



4-13-2023

Hochberg, Herbert

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Recommended Citation

Maier Garcia, Sophia, "Hochberg, Herbert" (2023). *Bronx Jewish History Project*. 13.
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Transcriber: Sophia Maier

Sophia Maier (SM) So, if you just want to start by telling me a little bit about your family and how they ended up in the Bronx.

Herbert Hochberg (HH): Okay. My family, for probably a few 100 years, lived in what is now Western Ukraine around the city of Lviv. And I owe my presence here to Tsar Alexander the Second. You know about him?

SM: *Laughs* Yes.

HH: Well, he was assassinated, I think around 1880-85. And the popular thought was that there were Jews behind the assassination. So there was an acceleration in the frequency and severity of pogroms from after his death, with the result that a large number of Jews left that area between 1890 and 1910. And my grandfather, who was born around 1880 or so, when he was in his 20s, he was out of service in Russia, I think the Russian army at that time. And he was kind of homeless, he had no occupation. And he was in desperate need for a bride and a place to live. And my grandmother was getting to be an old maid in that general area,

Judith Hochberg (JH): I thought he migrated and then he went back and wooed her.

HH: That was my father.

JH: Oh, I'm sorry, oh, I have the wrong, I have the wrong generation, sorry. *Laughs*

HH: So he married my grandmother, I think about 1905 or so. And he lived with her family. But he had two other brothers who had come to the United States. And things weren't really too great for him in that situation. So he decided to leave, which he did in 1913 or so, leaving my grandmother with then four children, and went to New York. So this is 1913. Then we had a war. And he wasn't able to bring his family to the US until 1920, 7 years later, which is a long time. Then he brought over my grandmother and my father and three uncles, and a great aunt. And that's how I got to be here. So I haven't thought about it too much, but the last — I guess maybe since I heard about you, I've given him a lot more credit than I did in the past because he went through a very tough time coming here as an immigrant: no English, no job, no education. And if it wasn't for him, you know, I wouldn't be here.

JH: So your father, my grandpa Aaron, he was born in Europe and then came over when they were able to do so?

HH: My father and my mother are distant relatives. And when [my grandfather] married my grandmother, they lived in a small town, outside of Lviv, and my mother's family would go there during summers for vacation. There wasn't much to vacation there, it's just a small little farming town. But he knew my mother, but he left the area when he was 14, in 1920. And then in 1928, eight years later, he and my mother are both 22, he picks himself up and goes to that little town and persuades her to marry him. There was a lot of correspondence before that, but I don't know what was in there, but it was. The family always kind of wondered. It was some surprise how my mother would do that. She had a very close knit family with seven or eight kids. Of course, when she left in 1928, she never thought that there would be a Depression, and then a war and that she would never see her parents again. And it's kind of sad when I think about it, you know? So that was how I got here.

SM: And so when your parents got married, were they living in the Bronx at that point, or were they living in Manhattan?

HH: They always lived in the Bronx. My family was basically poor, because my father came here, he was 14, he went to school till he was 16. And then he dropped out of school, and finished high school at night. And the family needed the money. And until the end of the Second World War, his income was really very modest. So we lived in what you would now call, and I would call, poor. We had a two bedroom apartment in the Bronx, which was a lot cheaper than Manhattan. And we had seven people living there, in the two bedrooms.

JH: This was on Allerton Avenue?

HH: This was near Allerton Avenue and Pelham Parkway.

JH: I'm sorry, but this was, when I used to go to grandma and grandpa's apartment when I was growing up, was it that apartment?

HH: No.

JH: Okay, so this is an earlier one.

HH: They ended up living across the street from the park for some years. But we had, you know, growing up in the 30s and the 40s, we had no car, we had no telephone. And things were so difficult in the Depression that in order to make ends meet, my mother and father took in an infant whose father had a lot of problems because his wife had been institutionalized. And he had no way to really raise an infant. And she grew up with us. She was never legally adopted, but she became like a sister, another daughter in the family.

JH: And this was a foster arrangement with a remuneration?

HH: Yeah, there was some remuneration. I'm sure by today's standards, it was a pittance. But in terms of the 1930s Depression, you know, whether it was a few dollars a week or something like that, it made the difference between living very badly and living just badly. It was very tough.

JH: And my dad was born in May of 1930. And so it was, you know, just a few months after the Depression had started, so it was lousy timing in that respect.

