think it must have been a similar feeling. It was like for some reason, with these people you didn't exist.

Tiffani Smith:

Okay, Mr. Weinman, will you state your name and your date of birth?

Bernie Weinman: Bernie Weinman. I was born April 24th, 1934.

Tiffani Smith: And what is your occupation?

Bernie Weinman: I'm now practicing law.

[8:00]

I'm an attorney. For 39 years, I was a judge. I was nine years as a city court judge, and 30 years as a state criminal court judge in Tennessee. Memphis.

Tiffani Smith: Okay. Let's take both of your parent's names?

Bernie Weinman: My mother's name was Celia Lesser Weinman, her maiden name was Lesser. My father's name was Max Weinman. My mother came here from ~~Ludge~~Lodz, Poland as a child, as a very, very young child.

I think she was probably four or five years old when she came to this country. Came, back when they got to this country, they came right to this area. My grandparents had cousins that lived in Mississippi, Rich, Mississippi, their name was Richberger, the town was named after them.

[9:04]

And they came and they brought them to this area. And my grandfather- in fact, in Poland, he was in the Polish Army, and they left.

My understanding is, I think this is correct, that they had to – that if he was being Jewish and if he was a member of the Polish Army for 20 years, then he became a citizen. And he'd lived all his life there, but he became a citizen after 20 years in the Polish Army, is my understanding.

And then when they drafted my uncle, my grandmother's brother, at that point, they decided they wanted to leave and came to this country. My dad was born in ~~Galesha~~Galicja, which is a country that no longer exists. It was part of Austria and some Austria, Poland, and some of Italy.

[10:07]

Anyway, that area of the world, and he was born there. A town called ~~Suecula~~Sokolov, and he came here also as a very, very

young child. Very interesting story about that. When they left, he was the youngest of four, three older brothers.

And they walked out of the country and walked across the country, somehow made it and got to this country.

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And he wound up in Memphis. Again, interesting story, his brothers were the older brothers; they were living in New York.

And the older brothers were peddling salesmen, you know, going around the country selling merchandise.

[11:04]

And they wound up here in Memphis on their travels and when they got to Memphis, then they boarded – and this was very common with Jewish people, they would board with other Jewish people.

Of course back then, so many people were kept kosher and all as my uncles did, so they would room – and the people that were uncles would board with – now, my dad wasn't here. He was in New York. And the people that my uncle were boarding with were – turned out to be my grandparents, my mother's family.

When they – and when they sent for my dad, he was much younger, I think he was about 14 when he came to Memphis and they left, my uncles left, they wound up back in Portland, Maine, and they stayed and lived in Portland, Maine.

[12:11]

My dad stayed here; he went to work for the Western Union. Western Union boy, delivered telegraphs. And wound up, when he was about 20 or so – he was 14 when he got here, when he was 20, he was one of the managers of the Western Union.

And he stayed there at the Western Union, he started going with my mother, they married very young. And my dad wound up opening up a store, him and another man, in Jonestown, Mississippi. A dry goods store.

Jonestown burned down and my dad and his – and when it burned down, my dad lost everything he had there.

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Not that it was lost in the fire, he was – he was taking everything out of the store in order to save it, and people would come and put it on wagons and take it away. And he lost all his merchandise.

Anyway, then he moved to Memphis. And he opened up a store, eventually, down on Beale Street, pretty far down on Beale Street, pretty far east as far as Beale Street goes. A-and then eventually he opened up several – he would move one and he moved closer to Main Street.

Wound up – he had stores on the corner of Main and Beale. He had a pawn shop on Beale Street, and he had a credit closing store on Main Street. Actually in the same building, they touched each other.

[14:00]

Wound up opening up – he and my brothers – I had two brothers and a sister. And my two brothers were in the Second World War. And when they came out of the Army, and one of my brothers opened up a discount jewelry kind of place, real small.

And then he wound up opening up a store called SellmaxSEL-MAX, which was a discount jewelry and small appliances and toys, and it was one of the first of that type of businesses in the country. It was down on South Main, and they ran that for a number of years until they decided to sell that.

[15:00]

And I used to work with my dad down at my dad's store, from the time I guess I was in grammar school all the way – I guess I was in college after we were married, and during that period of time I started law school.

Then it was Southern Law School, which became part of the University of Memphis Law School. And I graduated from there and started practicing law. I was licensed in 1961; graduated in '60 and took the bar in '61.

And then in 1965, I became a city court judge. And I stayed there for nine years, and 1974 I became a state criminal judge and stayed

there for 30 years. Retired about four years ago, and started practicing law with our son.

[16:04]

He has a office in Jackson, Tennessee, and we opened up an office here and work together.

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Tiffani Smith: Just to rewind just a little bit, what were your brothers and your sisters' names?

Bernie Weinman: My brother Harold Weinman, I have a brother Ralph; my brother Harold lives here in Memphis, my brother Ralph lives ~~here~~ in Florida. My sister's passed away. She lived here in Memphis; her name was Dorothy ~~Schaeffitz~~Chafetz.

Tiffani Smith: And did religion play a huge part of your life?

Bernie Weinman: Well, you know, it was significant. We've talked about – I went to Maury school too. When I was at Maury school, there was a few more Jewish students than apparently there was when Marilyn was there.

[17:04]

Marilyn Weinman: But I bet there were more when your brothers were there.

