



Interview: Lorraine and Alan Sandler

Oral History Title Clip: Impact of Habonim

Theme: Jewish Life in Southern Africa

Interviewer: Lisa Newman

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(Lorraine)

While we may not have had terribly much, a lot of the people—There was the Jewish community. We're not horribly prosperous in the beginning. But everybody was happy. The weather was beautiful. We had fruit trees in our garden. Lemon trees and mango trees and avocados and mulberry bushes. We had a wonderful schooling opportunity. Our schools were based on British schools with wonderful school teachers and headmaster and sports days and tradition—English tradition—and communal singing and sports teams and...It was an idyllic time. We rode our bicycles to school and kids picked up kids along the way eventually we were six or seven riding to school. And the same happened with Habonim. I was a very little girl when Israel—the new, modern State of Israel—was born and Habonim was a critical point in all of our lives. And we would ride to the [inaudible] on Sunday morning again, picking up kids along the way and eventually we could have been twenty kids riding to Habonim. And we had (inaudible) and songs. I could tell you at the time where every new kibbutz was being erected, where every water pipeline was happening, where every [inaudible] was being put on, it was kind of growing with the State of Israel. So today or even then when we heard that a soldier had been killed or injured it was like your own brother sort of being harmed. Very close and very committed and very aware of what was going on.

(Interviewer)

What else do you remember of the Jewish community or of Jewish observance at home?

(Lorraine)

It was a very, very well-organized little Jewish community. We had a Zionist office and a board of deputies. There was a political arm. There was a Zionist arm. Our needs were looked after. There was one synagogue at the time, the (inaudible) Hebrew Congregation. It was considered to be an Orthodox synagogue and the rabbi was a real focal point of this synagogue. We all went to synagogue, particularly on Friday night. Friday night was a very, very popular service. Us young girls would leave school at three o'clock and have our hair done and get our pretty dresses sort of ironed and we would go to *shul*. And it was a *mechitza*. We stood upstairs. The boys were downstairs. It was a social thing as well. But the community gathered there and met there and it was a pivotal and focal time of the week.