HH: So my mother, you know, I think the image of the United States then and now is that the streets were paved in gold. But it didn't work out that way, because my mom came in 1928. I was born in 1930. And there was nothing for at least the next 10 years but economic hardship. I had a folding cot that was kept in the living room, and I opened it up at night and I slept there. Course, I didn't know that I was poor then, I didn't know that till I went to college. And most everybody in the neighborhood was similarly financially situated. We always had, it seemed to me, plenty to eat and a dry, comfortable place at night. So I never felt that I was handicapped or in a bad situation. I didn't realize it until I got to college.

SM: And so what did your parents do for a living?

HH: Well, the short story is that my grandfather, when he came here, one of his brothers was in the millenary business, he made ladies hats. And my grandfather, probably through that connection, got into a business that doesn't exist. In those days before the end of the Second World War, every man wore a felt hat. After a certain amount of time they threw it away. Some of them ended up in my grandfather's shop, where he would examine the hat and determine its best use, whether it should just be used for scrap, in which case it would be made into shingles for roofs. Or whether it could be, with some good material, it could be used for a ladies hat, or whether it could be shipped to Africa, as is, for some African person. And my father learned that business from his father, who had a small shop on Division Street in the Lower East Side. And he did some other things before he got into that business, but it was all very marginal. And it was a very difficult time. He had a nervous breakdown in the 30s, with two kids and a wife and a Depression. It was a very tough time.

SM: Did he end up getting different work after the war?

HH: Well, after the war, and the availability of new hats, his business disappeared. His two brothers, who had become plumbers, got into the business of building two family houses in the Bronx. And they taught my father, who had difficulty, like I have, in screwing in a lightbulb, how to be a builder of two family houses. So he built probably a couple of dozen, two family houses from the end of the Second World War, until he retired about 10 years later. And he made some money that way. Because then you could build a two family house and sell it for under \$50,000 and have something leftover to show for it. In fact, when housing prices went up to 50,000, I was then 15, I figured that would be the end of the real

estate business because that was so much. Those houses now probably go for half a million dollars or more.

SM: Yeah. And your mother stayed home?

HH: And my mother stayed home. You know, they weren't, in the first place, there weren't many opportunities for women in those days. And she was a homebody, she loved children. And she stayed home. She brought in some income by taking in this infant, in about 1938. That was a long time ago. Of course the world, you know, the US was a lot different in 19[30], when I was born. Just thinking about it in anticipation of coming over here. The US population when I was born was 130 million. Now it's about 330 million. There was a depression. And at that time, they didn't have the benefits, the government benefits, that are available now. If you didn't have money, you basically didn't get any support from the government, so it was very tough. We had World War Two. And just talking about it with my wife today, so she checked on her computer, and we had a million casualties in World War Two.

JH: The United States?

HH: The United States.

JH: I didn't know it was that many.

HH: Casualties.

SM: So killed and wounded.

JH: Oh, okay.

HH: We tried to find, I'm not sure the number of deaths, it was either 100,000 or 300,000, which is a lot of people. It was a serious matter. We had rationing during the Second War for food and gasoline. Compared to what was going on in Europe, it was nothing, but it was pretty severe. Although for us as kids, you know, I was 15 when the war was over. It was sort of trivial. We would collect newspaper for recycling and aluminum foil for recycling.

JH: That was somehow related to the war effort?

HH: For the war effort because there was a shortage of materials of all kinds. They stopped making things like refrigerators and dryers. We had an icebox until 1939, when we moved into a new apartment house. There were no computers. No television. So, when I grew up, we got a tiny apartment for all the people. Most of my recreation was outside, with the other kids who lived in that apartment house, or the

adjacent apartment houses. And we would play in the street. So we lived near Bronx Park, we would play in Bronx Park. It was a whole different world, compared to today.

SM: Any particular games you liked to play?

HH: Well, we would play touch football in the streets. There weren't enough cars — there were so few cars that you could play on a main street in the Bronx, and not worry about the traffic. Very few cars. And then we played a form of stickball using each of the corners at an intersection as a base and a broomstick as a bat. It was a good time. I thought I had a great childhood.

SM: Yeah. And so yeah, tell me a little bit more about the neighborhood that you grew up in? Was it predominantly Jewish?

