



Interviewed: Percy Skuy

Oral History Clip Title: 40 Jewish Families

Theme: Jewish Life in Southern Africa

Interviewer: Naomi Raichyk

Date: 12 May 2015

Oral History Number: AC 416

(Percy)

I have to tell you a wonderful anecdote about my mother. She went to my brother's bar mitzvah in Durban some years back. And my brother's friends, wanting to be friendly to her came over—the pronunciation in Vryheid and South Africa at that time was “Skuy” rather than “Sky”—and one person said, “Mrs. Skuy, what was the population in Vryheid?” And she said, “Forty Jewish families.” Because her whole life was forty Jewish families. A very, very close Jewish upbringing that I was exposed to.

(Interviewer)

Did the town have a synagogue?

(Percy)

Not only did they have a synagogue, they had a shul. We had a Talmud Torah. We had a rabbi. We had a minyan every single evening. Kosher food. Outside of Durban there's a large Jewish population. Vryheid with only forty Jewish families out of a town of maybe let's say five thousand whites was the second largest Jewish population in the province of Natal. So there were very small pockets of Jewish families scattered throughout the province. So I was brought up in a very traditional, Jewish environment.

(Interviewer)

What type of customs and traditions did your parents maintain?

(Percy)

Probably everything they would have done back in Latvia. We kept kosher. Both butchers had a kosher section. I can't remember the number of times I had to take some of the *milkhik* or the *fleishik* stuffing and dig it [sic] put it in the sand there because I'd taken the wrong utensil. All the *yom tovim* were celebrated. (inaudible) It's traditional for all the businessmen to go to shul at five o'clock every day. As a young kid, I was the one who if we were short of a minyan would be sent out to bring somebody in to make the minyan up there. So a very, very Jewish experience.

---

OJASALP.ORG