

How did your parents feel when you were dating, other than German-Jewish girls?

They were quite unhappy, to an extent.

Did they ever explain to you why?

Well, what do you mean?

Did they ever make it explicit? Did they ever say anything?

Yes, of course. Of course.

Why would they have preferred you to date German-Jewish girls?

Because this is my kind of people. I was very resentful of their attitude, very resentful. I was a great liberal. I was one of those who came up for Wallace. If you come up in an American-Jewish community for Wallace in 1949, of course, it was disastrous.

I take it your mother had a reason to stay home.

Yes.

[LAUGHS]

Now you mentioned that your mother went back to work.

Yes.

Why did she decide to do that?

I don't know. I think that after a while we were doing better. My father was more established and he could work. You know, he earned more. I was well on my way.

I think that they saw that the economic situation was so that they just did not want to be bothered anymore by these individuals living in the house, in addition to which these people also were ready now to strike out on their own. Especially with the war over, apartments became readily available.

So that we then moved from the six room apartment to the next house, where we took, I think, a three room apartment. Of course, then to make up some of the difference in money, my mother went out, I think, to work part-time.

By that time, how did she feel about working?

I or she?

She.

How did she feel about workers?

She had worked. She had stayed home. Now she was going back to work.

I think that my mother was a very responsible person. I don't think there was ever any question about shirking this.

No, I'm asking if she liked it.

Liked it? She would have preferred to stay home and play cards, of course.

Would she?

Would she have done so?

Would she have preferred to stay home?

I would think so, yes.

OK. You also talked about, in your six rooms, there were what, eight adults and you?

Possibly.

Something like that.

Yes.

How was that for you, living with eight adults?

There was no problem that I remember. I don't remember.

Other people tell you what to do?

I suppose so.

Who spoiled you?

[LAUGHS]

I can't tell you.

OK. Not important. How do you feel about the idea of yourself? Do you think of yourself as a transitional generation?

Oh, absolutely. But only more recently, when I see my own child growing up.

In what way does that show? How does that show that?

Well, I carry the burden of the past, and my child does not.

What is the burden?

The burden of the past is being and having been an immigrant, having the Jewish Holocaust experience, seeing parents struggle with those kind of things. My daughter never sees those things.

My daughter cannot appreciate the value of a penny as a penny. When I remember when prices were quite different and what a thrill it was to get a penny to buy a candy bar. So you know, not that I blame our youngster for this, because she wouldn't know. But I know.

Do you think of yourself as a different parent? Do you see many of your daughter's parents who are American born, do you think of yourself as different from them?

Absolutely.

In what way?

In my frame of mind, not in the sense of what I do.

No, I understand.

My attitude toward things is different. My attitude toward life is different. I inflict some of the burdens on our daughter because of this. I'm not as carefree a person as I might have been had I grown up in general--

Had you grown up?

--had I grown up as the general public.

How does that show itself to you?

I'm stricter. I'm more demanding. I'm striving, ambitious for her. I keep her tightly in line as much as I can. I oversee many things. I'm concerned with what movies she goes to and things like that.

On the other hand, of course, I go with her to, let's say, a baseball game because I know that this is important to growing up. I remember how I wished that my parents might have seen me play ball, which I at one time attempted. But of course, they couldn't because they did not have the time.

Do you know any of her friends' parents who are non-German-Jewish? Know them on a social level?

No, I know none. I know no friends of hers who are not German-Jewish on a social level.

Do you have many friends who are non-German-Jews?

I, personally? I can't think of one offhand, but that doesn't mean that there aren't some.

But the majority?

I know you. You're not German-Jewish?

No.

Well, you see how you define it, you know? You're born here. David's born here.

David is not me in the sense that he is American-Jewish. I am not because of many of the same holdovers.

All right. All right. But I would have to think very seriously about it.

Why--

I mean, I, offhand, don't think so.

Aside from the fact of your professional life before you came here, when you were in Baltimore, let's say, did you associate with more American Jews?

95% there were American Jews. But I also became extremely friendly with those who were German Jews?

There?

Yes.

Why do you think that was so?

Well, it just came that way naturally because we felt a kinship with one another. As a matter of fact, one of the people whom I was extremely friendly with there was born at the same time I was born, so that we had an immediate kinship. Also, coming back to this German, East European dichotomy, in Baltimore, I was purposely taken into the country club which was founded and still ruled by the German-Jewish clique, by the president of my congregation who was a German Jew, not of this generation, but origins. So that in a place like Baltimore, this was absolutely a key factor for social acceptance.

This country club?

Yes. But it had Eastern European American-Jewish membership?

Very rarely. They had their own.

Oh, OK.

As a matter of fact, you know that in the congregation with which I was associated at that time was, I think, at least 100 years old already. Then, although that's over 20 years ago, German Jews, East European Jews could not vote until after the war, did not have the right to vote, even though they were members. Only German Jews could vote. That's right. You speak of prejudice.

Yeah. I was just thinking, in my own experience, at this, just it's a little later than yours. But I found that I, too, was appalled by the amount of prejudice that I felt, but I felt it. It really was transmitted.

Well, I never accepted it. Because as a matter of fact, I made these kind of prejudices part of my psyche. I worked very diligently for the cause of the Blacks later on on the same basis because incidentally, I had a lot of contact with Blacks. Because through my father's work, I ended up as a delivery boy for many years.

For Fuller Brush?

Well, yeah. Yeah, in that kind of thing. Because my father then left Fuller Brush in due course and became his own man. But I went into this area where there were a lot of Black people. Saturday mornings was my prime working time, for which my father paid me something. So I had a lot of contact, and I never had any difficulty.

Never had any difficulty with the Blacks?

Yes.

I just wanted to get back to your daughter for a minute. Do you think of her as an American completely?

Well, she certainly thinks of herself as an American completely. I do not see her as such. I really don't.

But I may be doing her an injustice. She is not an American, because she is a product of our upbringing, which has European elements a part of it, without doubt.

What do you see specifically that illustrates that?

To illustrate the American?

The fact that you don't think is--

It's not all American. First of all, the several languages, the knowledge of German. That's already one.

The concern with the past, which is a subject of discussion at various times, the strictness of the family set up, and the stringent rules about certain ways of conduct, rules of behavior in public and in private and with people, I don't think that all of this holds true in an average American household. We seem to feel more European. We used more European approaches.

What makes you think that it's not true in an average American household?

Because we see the behavior of the American average kid, and it's not the same. I'm making a generalization, obviously, but I feel that way.

OK.