HH: Well, the neighborhood, the Bronx was still being developed. Until the late 1940s, there were a number of farms in the Northeast Bronx. Farms! So it was a different kind of a place then today. The house, we lived opposite the Bronx park until 1939, and then a new building was put up further north, near Allerton Avenue and Pelham Parkway, and we moved there. And it was a nicer apartment and had more modern appliances. So that was a big change.

JH: But you had like Jewish bakery, Jewish deli?

HH: Oh, yeah, the neighborhood. The neighborhood had a lot of Irish Catholics, a lot of Italian Catholics, a lot of Jews. No minorities. Can you imagine that? No minorities. That area now, there are no whites. And we didn't have any Protestants. I would — I keep thinking about whether there was a Protestant church in the area. I can't think of any. They were Catholic churches, including one famous church, just a few blocks away, where miracles supposedly took place. If you came with your crutches, and partook of the holy water, you could throw the crutches away. And until 10-20 years ago, there were buses that would come there regularly with Catholics.

JH: I had no idea. Have you ever heard of that?

SM: Do you know which church it was? Do you remember the name?

HH: I don't remember the name. It was on Mace Avenue.

SM: Okay, I'll look into it.

HH: Mace Avenue about five blocks from White Plains Post Road. One block from Allerton Avenue. I think it was St. Lucy's, but I'm not sure. I only went there once or twice to see what it was all about. There were plenty, plenty of synagogues. And there were rabbis who were in business for themselves

that would just be set up to handle high holy days services. And my father was very devout and followed religious scruples as much as my mother would let him, because she didn't take much stock in all of that. What else?

SM: And so did you get along well with your neighbors, were there ever any tensions with the Italians or the Irish in the area?

HH: No. All my friends were Jewish. We had a number of neighbors who were Catholic, but I essentially had nothing to do with them. I don't remember any tensions between them. But I know when I went to college, most of my friends were Jewish, and that was in the late 40s. So there was a tendency to stick with your religious cohorts. And most of the people, the Jewish people in that neighborhood, the kids were first generation kids. The parents had been born abroad and come to the United States.

JH: And did you speak Yiddish at home until you started school, or did you already learn English?

HH: My situation was this: my grandparents, my father's parents, were 100% incompatible. I never really understood, when I got older, how they ever spent enough time together to have six children.

JH: *Laughs* Well, they didn't have to talk for that.

HH: Well, she was born also about 1880. She never learned how to speak English. And my grandfather, her husband, very quickly assimilated. And he had a small business, he didn't make much money. But they got divorced very early on, sometime in the 30s. And there wasn't enough money for alimony. So she lived, I think mostly with my parents and our family. And because she didn't speak English, she taught Yiddish to us. Marilyn and I, my sister, became conversationally able to speak Yiddish, which I still can do to some extent to this day. So it was quite a change. What happened, you know, between 1928, when my mother came here, and today, would be unbelievable to her parents or grandparents, and not foreseen by them in the 30s and 40s. My father and his two brothers — I don't know if the two brothers ever got a high school diploma. My father did. And after he retired, he went back to Lehman College when he was in his 70s, and he got a bachelor's and a master's degree.

JH: He got a standing ovation at his graduation.

SM: I bet.

HH: Well, my cousins, my uncle's children, there were, three and five, there were eight of them. And either all eight, or seven out of the eight, went to college. And my sister and I went to college. And they all ended up doing reasonably well financially.

SM: Was education an important thing in your house growing up?

HH: It was very important. It was taken for granted. I don't know how, my mother went to — oh, what did they call it.

JH: Taken for granted, but not in the sense of not caring, but just that it was —

HH: So important. My mother went to gymnasium. My mother and father were pretty smart people without the benefit of college degrees when I was growing up. So some — well, I knew from the time when I was in elementary school that I was a good student. We had half semesters, the year is divided into two semesters, and early on, I was skipped four times.

JH: Oh, you have to tell the typewriter story.

HH: Oh, yeah. Back when I was eight or nine, somehow I started yearning for a typewriter. We didn't have anything and my father — out of necessity, we lived pretty frugally. But I lobbied for a typewriter. A typewriter in those days was, I don't remember, 50 or 75 dollars, which was like 500 dollars in today's money. And he finally bought a portable typewriter for me. Borrowed the money to buy it, he bought it on time. And I learned how to type when I was in elementary school.

SM: Yeah, that's great.