Bernie Weinman: My brothers didn't go to Maury.

Marilyn Weinman: Oh, they didn't go there.

Bernie Weinman: But that was more – but you know, you really didn't realize, I don't think. And then I went to Snowden, and of course there were a number of Jewish students at Snowden and Central, there was certainly a number of students.

I played sports, like at Snowden, I was on the basketball team some other ball teams. And the people I played with, some were Jewish, most were not, obviously. Majority was not. And they were my friends. But you know, when you left school, when you went out socially, the people you went out with ~~was~~were Jewish.

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Boys and girls, at the time. People you knew from the synagogue or knew ~~—and~~ I went to Hebrew school after school three days – several days a week we’d go to Hebrew school. And of course, you would be in school – of course, everybody there was Jewish. So you know, the people you spent a lot of time with, well, obviously, were Jewish and that’s who you really –

In fact, back then, and I think this has changed significantly, they had, back then, sororities and fraternities were big –

Marilyn Weinman: In high school.

Bernie Weinman: In high school. In junior high school. At junior high, fraternities and sororities. It was like social clubs, but we had separate ones for the Jewish kids.

[19:00]

We weren’t invited normally into – some made exceptions, but normally you weren’t invited into the –

Marilyn Weinman: And remember the lunchroom at Central? There were like three or four tables where the Jewish kids sat together and ate. And you didn’t eat with anybody else.

Bernie Weinman: And of course, again, I think a lot of that was because these are the people that were your friends because you were with – at Sunday School, we’d go to Sunday School and they were the people we were with at Sunday School, the people we were with – and then these sororities and fraternities; these were the people you were with.

So it was – it was really –

Marilyn Weinman: And as you got older, it was definitely parental expectation about who you would date.

Bernie Weinman: And you know, even in college, originally I started at the University of Alabama, and there was the Jewish fraternities, Jewish sororities and non Jewish fraternities.

[20:02]

And some, there was some Jewish people that were going to the other – join fraternities and sororities that were not the Jewish

ones, and we had, I remember, some affiliates that were not Jewish, but that ~~so was the~~ rare. That was the exception, that wasn't the rule. And so it certainly did have a significant part of me growing up.

Daniel Jacobs: If I could just – how did that affect kind of your view of segregation in Memphis; having these kind of experiences?

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Bernie Weinman: You know, me personally, and I'm not sure I can, and I know I can't speak for everybody who is Jewish. I feel that it made me feel have stronger feelings against people being segregated.

[21:02]

And you know, here I am, and be truthful, growing up, you don't think about these things. It's just the way things are. You just don't think about it.

But I really think it's something that caused me a lot of concern and caused me a lot of – strong feelings concerning people being segregated. I know I certainly, and I certainly don't want to give the impression that I was a person who originated all this or was the first one to do these things, but I remember when I was first became a judge in city court.

And you know, you would hear things like, people – law enforcement, it was very accepted the way people would address other people like, for instance, Mr. Jones may be the person who was the violator, who committed the offense.

[22:15]

The person he may have attacked was Joe over here, because Joe was African American, Mr. Jones was white. Joe was the victim, and that was accepted.

And like I say, I was not the first one to do this, when I got there, there was other people doing this. I said, no, you call everybody by their proper titles, proper names, we're not gonna have this. We're not gonna have people being discriminated against or being made to be a lesser person because of their color of their skin.

And I just really always had strong feelings about segregation and strong feelings about people being –

[23:10]

Marilyn Weinman: Do you think that after we found out about what happened in the Holocaust too, when we were really young, and you started – I guess I was like nine, eight when the war ended, and all the stories started coming out that you began to look around and see what was wrong where you lived?

I think when I was really young, it was like you said, you accepted it because this is how it was, but when you started to read about the Holocaust and it was so personal, because we lost family, that you could see how things like that start.

So I think being Jewish, for me, had a great deal to do with a sensitivity to injustice.

[24:00]

Tiffani Smith: Did you all have any relations with maybe people of Asian ethnicity or just – did you realize other maybe Africans Americans in your neighborhood?

Marilyn Weinman: We ~~had~~ have talked about this, that growing up in Memphis there were two kinds of ethnic restaurants. There was the Jewish delicatessens and then there was some Italian restaurants. And we must have been young adults before the first Chinese restaurant opened – (Joy Young).

But later you discover it really wasn't a Chinese restaurant. I don't know – I never had any contact with anyone who was different other than African Americans. I don't remember meeting any Asians.

Bernie Weinman: I don't recall that as I was growing up, any Asians.

Daniel Jacobs: Did you have much contact with African Americans in the community?

Bernie Weinman: I had a lot of contact with African Americans but it was ~~usually~~ usually in my dad's stores that there would be people working there.

[25:10]

Marilyn Weinman: And the pPeople who work in yourthe home.

Bernie Weinman: People who work in ~~the~~-your home, lot of contact. Was not social contact with people as we were growing up. Absolutely.

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Tiffani Smith: I remember you said there were Italians as well? Were there some – I know you said it was an expectancy for your parents to have certain social background –

Marilyn Weinman: No, it was the expectancy was that you would only date Jewish boys. And it was interesting, it was never really verbalized in my family, you just, you knew.

Tiffani Smith: Understood.

