

Tuesday, May 3, 2011

Kimi Kossler – KK

Harvey Sterns – HS

[transcript by Yichen Jiang, corrected by HS]

Note from Harvey: Some branches of our family go by Stern, while my grandfather used Sterns as did his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. The store name was Sterns Department Store.

KK: So, let's start off with how did your family end up in Skowhegan?

HS: Well, my family ended up in Skowhegan because my father was doing some business there. Let me kind of explain. As you know, the stock market crashed in 1929 and my father [Fred] graduated from college in 1929, so his father, my grandfather [Harry], had some illness that also had affected the ability of my father to go to graduate school. He had been accepted at Harvard Business, but because of my grandfather's illness, he could not go. So what he was doing was running sales for my grandfather in vacant stores. One of the sales that he ran was in a vacant store in Skowhegan. And he decided that he liked it there. So this would have been either '29 or '30 and he decided then to establish a branch of Sterns' store in Skowhegan. And that led to him settling there and starting his own business. ----- My grandfather had stores in many communities.

My father was born in Bangor. And my family lived in Bangor at that time, and then my grandfather started a store in Hartland where my father's family lived for many years back when my father was a graduate at Hartland Academy and then went to Colby.

My grandfather decided to set up his principal store in Waterville. At that time my father was going to Colby... [a lot of noise in tape] my father would talk about the fact that in business classes they would always analyze Sterns' ads.

That's how it started, my father was basically running sales in various towns and so he started his business in Skowhegan. My mother Sarah Hoos joined him in the business after they were married.

Actually, my parents attended kindergarten together in Bangor. What happened was, that sometime I think in my father's and mother's senior year of college they became reacquainted. My mother was attending the University of Maine, my father Colby. And there was some kind of a party at the University of Maine and my mother used to tell the story that at this party my father comes over and gives her a slap on the back and says, "I know you, you are Sara Hoos." And she said "Who the hell are you?" [laughter] And so they started a relationship. And in those days, it was quite a trip from Waterville to Old Town, where my mother lived. My mother used to tell the story that, one time my father drove all the way to Old Town to see my mother. My father knocked on the door, and my uncle Sidney came to the door and took one

look at my father, he was wearing a racoon coat, in those days there was no heaters in the car, and decided that he didn't think that this is somebody that his sister should date. And told him that my mother wasn't home [laughter] (3:48). So when my mother found out she was furious.

And so my mother, after she graduated college went to Boston. She was first a Montessori..... (inaudible, 4:02) teacher in Boston and then, (she was a major in French and German) she taught at Chelsea High School.) in French and German. She was in Boston for about a year and a half. My father kept trying to convince her that it would be a good idea for them to get married and that she should come to Skowhegan. (laughter) And eventually that happened, and there were letters back and forth. I think my mother told me that she used to take my father's letters and correct them and send them back to him. (laughter)

So they got married in 1932, in Old Town, and subsequently moved to Skowhegan. And I know that in their early days in Skowhegan they rented a room with kitchen privileges from a lady by the name of Mrs. Matshon and at that time, my father felt strongly that my mother should work with him in his store. So my mother began to then be in the business and eventually became the main women's buyer and my father was doing the men's things. And interestingly enough, one of the earliest employees of my father was Spike Burnier... this person was the brother-in-law of Margret Chase Smith. And after he was my father's manager for about 20 years, he went and ran Margaret's office in Washington.

One of the things my father used to tell me about building a business during the Depression was... My father played the saxophone, which he played in jazz bands at Colby, and he continued to play in jazz bands after he was married. I remember my father telling me that some weeks he'd make more money playing at a dance than at business. So I think it was a very difficult time, but for whatever reasons my father was able to build his business and expand his business all during that time.

Now, as you know, the rest of the Harry Sterns family lived in Waterville. My brother [Richard] was born in 1933. My parents rented a house in Skowhegan for a number of years. (It was kind of interesting because many years later that home became the village Candlelight Restaurant, which was owned by my-sister-in-law. She had owned it with her first husband. But then after her husband died, she later married my brother.)

My parents built a new home in Skowhegan, it would have been about the period of 1937, '38. It was one of the few new houses built in Skowhegan, it was a very nice colonial. And I remember my father saying that, because this was during the Great Depression, every week he would go to the building site and pay the workmen, cash. An interesting story was that my grandmother [Bessie] Sterns did not want my parents to live in Skowhegan; she wanted them to live in Waterville, and made it a condition that she'd only loan the money to build the house if they would live in Waterville. My grandfather Hoos, who lived in Old Town, didn't have the money but

he went and borrowed it to help my parents. It was a twenty-mile distance between Skowhegan and Waterville, but in those days it was a major trip. And my mother and father felt quite strongly that they wanted to live in Skowhegan. (9:00)

Now that meant, by the way, that my parents kept kosher, that meant that meat was shipped in from Bangor, and other things. Probably the primary reason for that is so that my grandparents would also be able to eat in their home and so forth. So that was part of their observance-, you know... (9:34) many Jewish families didn't keep kosher in those days in Maine..

I was born in 1942. We talked about that early time... you asked me to talk about... life in Skowhegan (inaudible 9:48). I remember quite well spending Jewish holidays in Waterville because in those days we would not drive.... (inaudible, 10:05) and stay with my grandmother in her home in Waterville. And in those days, people didn't drive on the holidays, so we would actually walk to the synagogue and you know, spend the holiday in the city. (10:14) In those days no radio, no television. Got a little more liberal as time went on. Or we would go to Old Town, where my mother's family was from, and my grandfather who was a Talmudic scholar before he became a grocer and also was the president of the synagogue, he was a very active member of that congregation and so I have very fond memories of going to the high holidays. And of course in those days, in Waterville, in the old synagogue, there was a balcony for women. So if you were a little kid you could run up to be with your mother and then you could run down and be with your father downstairs.