HH: So I was very lucky. But the contrast between the standard of living of my grandparents, my parents, and me early on, and today is, you know, just almost unbelievable. I mean living in Scarsdale. You know, graduate school and kids, all the grandkids went to college. I mean, the US has been very good for not only my family, but most families. People talk about opportunity having disappeared. But there's still tremendous opportunity in the country. And the New York City school system, with all the handicaps it had, with all these immigrants coming here, they did a wonderful job. And they deserve a lot of credit for it, which I don't think they get. So I was going to go — we had essentially a tuition free college program back in the 40s. Now, I think there's tuition. City College, Lehman College, Queens College, but I think it's a fraction of what it is in a private school.

SM: Absolutely.

HH: A friend of mine, when I was graduating high school, said he was going to apply to MIT, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. And I was going to apply to City College, but he set me to thinking — the idea of applying to an out of town college was crazy. Maybe there's one other person in my 400 person graduating class that didn't go to a local college. But I applied and got into MIT and that really changed my life. *Looks at Judy* And your life.

JH: Yes, you're a faithful, faithful alumnus.

HH: Well, I met your mother that way.

JH: Well, you didn't meet my mother when you were at MIT.

HH: Well, because of MIT, I went to Harvard Business School.

JH: My father met my mother when he crashed a freshman mixer.

HH: So I think this is a wonderful country, and I'm very glad to be here, and I love paying taxes.

SM: *Laughs* Yeah, that's wonderful. Let's talk a little bit more about school. What public school did you attend?

HH: Well, when we lived on — when I started school, we lived on Unionport Road, which is along the Lexington Avenue Subway, literally across the street from the Bronx Park. And then in 1939, when they built this new apartment house a couple of miles uptown, we moved there. What was your question?

SM: What public school did you attend?

HH: So I went to PS 34, when I lived on Unionport Road, until we moved to the new apartment on Mace Avenue, and then I went to PS 89. I don't really remember much about PS 34. But I went to PS 89, Christopher Columbus High School was a couple of blocks from there. And when I graduated, I had to decide where to go to high school. I was thinking of Brooklyn Tech, in Brooklyn, Bronx Science. They had closed a school called — what was the school called? It will come to me in a minute or two. But I ended up going to Columbus High School, because it was walking distance, whereas Bronx Science was on the west side of the Bronx, and Columbus was very convenient. And it was a good move. After I left, Columbus fell apart, and it became, I was told, the most dangerous high school in New York City. It was closed and split up into charter schools.

SM: And so are there any memories from Columbus that stand out to you?

HH: Well, I didn't appreciate it then, but they were very wise. I mean, they had — if you were at Columbus, you fell into one of three categories. You're either on an academic course, a commercial course to be a secretary or whatever, or a general course where you can become a blue collar worker. They had a wide mix of abilities in high school, but they were able to tailor a program that was suitable for each of them. Even in elementary school, they did what today is probably politically incorrect, and each year they had four, they had three or four classes. There was one class for the bright kids, one class for dummies, and one or two in between. And it's politically incorrect. And some could argue that it was not a good thing, because of its whole geniality, but I think it was a very good thing. I think I got, at

Columbus High School and the elementary school, as good an education as I could have gotten at any one of the private schools.

SM: And was it the SP program when you were in elementary school?

HH: They didn't have that. What you could do is, you could take in high school — they had very broad opportunities. So you could take calculus, and, you know, trigonometry and solid geometry and physics. So you could really get a very good education there. And when I ended up in college with a bunch of other kids who had gone to more prestigious schools, I wasn't aware of any difference. The thing that has changed though, my first year at college the tuition was \$600 a year.

JH: MIT.

HH: MIT. I got a \$200 scholarship, which was a fortune. So that worked out well. MIT was a land grant college, you know about that?

SM: No.

HH: I guess the land MIT was constructed on originally belonged to the government. And if you did that, you had to have ROTC, Reserve Officers Training Corps, for the first two years mandatory for the men. Well, it wasn't a problem, there were 10 women out of 1200 in my class. 10 out of 1200. And then the last two years were optional, but if you took Advanced ROTC, you got paid \$25 a month. Well, that was like \$500 now. So that was a no brainer, I signed up for that. As a result, when I got out of graduate school in June of 1953, I was immediately called into the army from the reserves because of the Korean War. So instead of being a disaster, like getting shipped off to Korea, because I had an MBA, hardly anybody else that was called in had that background, I ended up being a contracting officer in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, with more responsibility than I ever had in the 40 or 50 years subsequent to that. So that was a good turn of events.