Marilyn Weinman: That's right. I don't know how it was in your family, but it was understood that you were not to date a boy who wasn't Jewish. And your life was organized so that you couldn't.

[26:03]

You know, it was true that the people you knew from religious school were your friends at school. And you know, I had friends at school who weren't Jewish, but you really never socialized at all.

And I don't know how they felt about it, but I know what the feeling was in my family. A, and it's interesting because I taught in a Catholic girl's school for 21 years, and it was interesting because those Catholic parents had pretty much the same expectations too.

I would listen to these little girls talk about the boys that they dated from CVHS-CBHS and you know, what was expected. It was a very restricted life in many ways. And it might have just been being in the South. I don't know what it would have been like if you'd lived in a northern, more ethnic neighborhood.

[27:00]

Now, where you lived, was really lots of Greeks and Italians.

Bernie Weinman: It was, and where I had grew up – and we didn't talk about that, but where I grew up from the time I was born until the time I was 16, I lived on Bellevue and Jackson. It was north Memphis. I lived south of Bellevue, only about two doors. South of Bellevue was all white. North of Bellevue was all African American.

Marilyn Weinman: Jackson.

Bernie Weinman: Jackson, excuse me, I said Bellevue. Jackson, it was all African American. Interesting story – we were – there was a vacant lot in Jackson, just maybe half a block off of Bellevue.

[28:02]

Big vacant lot, and we played football games, and kids from the south of Jackson would have a team and kids from north of Jackson would have a team; we'd play each other. Everything was great. No problems. Police would come by, wouldn't let us play. Say, no, you can't have – nothing's happening, we're having a great time. I'm sorry, you can't play. There wasn't anything mean said other than you can't play. Wouldn't push you around or hurt you or anything, they'd just say, you just can't play. That's just the way it was.

That was something hard for me to accept and understand. Even as a kid, I didn't know – we were having a good time, we were playing football, everything's going great, that's the way it was back then.

[29:00]

Daniel Jacobs: I guess moving on, when did y'all first meet and when did y'all get married?

Bernie Weinman: We met in the first grade –

Marilyn Weinman: Just about, we really went –

Bernie Weinman: We've known each other – well, I'm of course older than Marilyn, but we've known each other almost all her life.

Marilyn Weinman: Our dads both had stores on Beale Street and our parents were friends and we went to the same synagogue, so we had our first date – our oldest daughter just hates to ever hear this story, but I was 14, and you were 17, and we got married when I was 18. I mean, that's just what happened then.

Bernie Weinman: All of our friends when we were growing up all married very young.

Marilyn Weinman: Right. Within two years, all the girls in my crowd, except the girl who went to Sarah Lawrence. xx

[30:02]

~~Everybody~~ ~~e~~Everybody else was married, and we all started families right away.

Bernie Weinman: I was in college and Marilyn had started college, went back later after the children.

Daniel Jacobs: What year was that?

Marilyn Weinman: We married in '55.

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Daniel Jacobs: And how many children?

Marilyn Weinman: We have four children.

Bernie Weinman: Four.

Marilyn Weinman: It's interesting, our kids went – we decided, I mean, they were in public school, and then when all of the – the desegregation order came down from the federal court, we decided that we would keep our children in public school. And it was awhile after the ruling before the schools were really desegregated.

Bernie Weinman: Well, they started having bussing and of course our oldest daughter was not affected by that cause she was already in I guess high school –

[31:08]

Marilyn Weinman: No, but Michael was bussed –

Bernie Weinman: Our, like I said, we have 4 children, and our daughter Sharon who's 51, she was like in high school and it did not affect her, the bussing did not affect her. Michael is 48, almost – 48, and he was in the first group of kids being bussed.

He was bussed to Lester Junior High.

Marilyn Weinman: There were what, a couple of kids from our neighborhood that went: him – Michael, and David Dreyfuss.

Bernie Weinman: And there was not that many white kids in the classes –

[32:00]

Daniel Jacobs: This was in the early '70s or what time period –

Bernie Weinman: This would have been yeah, it would have been, Michael's 48, so it would have been 35 years ago or something. So he was like I said, he was bussed to Lester Junior High, and then he went to East High School.

Then we have – our next is a son, and –

Marilyn Weinman: Chuck and Becky both went to the optional school at Snowden.

Bernie Weinman: So they went to the optional school, that's where they were at school.

Marilyn Weinman: And then Chuck went from Snowden to Central, and Becky went to White Station because I was doing my student teaching that year, and I wasn't sure where I was gonna be and how she would get home if she went to Central.

[33:07]

But she could walk home from White Station. And they both had – I think they had pretty good experiences.

Becky, at one point, they were always the minority. There were very few white children and they were the only Jewish kids, as a rule.

Bernie Weinman: Of course in the optional schools –

Marilyn Weinman: The optional schools were wonderful and our kids got

Daniel Jacobs: Could you explain what the optional schools are?

Marilyn Weinman: They went to – they were optional academic schools. You had to have a certain grade point average and a certain – I guess IQ, and then, I'm trying to think to get into Central, were there scores that you had to have on tests?

But you know what I discovered when Becky and Chuck were at Central, was that, I don't think it was as much a race issue, the problems, as it was a class issue, and people are a lot more

comfortable in America talking about race than they are about class.

[34:13]

But at Snowden, a lot of the parents that I met, you know, the black parents were middle class parents who had the same aspirations for their children that we had.

