



Interviewed: Monty Grunebaum & Bernie Sher

Oral History Clip Title: Wandering Jews

Theme: Jewish Identity

Interviewer: Naomi Raichyk

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(Monty)

On Rosh Hashanah, which is to me an important time to go to *shul*, I took myself and my family across to Bathurst Street, to Bayview Avenue and presented ourselves in front of the door person and said we're recent immigrants from South Africa and we'd like to come to *shul*. He said, "Do you have a ticket?" I said, "No." He said, "Well then you can't come in. Please leave." So I said, "Then I have nowhere to go." He says, "Well, I'm sorry I can't help you." So we went back home and that was the kick-starter from my point of view that no, I'm not going to go for that. I'm going to try and be involved in getting something going here, in Canada that I would feel comfortable with and wouldn't be kicked out of the front door.

We were a group that...we all felt the same way. And we got to know each other because we lived in the same area. And we started *davening* in each other's basements. Friday night at my place, *shabbas* morning at Barry Nussbaum's house. So we had a core that tried to keep some kind of religion going, our religion going. Eventually we realized that we didn't and we couldn't get this going until we looked for a permanent place. We were using different venues and we applied to get a Rabbi, and a Rabbi was made available to us. And he helped us to establish a community. We were using places like...the Winfield School, and the ice rink on Bayview and York Mills and various other places like that but we didn't have a home.

(Bernie)

We used the basement of the Temple Emmanuel. But the only thing is that Temple Emmanuel used the basement on High Holidays for the over flow so we wouldn't have that space. So then we used to pitch a tent on the grounds where we had our little house or we pitched a tent at the Bayview arena on York Mills and Bayview. We used the...community centre, where the tennis courts are, on Don Mills. We used that there. We used the Winfield School and we used the library at the Fairview Mall, and the very, very first *yontef* we spent, there was a couple from England that had a party room on Don Mills and Finch. There was a high-rise there and we got the party room. So we were wandering Jews. We were definitely wandering Jews. But it worked out and funnily enough there was quite a group of people that came because the tickets were cheap and could relate to the South African way but the main thing was that there was a core. All of us sticking up the tent, putting up lights, putting down things, carrying chairs and all that.

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There was a certain core that is still there but is getting fragmented now because a lot of guys have moved north up to Thornhill and Thornhill Woods.

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