SM: Yeah. And so I guess going back a little bit, some fun questions. What kind of music did you like to listen to?

HH: Opera music. My father used to play this — at the Metropolitan Opera, he still had programs on Saturday afternoon. And our house was filled up with opera on Saturday afternoon, and I liked it very much. And my wife, my first wife and my current wife both liked opera. So I've had an opera subscription in Manhattan, Metropolitan Opera, for probably 50 years now or more.

JH: So you didn't listen to like popular music?

HH: I wasn't into popular music very much.

JH: Well that hasn't changed. *Laughs*

HH: Well, the popular music has gotten more and more weird. I mean, I don't even understand anything. It doesn't even seem like music. So, you know, New York City, you've got all this cultural stuff. We don't partake of much of it, especially now as we've gotten older and it's more difficult to go in and out of the city, we still have an opera subscription and feel a philharmonic subscription. Though this year, we cut the number of nights that we go out in half, shorter subscriptions.

SM: I'm actually going to the opera on Friday. Not tomorrow, but next week.

HH: Oh, yes?

SM: Yeah.

HH: Well, we're going — when is our next opera?

JH: May 4th.

SM: To see *La Boheme*?

JH: No.

HH: We got a subscription for three. Judith often goes with us and Carol comes too. So that's very nice. So we can drive in. It takes more now, but to go to Lincoln Center, you know, we can make it in an hour and a quarter or so and just park there. It's relatively easy, especially if you have money. Imagine paying \$50 to park a car to go to the opera or philharmonic? But the dollar is not what it used to be. I used to babysit for 25 cents an hour. I think the going rate now is 15 dollars or more.

SM: Probably.

JH: My father also did Boy Scouts when he was growing up in the Bronx.

HH: Yeah. Yeah, I joined Boy Scouts when I was 11 or 12. The idea of hiking was very appealing. And then you could hike in wilderness areas in the Bronx, and then Yonkers and across the river, the Hudson River. And I really enjoyed that. And as an adult, I did a lot of hiking all over the world with very fond memories. Now I can walk around the block, but that's about it. *Laughs* Oh, but I'm here.

SM: Yeah, absolutely.

HH: Well, that's changed also. Most of my father's family, men died in their 70s, maybe their 80s. So my goal in longevity was to be 70 years old, because the men and the women were eating an Ashkenazi diet. Do you know about Ashkenazi diets?

SM: Yes.

HH: And they didn't know it when they were eating it, but it was almost sure to kill you before you were well into your 80s. Fortunately, I had an internist who had me see a nutritionist to help me keep a diary when I was 50. And I changed my diet very dramatically then, although it was late, but it was before I ended up — before anything like a heart attack or something like that.

SM: And what did you eat when you were growing up?

HH: Well, I loved a lot of things that are not good for you. We ate red meat. I went out of my way to buy milk that was unhomogenized because it had cream at the top. Ice cream almost every night. A lot of things that were high in cholesterol, and not good for your circulatory system. So, not in spite of that, I developed some problems when I was about 70. And I had a bypass with new plumbing. And I was very careful to do nothing to the plumbing to have it get clogged. So they're still functioning and I'm still here at 92, about to be 93.

SM: When's your birthday?

HH: Next month, in May. My wife celebrated her 96th birthday, and she's unbelievable. Nobody can believe that she's in such good health. So we're very lucky.

SM: And so I know you mentioned that you liked to hike. Did you go upstate often in the summers or things?

HH: Well, you know, in the 30s and the 40s there was a huge concern about infantile paralysis, especially in the summer. I had a friend who had infantile paralysis, my age.

JH: Polio.

HH: Polio. My wife's sister had polio, and people, in order to reduce the risk of getting polio, which increased in the summertime, would leave the city. So we would go to the Catskill Mountains and stayed in — we couldn't afford hotels — but we stayed at a dairy farmer's lodge in the Catskills every summer for a number of years.

JH: That was called a *coochalane*, right?

HH: It was called a *coochalane* in Yiddish, which means you cook for yourself. It was a communal kitchen where you shared a refrigerator, and you shared a stove. The main activity there was playing card games and bringing the cows back in the afternoon to the barn. But we didn't know any better. We knew there were hotels, but we were very happy where we were. So that was summers while I was a teenager — until I was a teenager.