You know, they were gonna do well in school and they were gonna go to college and they were gonna go to a professional school, and I think that's where people got really worried and where there were problems was when you had a difference in that feeling.

Even the kids you know, felt it. But our kids did really well. I always thought how they got good educations and did well, but they were lucky and they went to two of the very-really really good schools.

And now Becky, remember- at one point Stuart Westbrook liked her and asked her out, and Stuart was black.

[35:07]

In fact, I knew his grandparents. We knew his grandparents really well. And it caused problems, and it was interesting. The girls at school were mad at him for asking out you know, a white girl, ~~and~~ And it just never happened again.

And it's interesting, our oldest daughter, who wasn't bussed went through law school, she had a human rights fellowship in law school, and I think our kids have all felt that going to the schools they went to really prepared them for the real world. That you had they knew how to get along with everybody.

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[36:00]

Daniel Jacobs: Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Weinman: Chuck has always said that – our youngest son, he went to work when he was in school, he went to work at FedEx in the Hub, and he eventually became a manager in the Hub and said he was the only manager that didn't have problems with his flights because he could get along with everybody, and he made sure that the people

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who worked under him got along with each other, that there was just never any problems.

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~~But h~~He says it wasn't true with every flight.

Tiffani Smith: Were you criticized by maybe other parents or family members for allowing your children to stay in schools?

Marilyn Weinman: I think there were people who thought we were crazy.

Bernie Weinman: Well, they – I'm not sure. I'm sure there were people – obviously there were people that disagreed with us, because they were doing the opposite; they were taking their kids and putting them in private schools.

I don't remember anybody ever saying anything to us or anything.

Marilyn Weinman: Nobody would say anything to me. Because I was so out there that I thought they were wrong.

[37:03]

I was on the panel of American Women, and I think you interviewed somebody who was on the panel –

We were going out and talking about desegregated schools and the importance of keeping your kids in schools. And it was like, I can't do this and be a hypocrite and put my kids in private schools. So I was really out there. But I know some of our family thought we were crazy.

Bernie Weinman: You may speculate, but I don't – nobody ever said anything to us, that I can recall.

Marilyn Weinman: The kids had gotten comments from their friends who didn't, about you know, I can't believe your mother is letting you go, you know, to ~~you~~ that school.

Tiffani Smith: While your children were growing up, what are some of the things you told them about how race relations were in Memphis, or how did you explain these things to your children?

[38:00]

Bernie Weinman: I don't think you had to really talk about it, cause they knew. It was – they lived it.

Marilyn Weinman: They lived it, they heard it from us a lot. We talked about it at the table, we talked about it_ they knew what you were doing in court. Our oldest daughter would go with me sometimes when I was doing a panel. And what was one of the great things about the panel too was that we partied a lot, you know, we socialized, and our children were friends with a lot of the children of other panelists.

You know, some who were white and some who were African American. And so they had a little bit different experience, I think, than some of their friends, don't you, because of that?

Bernie Weinman: Yeah. I think so.

Marilyn Weinman: And I think that one of the nice things about getting to be this age and looking at your kids is that I think they all pretty much have our values.

[39:01]

And our kids here are all in public school, our two oldest granddaughters. Our oldest one's graduated, but they were at Houston, and we have two grandsons at Richland Elementary School now.

And I think their parents feel pretty strongly about the value of public schools.

Daniel Jacobs: I wanted to ask about the comment you just made about how you socialized and kind of partied with other panelists. What kind of gatherings did you all have and what were those like?

Marilyn Weinman: We had evening parties a lot. We would do this two or three times, four times a year. And we would meet at somebody's house, and you know, it was potluck, so everybody brought something to the – one of the first parties I brought chopped liver, you know, a real Jewish dish.

And then a friend of mine who was on the panel who was white and Episcopalian called me one day and said: the next party, I'm bringing the chopped liver.

[40:06]

So we sort of broke ~~us~~ that stereotype.

Bernie Weinman: Do you understand how the makeup of the panel? There was African American panelists and there was Jewish panelists and there was Catholic panelists and the Protestant panelists. I mean, sometime, obviously, the same person could be more than one, but —

Marilyn Weinman: That was a defining part of my life was the panel, and I think it was important for our kids. ~~A~~ and for a few years, we did a teenage panel that was called generation rap, and our oldest daughter was on that, and she had a really fun experience. They went down to, I think it was the Methodist Youth Camp, in that Northern Methodist District in Mississippi.

[41:04]

And I don't know if you know how the panel worked, but every panelist did this little five minute speech, and it was a very personal speech about your life, and how prejudice affected you. And Sharon had this little speech and when it was all over, when everybody has done their thing, then they ask for questions.

And this one kid stood up and wanted to know if he could see her horns. And Sharon said, "What horns? What are you talking about?" And he says, "Well, all a lot of Jews have horns." And Sharon said she started going, "I don't have horns and nobody in my family has horns."

But for this boy, I know this was great exposure, but it was great exposure for her, 'cause she had no idea some of the dumb things that people believe.

Tiffani Smith: Did you experience any difficulty by being on a panel, were you criticized by being on the panel itself?