SM: And so a little bit about Jewish life. So you mentioned that your father was more religious?

HH: He was very religious, I think if he had his way, he probably would have wanted to be a rabbi. When he got older — oh, so he sent me to a Jewish parochial school after school starting when I was about eight years old. So I became reasonably proficient in Hebrew and was pretty active in Jewish beliefs and things until I was 13 when I had to read enough of the Bible, which had English and Hebrew, to be pretty disgusted with the English words, which I had trouble accepting. You know, God is great if you're a good Jew. And meanwhile, we had the Holocaust, which I thought was going to kill Judaism. How could you believe in all of the power of this God if He let 6 million Jews get killed? So I joined a temple when the children were born, mostly because I liked Judaism, and I wanted them to feel Jewish. And hopefully to marry a Jew. But it didn't really work out that way. *Looks to Judy* You married a Jew and Brenda married a Jew.

JH: I mean, he's not.

HH: Well his parents are Jewish.

JH: No, no, I mean, David is nominally not. I mean, he's nothing.

HH: He's nothing.

JH: They raised their kids Jewish.

HH: Right. And then the unusual thing amongst my seven grandchildren, is when some of them has a partner, or a spouse who's Jewish — although we've had two, one spouse convert, right?

JH: Catrine converted to Judaism, Melanie is Jewish.

HH: And Melanie is the only one —

JH: Colin is nothing.

HH: Colin is nothing. So because the country is so open, and what discrimination there was when I was a boy has more or less disappeared, the importance of being Jewish or Catholic or Protestant isn't as

meaningful today as it was before. Although we still belong to the temple. When you think about it, the Jewish ethics and the 10 commandments are, it's all good stuff. And although some of the worst people I ran into in my business career were Jews, for the most part, they were Orthodox Jews. And I don't know what went wrong with the Orthodox Jews. They don't look on me as a Jew.

SM: Yeah, none of us count.

HH: Yeah, right.

SM: And so did you end up having your Bar Mitzvah?

HH: Oh yeah, it was a big thing. You couldn't imagine it not happening. But I went through all this stuff, and I was not happy about it, so I didn't push it on my daughters. Right?

JH: Right, with the result that Brenda and I both studied Hebrew in college. I'm the most religious person in the family. I'm a regular Torah reader in my *chavurah*.

HH: I probably went too far. But that's the way I felt.

JH: But no, if you had sent us to Hebrew school, we would have had 10 years of classes and we wouldn't have learned anything except how to read out loud, so it would have been pointless.

HH: I hope they would have given you more but —

JH: No, your average kid who goes to Hebrew school for years and years doesn't learn squat beyond the alphabet.

HH: But today we have a number of friends — well many of them have passed away — and I have to think hard before I can think of anyone who's not Jewish. Carol has a number of friends from college who are not Jewish. And Scarsdale has a substantial Jewish population. I don't know what the percentage is, but it's not a small minority.

SM: And was it a culture shock at all when you went up to Massachusetts, to MIT?

HH: No, I didn't feel any culture shock. The primary thing was education. And MIT was a very demanding place. So at least the first year, I went to class half a day on Saturday. And when I got out to work and went to graduate school, I realized I never had to work as hard in my life as I did in college. I was a good student. But there was a lot of stuff, and you were kind of expected to learn about it. Sure, you had the professors and the section managers, but basically the teacher was your textbook. And I remember, I used to spend an hour on one page in the calculus textbook until I got it. So that was, I

remember in graduate school, kids were complaining about how hard it was. To me, it was a joke. Oh, I wasn't at the top of the class, but I was well above the average. And the work was relatively light. Well, that was true about engineering schools in general compared to liberal arts. You probably maybe noticed that at Fordham, engineering students versus liberal arts.

SM: It's very different, especially STEM students, I feel like in general, you know, are different.

HH: But the main thing is things have changed an awful lot, although it depends, of course, on individual circumstances. But going from poor first generation to the biggest concern with the kids and grandkids was whether they would be spoiled by the affluence. For me, I for one, was spending a few cents for an ice cream cone. Now my grandkids go on vacations to Florida.

JH: Florida, shmorida. I mean, Italy. Look what Cameron does, I mean a month long honeymoon. It was mostly on points.

SM: Okay. Yeah, right? *Laughs*

HH: Yeah, my grandson, Cameron, he's a master, he could probably make a living just by helping people get the most out of their points or point possibilities.

SM: My mom is the exact same way. We're going to my roommate's graduation party in California. And she spent her points on the plane ticket.

HH: She from California?

SM: My roommate, yes.

HH: Well, then when my girls were ready for college, I got out a compass, you know, and a map. And I drew an arc with a 200 mile radius. And I said, please try and stay within the radius. Well, there was New York, and there was Boston, and Philadelphia. So it wasn't a hardship.

JH: I don't remember that conversation. But all the schools I wanted to go to were within that circle anyways.

HH: No, I remember taking out the compass. Maybe it was with your sister, mostly with Carol. But you went to Cambridge, and Brenda went to Cambridge, Mass, and Carol went to Philadelphia. So it wasn't a problem.

SM: And so did you ever return to the Bronx after you left for college?

HH: Did I return what?

SM: Return to the Bronx after you left for college?

HH: Well, my parents lived in the Bronx until they passed away. So we would go there pretty regularly.

JH: But you never lived there.

HH: I didn't live there. I graduated, got out of graduate school, went to the army and then I was discharged from the army. Audrey was graduated from college and we got married and we got an apartment in Yonkers. I had a job that my father-in-law found for me in Yonkers. So we lived there, we kept moving every time we had a baby, we had to move to a bigger place.

SM: And so were you aware of the changes going on in the Bronx, even after you left?

HH: Oh, yeah. The Bronx changed very dramatically. The worst subject I'd had in high school was Spanish, mostly because I lacked the motivation to learn Spanish. I kept thinking, what am I going to do with it? I couldn't imagine I would ever go abroad somewhere to speak Spanish. And there weren't that many Puerto Ricans or Dominicans in New York City. So I really barely got through Spanish until I got more interested in it a decade or two later, and I studied it on the commuter train. And I think all the Bronx, except Riverdale, is now black or Hispanic, which kind of surprised me, you know. I go back to my old neighborhood every 20 years or so and I look around. I had graduation pictures from PS 89. It was a big picture and I said, What am I going to do with this? I figured maybe the school wants it. So I called up PS 89, I said, Would you like that class of '42 picture? Oh, yes. So I went there, and I saw the student body. No white faces. Only one door open with a guard at the front door. So it's changed a great deal. Except Riverdale. But I've been living here in Scarsdale for — how many years? 60 years or more. And it's really changed very little. There was one attempt made 30, 40 years ago to put up two high rise buildings in Scarsdale, but they couldn't get the zoning changed, because the population opposed it. They were gonna do this at the parking area near the railroad station.

JH: Well, that's again afoot.

HH: Again afoot?

JH: Yes. I think in Kathy Hochel's housing plan.

HH: Yeah, the state is putting tremendous pressure on every community to have more low income housing, and it's very difficult to do that. Scarsdale, with about five or six thousand homes, has one house set aside for a homeless family. One. In fact, the one unit is the former village hall, which was about the size of a house, a small house.

JH: Where is that?

HH: Across the street from the current village hall.

JH: Across Post Road?

HH: On the south side of the Post — on the East side of Post Road.

JH: Oh, I'll have to keep an eye out for it.

HH: It is very inconspicuous. And I don't think there's anybody there permanently, I think they let people stay for a couple of years and they try and give it to somebody else. But there has been a move on for 15 or more years to increase low income housing throughout Westchester.

JH: Yeah, there was a big lawsuit that was going on for several years and it was looking like Westchester County would be forced to have more low income housing, and then Trump was elected. And he put his favorite event planner in charge of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. And she just canceled all of these programs. So it was ironic that Scarsdale, which, I don't know how many people here voted for Trump *Laughs* but in terms of what the town wanted for real estate it had worked out, because this had been hanging over the town for possibly a decade.

HH: So living in the Bronx today, I suppose if you're white and you live in Riverdale, it's probably very comfortable there. You know, I've looked at some, they have some nice homes in Riverdale. I never seriously considered living there, but I know they exist. And when we drive into the city, we often go on West Side Drive and we go by all these lovely apartment houses.

JH: I have a friend who's a German adjunct and she and her husband live in an apartment in Riverdale.