BEGIN Sequence #9: 00:41:56:00

[42:00]

Marilyn Weinman: Not to my face. Nobody would have done it. I'm not joking. No, I had — a lot of my friends would join the panel eventually. It was a great experience, and the women that were on the panel were

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movers and shakers. I wasn't, but there were a lot of women on the panel that really made a difference in Memphis.

Daniel Jacobs: Mr. Weinman, I wanted to go back to your experience with the city court. I guess first of all, what is the city court, what kind of cases are you trying?

Bernie Weinman: Okay, it was different then than it is now in that our jurisdiction was greater. But we handled city ordinance violations, which is what the city courts handle now, which w—Would involve a great many traffic cases, Bbut also we — any violations of the city ordinance and the city ordinances were involved, they could be assaults, they could be public drunk, it could be anything of that nature.

[43:12]

Marilyn Weinman: Dog cases.

Bernie Weinman: We also, at that time, —we would have all the preliminary hearings. I'll explain that a little bit. A preliminary hearing is somebody's on felony charges and state misdemeanor charges. Somebody's arrested on a charge. They have a right to be brought before a judge and the judge can make a determination. At that time, the real determination was whether there was — what the bond should be, is really what we'd get involved in.

And of course, then I say at that time, when I first started developing, we would have preliminary hearings to determine whether there was a probable cause or reasonable probability that the person who's brought before you committed the crime.

[44:00]

That's still the process, only now those go before general session's court. The judge determines, is there a reasonable probability, is there a probable cause in this case, to should be held to the action of the grand jury is what that does. The case is if you find that it is, if it goes before the grand jury and then if you want to in I don't know if you want an explanation of all that.

But anyway, then if the grand jury determines it should go to the next level, it'd be to the state criminal courts. And we would handle all those violations.

Most of what we'd handle would – the law then said it was quasi criminal. A city ordinance violation was quasi criminal ~~and~~, it wasn't the same as ~~ss~~ – some of the ordinance violations. It -wasn't the same as going to the criminal courts.

[45:00]

But yet, there was punishment involved. We later got additional jurisdiction, before I left the city courts, which gave us jurisdiction to try state misdemeanor cases. A sState misdemeanor case at that time, well, generally, it's a criminal violation that carries up to 11 months and 29 days in jail. That's not the total definition, but that's close enough.

And so we later tried those matters. So you know, what we would get, normally, the next day after someone's arrested that night, would be brought before a city court judge. Now, general session judge. And the city court judges s still have city ordinance violations, which includes traffic and that type of thing. – Sso that's basically what we would handle.

[46:12]

And so of course, I was there in the '60s, and of course I was there during the Civil Rights movement, so we would have, but for most of that time, at that time, in the middle '60s, there were three city court judges.

I handled, at that time, all the non traffic cases. So when everybody was brought and where there was the misdemeanor or felony preliminary hearings or the trial of the city ordinance violations that weren't traffic, I was handling those.

[47:03]

So when they had the huge volume of arrests during the – when there were riots and all, they were brought before me and a lot of times on the morning calendar there'd be 600, 700 cases.

Daniel Jacobs: Reallyight.

BEGIN Sequence #10,00:47:19:00

Bernie Weinman: Then we started kind of splitting those up cause it was kind of burdensome. It became more than I could handle.

Daniel Jacobs: Mm-hmm. So that was during the riots after Dr. King was assassinated?

Bernie Weinman: Absolutely right.

Daniel Jacobs: What kind of cases did you see and what was that experience like, having to – did you have to go into court the day after his assassination?

Bernie Weinman: We did. We sure did.

Daniel Jacobs: What was that like?

Bernie Weinman: It was very difficult. Downtown Memphis was a very difficult place to be. I'm not talking about from the standpoint of any fear of getting hurt or anything, but area sites, one of the most difficult, ~~traumatic~~ situations I'd ever been in, ~~it~~ just ~~—~~walking ~~down~~ downtown the next day – nothing on the street.

[48:20]

Nobody on the street ~~besides except~~ police officers. No traffic was allowed going on, and it was really, really eerie.

Marilyn Weinman: Was the National Guard down there?

Bernie Weinman: Yeah –

Marilyn Weinman: With tanks or –

Bernie Weinman: It was really very traumatic difficult situation.

Marilyn Weinman: I went to – it happened – the assassination was like the day before Passover started. And I remember - I'm breaking ~~into over~~ your story. And I remember going to a shopping center out here to go pick up my Passover order, the ~~—~~matzas and everything. A, and I drove up, and there was like a big troop carrier –

[49:00]

Daniel Jacobs: Wow.

Marilyn Weinman: Parked, and there was a gun on it. I don't know what it was, but you know, it drove into my neighborhood and this was there, and

there were National Guardsmen out in ~~East Memphis~~ patrolling, and I went home sick. It just made me – it was just awful.

Bernie Weinman: But it had, legislature met, and I think, I'm not sure if they were in session or if it was emergency session or something, and Memphis did not have a curfew law, and they passed a curfew law which allowed the mayor to implement a curfew, which the mayor immediately did.

And I had hundreds and hundreds of people brought before me, in curfew violations. And the legislature never designated a punishment of the curfew law. They just said it was a curfew law.

[50:00]

And so really, we were – I said, normally the hearing would go ~~we were~~ Were you out? Yeah. You wasn't supposed to, it was curfew. Don't do it anymore. Go home. That's generally the way it went. ~~B~~ but it was a tough time. Really tough.

Daniel Jacobs: ~~Mm-hmm-~~ What other kind of cases were you seeing ~~after the~~ during the –

Bernie Weinman: A lot of assaults, vandalism, people ~~get into~~ in fights and people getting hurt. Lot of vandalism cases where a lot of store windows would be knocked out type of thing.

Then you would have a lot of larceny matters, too. Thefts where people would break into stores and take stuff out of stores. Probably just the normal variety, just a whole lot more of them, ~~other than~~ a lot more, say vandalism.

[51:00]

And that type of thing that you normally see, B, but you would see many more of the same type of thing you'd see normally.

Daniel Jacobs: Were there any cases or anyone you talked to, or I guess came before you, that I guess stands out in your mind during that time?

Bernie Weinman: I can think of – we had a couple of situations, very unusual. I remember, one day, I got off the bench, getting ready to leave and come home. And I got a call from the city attorney's office. And the city attorney said: J, judge, could you stay there? We're gonna arrest, there's gonna be a lot of arrests, and we want the people released on their own recognizance.

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I said, I don't understand, you know there's gonna be arrests and you know they're gonna be released? What's going on? Would you just wait? I said okay.

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So I did. What had occurred was – they were asked, a group of people had asked for a parade permit to march, and it was gonna be like they wanted it at 5:00 in the afternoon. It may have been Friday afternoon, but they wanted it 5:00. And the city refused to give em a permit at 5:00, cause they said all the traffic and everybody's going home.

So they came to an agreement that they would go – they were on Mulberry Street, which is right off of Beale Street, and they put up a barricade and they had busses there.

[53:05]

And the marchers would come around the barricade and march onto the bus. And that was the arrest. And they were bringing ~~em down here~~, bring them downtown.

So they got down to the ~~—and~~ I waited, and they got down to the courthouse, ~~I~~ I said, Look. If this is all, if you're being serious about all these things, I'm not just gonna blatantly release everybody. That's not the way we do it. We hHave hearings, right?

So they say, okay, so the assistant city attorney came over, who represents the city, and I said, ~~well~~ Well, people are not represented. ~~He-In~~ came, an assistant public defender, he's now a judge.

[54:00]

It was Judge Higgs, Otis Higgs came down there, and he said, I'll represent these people, ~~I~~ I said, ~~great~~ Great, we'll have hearings. So we would call, and I'm not gonna go into all the detail about the hearing because it might be embarrassing to Judge Higgs, but one of the cases, with my smart mouth, I got him in trouble.

But anyway, as— we called the case, and let me say this, all the people there were handpicked. Nobody had any record at all; outstanding citizens. Every one of them.

Daniel Jacobs: What group was this?

Bernie Weinman: It was a group of people –

Marilyn Weinman: ~~But it w~~Was ~~— —~~Vasco and Maxine Smith and –

Bernie Weinman: I don't know, I don't know, I don't know that. I don't remember that. But it was a group of people that asked for this parade permit. I don't know that there were any special organization, it was just that they got together to do this.

[55:06]

And so they come up and I'd say, they'd call the name, and I'd say, well, what about this person? Well, he'd say, I've known him all my life, no problem. He'd turn and say, I've got no objections.

So we did them one at a time and we released the people. But that was certainly a strange and unusual situation. I remember one time when there was a group of people arrested, and I don't remember exact circumstances, but it had to do with some type of march or something.

And everybody come to some agreement that they could be released on their own recognizances, and I do remember the person that was involved there, the person who was kind of the leader of the group.

[56:00]

It was a man who was a labor leader, organizer, that was involved with this. And I was getting ready to release them all, and he says, he came to me and he says, Judge, is it all right if we meet and ~~see~~ if these people see if we want to be released?

I said, you want to meet and see if you want to be released? He said yeah, I said – of course it was a lot of people, ~~and of course,~~ all the people were in the courtroom. ~~And,~~ so they could have their meeting, we all left the courtroom. And I never – and I was standing out there ~~and just~~ shaking my head, there were other people out there, newspaper people and all that and I said, and my comment was that you run for a job like this.

[57:06]

That was all over the newspaper the next day. They consented to being released. But they had a meeting. They were going to meet first. It was interesting. That was certainly. That was certainly unusual circumstances, no question about it.

Begin Sequence #12, 00:57:23:00

Tiffani Smith: During this time period, was Mayor Lowe-Loeb the mayor?

Bernie Weinman: Yeah.

Tiffani Smith: Do you have any views on politics around the mayor and Memphis and –

Bernie Weinman: Well, from my perspective, I certainly didn't think he was understanding and flexible enough of the times.

To bBe kind.

Marilyn Weinman: Memphis would be different, don't you think?

Bernie Weinman: Well, I don't know. I just didn't think he took a very open view and weighed all the all the issues as I thought he should be doing.

[58:05]

Marilyn Weinman: I went down, there was a group in Memphis, Concerned Women of Memphis, during the strike, and we all got dressed up and went down and called on Mayor Lowe-Loeb and our picture was in the paper in our hats and our gloves, and some of the women who went were from really prominent Memphis families. A, and you know, we said, you know, we think – the handling of the strike just was really bad and there needs to be some kind of accommodation.

And Mayor Lowe told us that we were all just a bunch of communists.

Daniel Jacobs: Wow.

Marilyn Weinman: I mean, that was just typical.