SM: Yeah, I know a few Fordham professors who live over there, or in Washington Heights now as well which is changing but —

HH: We're about 20 miles from Grand Central. Riverdale is 10 miles. And the rents are probably a fraction of what they are in New York City. So I've often thought if something happened, I might even — I would consider living in Riverdale.

SM: And so my last question for you. When you think back on your time growing up in the Bronx, what kind of emotions and memories do you associate with it?

HH: Well, they're all good. They're all good. I was very lucky. I had very good parents. And I think the city did a very good job for people like my family, immigrants, immigrant children. And it was very good experience. Given the choice between growing up in Scarsdale for myself and my children, versus the Bronx, you know, it would be an easy decision. But I don't harbor any regrets, and I think, I don't know about being privileged, but I felt very comfortable coming from there. It certainly prepared me for the rest of the world.

JH: You and your friends had a lot more freedom than kids do now, for sure.

HH: Well, I said earlier, I think we never played in the house with friends. Or rarely. We did it all outside in the streets, in the park.

JH: Right. And you didn't have playdates.

SM: None of that.

JH: The word probably didn't exist.

HH: Yeah. And it was a good — it was like a half mile walk to the public schools, you didn't think twice about it. And they had kids who volunteered to be crossing guards, so I was a crossing guard for a while. Wasn't much activity *Laughs*. But New York City, you know, I don't think that any of the 10 large cities, all of the 10 largest cities in the US, whites are now in a minority. That's been a huge change. And I think it's one of the quiet factors behind some of the dissension we have in controversy in the country. There are a lot of white people who cannot accept the idea that Blacks and Hispanics have a vote, have a voice and a vote and are very frustrated and blame whatever problems they have on minority ascension, which was really inevitable, you know, inevitable. Until very recently, our state senator was black. Our state assembly person was black. And we used to have Nita Lowey and Eliot Engel, who are Jewish, as our local and next to local congresspeople. Now they're both black. So things have changed. And of course, we had a black president. And this guy from Florida — Florida? No, one of the Carolinas?

JH: South Carolina

HH: South Carolina. He just said he's thinking of running for President.

SM: Tim Scott, yeah.

JH: I'm sure he's a wonderful human being.

HH: Well, I surely thought —

JH: He's running for vice president. Well that's what people say, because he doesn't say a word about Trump.

HH: Well, the guys who are running are trying not to alienate Trump, somehow. And Trump has led a charmed life, of doing things that are illegal and unethical. All of his life is about to face — his past is about to catch up with him and it has caught up with him. And the worst is yet to come. I actually am starting to feel sorry for him.

JH: Really?

HH: He doesn't realize what really is going to hit him.

JH: How can you feel sorry for him? He's totally immoral.

HH: Well, he's a human being.

JH: *Looks at Sophia* I'm sorry, I don't know how you feel.

SM: You're fine. *Laughs* That's like my mom. She always says stuff like that, and then she'll be like, "Oh my god, I'm so sorry. How do you feel?"

JH: Well, actually, it's very pleasant to spend time with people who are on the other side because you can't talk about politics.

SM: Right?

JH: So like the only time the only time we've had dinners where nobody talks about Trump is when —

HH: Well, we have one set of in-laws that I've been told is pro Trump. And I'm sad about that.

JH: Yeah, it's creepy. It's creepy, but Melanie's fine. Melanie made phone calls for Biden.

HH: He's gonna be indicted, at least three more times. And I think is a definite risk that he's going to commit suicide, because he cannot take relatively small things like losing an election. What's gonna happen to him when he's indicted three or four times? But the ones I feel sorry for are his ex and current wife.

SM: Oh, yeah. Well, his current wife wants nothing to do with him.

JH: But she knew what she was marrying. She can't feel sorry for her. She basically sold herself.

HH: She made a bad deal.

JH: She wanted to be married to a rich man and didn't care that he was on an oaf.

HH: With her figure, she could have married a wealthy guy with a better personality. But anyway, that's another story.

JH: But that's far from the Bronx. He was Queens.

HH: But you know, my mother was a female and I had a sister or two that are female, and I had three daughters who are female, so I'm very partial to women. And I can't see how anybody would marry a guy who's been divorced twice, and is a serial adulterer. But that's besides the point.

SM: Well, thank you. This was wonderful.

JH: Do you want some fruit? Good.

HH: So have you learned much in your interview?