Tiffani Smith: Do you feel like because you had a insider's look at what was going on inside of politics, do you feel like what was really told to the public was what was really going on?

[59:00]

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Or was it kind of like what was needed to tell was told?

Bernie Weinman: I think that both sides were being told. I think that there was a lot of inflexibility, particularly in the administration, and I think that ~~was's~~ the real problem. Wouldn't budge.

Marilyn Weinman: You think there was enough criticism of the administration by the newspapers?

Bernie Weinman: I don't recall and I don't remember. But obviously, I think everybody's story was out there. Again, I don't know that —some people would make up their mind and just wouldn't budge from that. Listen to reasonable thinking.

Certainly, the synagogue that we now go to, we were not going there then, but the rabbi at the time really — he was getting on Lowe-Loeb and I mean —

[1:00:05]

Marilyn Weinman: But hHe marched with Dr. King —

Bernie Weinman: He did, he was really quite outstanding. Aand he, be—cause he had known LoweLoeb, I assume, all Lowe's-Loeb's life, and he—

Marilyn Weinman: But there were a few religious leaders there. Rabbi Wax and Monsignor Leopard-Leppert that marched with Dr. King, there There just wasn't weren't enough.

Daniel Jacobs: I wanted to ask, Mrs. Weinman, you've talked about a couple of the different organizations that you were involved in. How did you first start getting into this, I guess just activism, in Memphis? in—

Marilyn Weinman: You know, I think it was a friend called and, Kay CortmanPortman, and she was starting a- the national conference of Christians and Jews, ran these, — it was called rearing-Rearing children-Children of goodwill-Goodwill workshops, and they lasted for six weeks, and we met once a week.

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I think we met on Wednesday. And she called and asked me to help her with that. And that was the beginning for me. There was a group of women, the Saturday Luncheon Club, where African American and white women would meet for lunch, and that had

been going on for a few years before the rearing children of goodwill workshops.

But that was the first meeting of any size of an interracial meeting of women, and we were all pretty young, because we all had young children. And we did a, we met at Evergreen Presbyterian Church over where Rhodes is, and we did a – we ran a nursery so that young mothers – you know, with real young children, could come.

I don't know if you all have talked to Judy ~~Wimmer~~, Wimmer, but Judy and I, I remember walking in and looking in that nursery with Judy and here were these black and white children playing together, and we would look at each other, and oh, it's the future that we were looking at.

[1:02:14]

But from the panel, and Dr. King was assassinated when we were in the middle of running that.–

Daniel Jacobs: So this was in '68?

Marilyn Weinman: Right, and that –

BEGIN Sequence #13: 01:02:25:00

Marilyn Weinman: I remember that just sort of, I think my involvement ~~in~~of that at that moment intensified the feelings that I had. And then a year later, I think the panel was formed, and I was in the first group of panelists. And we went out then, I know you've heard this story, but we went out and spoke to every group that would invite us.

We went, and any, it was almost always women, you know, church circles or meetings of women. We went all over this area, you drove us one time, didn't you, over to West Memphis.

[1:03:01]

We did a panel over there, it was our anniversary. We went to one group that asked us, and they didn't know what the Panel of American Women was about, and it was a White Citizen's Council. And we didn't know where we were going either. And we got there, and some man in the front row, after we made all our speeches, stood up and told me that I was lying about the Holocaust, that it never happened, and I mean, I just lost it.

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I remember standing up and putting my hands on the table in front of us and getting in this man's face and screaming at him, and ~~——Jocie Wersburg Wurzburg~~ is just pulling on my skirt to sit down. And I just blew up. But most of the time, it was great.

You would do a panel, and then afterwards, people would come up. Women would want to know how they could join, ~~how they could-wanted to~~ be part of it.

Bernie Weinman: You know, I think after Dr. King was assassinated I think there was a lot of people ~~that~~—of goodwill who got things started, organizations where people of different races and all could meet.

[1:04:15]

I remember I used to go to a meeting, a group that ~~Janet-Jed Dreyfuss-Dreifus~~ had started, and I forget the name of the group now, but we used to meet, not sure how often, was it – I'm not sure if it was weekly or monthly, but we'd go and have breakfast together.

Marilyn Weinman: And ~~Janet's-Jed's~~ mother started, I remember before I did anything, ~~I was—I~~ think I was involved in a group, Fund for Needy Schoolchildren, that Myra Dreyfuss and Selma Louis started. And we were volunteers, and you were assigned a school and you went into the school and did –

Originally the plan was to get free breakfast for children who needed it, and you can't believe the resistance of the Memphis school board.

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They were providing a free lunch, but these were kids who would come to school hungry from the night before, no breakfast and might not eat until lunch.

You're hearing my story, and part of what we did was a lot of pressure, whatever we could do to get the school board to provide, and there was federal money for it, they just didn't want to do it. But to provide this free breakfast for these kids who were getting a free lunch.

And then you were assigned a school and you went in and you did whatever you could. Whatever the principal needed, you tried to

provide for that school. But there were a lot of groups that were started.

I served on every superintendent's committee when the schools were desegregated, because there was all kinds – I remember working in a rumor center when plan A went into effect.

Because people would call up, people were threatening to bomb ~~the~~ schools, you know, they were gonna overturn busses.

[1:06:07]

And what we did was just – you know, the parents would call, frantic, should I send my kid to school today? And we did that.

I think there were a lot of people who really tried to help. I think we then had a city administration when the schools were desegregated, we had a city administration that fought it so vehemently, ~~so~~ that I just think Memphis would be so different if we had had different city leadership.

Daniel Jacobs: Working on the superintendent's board, how did you see the city fighting desegregation in the schools? What kind of –

Marilyn Weinman: Oh, they did everything they could. They fought it legally, remember? The city – the attorneys for the –

Bernie Weinman: Well, there was lawsuits in the federal courts, part of the desegregation, so I mean, obviously there were two sides to the case, obviously. To have a lawsuit.

[1:07:05]

Marilyn Weinman: But the first plan they came up with, remember, to desegregate, and the court's wouldn't accept it, was ~~we're well~~ we're gonna desegregate starting with first grade. And we'll do one grade every so many years. And they threw that out, and then they would come up with something else that was going to delay and delay actually desegregating.

Daniel Jacobs: Since you were on the board did you ever actually –

Marilyn Weinman: I wasn't on the board. I wasn't on the board. I just was involved with – they had, it was like a parent's committees. It wasn't just parents, but it was people not on the board who wanted to see everything go smoothly.

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Bernie Weinman: I think we were very fortunate here too, as far as desegregation starting to happen, really strong federal judge that was willing to do what he thought the law required to be done and he thought was the right thing, was Judge ~~McCray~~McCrae.

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He was a man of, I think, very strong moral fiber. And I think he did a great deal to get things going on a better track.

Marilyn Weinman: People would say, I don't want my kid riding hours on a school bus, and you know, Michael was being bussed to Lester, and I would always ~~say~~thought, I don't care, as long as I'm not driving it, you know? It's fine. This was after years of driving carpools endlessly ~~and~~ ~~but~~. But-

Tiffani Smith: Just to rewind a little bit, I don't think I got it, what undergrad institution did you go to?

Marilyn Weinman: I went to Memphis State University, University of Memphis.

Tiffani Smith: Okay.

Marilyn Weinman: ~~Bec~~Cause I got my undergraduate degree, BSABFA, and I went back, it took me a long time to do it, I went back and then I got an MFA and taught art for 21 years.

[1:09:10]

Tiffani Smith: Okay. And as a teacher, did you experience a lot of thing with the children and the –

Marilyn Weinman: You know, I taught in a private Catholic girl's school, and it was small. And they were always interested that I was Jewish. And they would find out, the beginning of the school year, when I would have to say, now, I won't be here for two days next week, it's Rosh Hashanah, you're gonna have a substitute and then I would have to go through and explain.

You know, they were a different generation, and they really saw the world differently, and the school that I taught at, and the Catholic schools in Memphis made an effort not to be a refuge, a

white refuge. I mean, you can't believe the number of private schools.

[1:10:00]

Every church ran a private school when bussing started. What it – in "Time" magazine, they called them "briar patch schools". There was that article about Memphis, and some of the schools were hideous, and most of them –

Bernie Weinman: Folded up.

Marilyn Weinman: Folded after awhile, but they did a lot of damage. But the Catholic schools really made an effort to accept everybody who applied and my school, because it was a private school, the tuition was high, and they gave a lot of scholarships to African American kids so they could begin to desegregate the school.

Social justice was a big thing in that school, which was nice for me, because I could do an art project for like the juniors, I'm a print major printmaker and it was a print making project. My mission in life was to raise the next generation of female print makers.

That's really — that was what I - did.

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But they could pick a topic on social justice and make a different print about it, and a lot of it dealt with the Civil Rights Movement. Bec Cause they had lots and lots of photographs and files that they could go through. But it was an easy school to talk about, and I think it was because of religion classes and And that, at least, in Memphis, a church was making an effort.

Daniel Jacobs: I guess, is there anything that we haven't asked that you want to talk about?

Bernie Weinman: I think you've covered it very well.

Marilyn Weinman: Well, I just think have a real future, I don't know if you want to go into broadcast television.

Daniel Jacobs: Well, we're just happy to have you all talking to us.

Tiffani Smith: Do you all have any advice for anybody in this generation, or if you could look back on anything you've done, anything you wish you would have known?

Marilyn Weinman: I think exposing your children early to people who are different is really important. And I think if you have your kids in public school now, you don't really have to worry.

[1:12:09]

I know in my grandson's kindergarten class last year, I would go and volunteer some.

And there were white kids, there were black kids, there were Indian kids, there were Native Americans.

Bernie Weinman: Of course, Memphis has changed a great deal. You know, it was – when we were growing up, there was not the variety of people that there are now. What I mean by that, there were – if they were there, I didn't know Indian people and I didn't know Orientals, you just didn't know them.

Now, of course, it's changed a great deal. I think that's for the better, as you get to know, what you really learn is how everybody's really the same.

[1:13:00]

Marilyn Weinman: I think parents – I think that their parents, like neighborhoods like this, neighborhoods out in Germantown, neighborhoods all over town, where parents, black and white parents, need to make the effort to get their kids together in some way with kids who are different. Our daughter in Philadelphia lives in Mount Erie Airy, and I think they picked that neighborhood because it's so diverse.

That their kids who would live with people who were different. I just think that's really important. Just to teach respect for people who are different. Different's good.

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