Many good friendships: Bobby Hains was my childhood friend as was , Louis Chesner, Bobby Mandell (11:11), Bobby Levine Ida Joyce Levine, and Joyce Grey. All of us were pretty much in either Sunday School or Hebrew School together. Almost from the time that I was in kindergarten, many of the women, including my mother, organized the Sunday School in Waterville that was in the Y building. So we would come from Skowhegan to Waterville for Sunday School, and through most of my childhood, I would attend Hebrew School and Sunday School, making the trip a couple of times a week from Skowhegan for religious education. In fact, my father hired a chauffeur to take me to Hebrew School on a weekly basis. And of course in those days, David Prince was the rabbi in Waterville, and that was the person who prepared me for my bar mitzvah.

Let me say further that one of the things that you probably know about is Camp Lown. My mother was one of the founders of Camp Lown, she was the treasurer of the camp, and my brother also went to Camp Lown , he had actually gone to Camp Modin (12:36) earlier. When I was a camper at Camp Lown, I think my first summer was 1948 or '49, I started very young, at six years old. My brother was a counselor there, he was the athletics counselor at Camp Lown, he was nine years older. And I attended Camp Lown every year through into college, ... (inaudible 13:05) later a counselor. So Camp Lown played a major role as part of my Jewish education.

Getting ready for bar mitzvah in Maine, at least the kind that I had in Waterville, was a major event because we were expected to conduct services at the beginning of Shacharis, which is the morning service, and conducting the entire service, reading out Torah portions and also any additional service. So it was a major preparation to do all of that, and that was something that Rabbi Prince prepared everybody for. Bar mitzvahs were a big deal, obviously, there weren't that many. They became major events, when my bar mitzvah was held in Waterville, the James Hotel was taken over, which used to be near the railway station. A caterer by the name of Mindy Michalson came from Bangor, because he was the kosher caterer that went all around the state. So he went in and koshered the kitchen of the James Hotel, cleaned everything. He had his own dishes, silver etc. and everything to do a formal dinner, which may have been attended by well over 100 people in celebration. This was fairly typical at that time.

One of the things that did happen that was of interest is that in those days in Waterville they did not allow bat mitzvahs on Saturday mornings, so David Grey who was very involved in the synagogue, and his daughter Joyce, (14:54) who was my classmate, had her bat mitzvah in Augusta, because they wouldn't allow her bat mitzvah on Saturday morning. So one of the things that you see in some of the changes in Jewish practice was beginning to evolve in terms of more liberal approaches.

Growing up in the old synagogue on Kelsey Street, many people wanted a synagogue where they would get better bathroom facilities. It was very charming in its own way because it was basically a European-designed synagogue. And inside it would look like typically what you see of synagogues from Poland or Russia or Germany with a *bima* (15:48) in the center all done with nice wood work. It was actually a very attractive environment. When people decided they wanted a new synagogue, that was a major enterprise that happened. I was in high school, and if you go and look at the dedication booklet you will see a picture of me. By then I was a sophomore in high school, I was teaching the kindergarten's Sunday School class myself..... (**inaudible** 16:26). And the other thing that was kind of interesting is that I was one of the people that was asked to carry one of the Torahs from the old synagogue to the new as part of the next generation. So that was an obligation that I still feel to some degree. At that point in my life, I went off to a private school, Stockbridge School in Massachusetts.

In terms of characterizing what it was like growing up Jewish in Skowhegan, I would say that the experience was positive. I think it was clearly linked to Waterville. I think now my experiences led to lasting active Jewish practice.... Now we are talking about the '50s and into the early '60s. You had a fairly well-functioning Jewish community; you had a Sunday School in multiple grades, so there was a fairly usual small town Jewish experience. I think the level of study and scholarship was actually fairly well done. The other that was perhaps very important was all of us also participated in Center Youth, which was a state-wide Jewish organization that was bringing Jewish high

school students, junior high students, together from all over the state for get-togethers, meetings, weekends, dances that kind of things. So there was also a social component, although I think Camp Lown for many of us led to really good friendships that continued in all kinds of ways, particularly through the years.

I must say that my early background in Skowhegan, with the synagogue, with the religious education, even though I went away to private school in Massachusetts and then onto Bard College in New York, I continued to be active in Jewish things. I attended services when I was at private school for the holidays, and when I was an exchange student in Germany, I attended Yom Kippur services in Hamburg. When I was in college I was the head of the Jewish services committee and conducted services for Jewish students (19:13). I have continued my Jewish identity; I have been involved with synagogues in the communities where I lived. I was principal of the Sunday School in State College [Pennsylvania] when I was finishing my doctoral work there. **(inaudible 19:33)**. So I think that whole Jewish background has continued with me, and now I'm vice president of my synagogue.

Let me just say a few things about other people in Skowhegan, there were a lot of relationships. You've read a lot about the Russakoff family. My mother's brother, Sidney Hoos, married Ida Russakoff. My uncle Sidney was a professor of agricultural economics and business administration and economics at the University of California Berkeley. He was one of the agricultural economists of the world. My mother arranged for my Aunt Ida to meet my uncle. And they seem to hit it off and relatively shortly ended up married. My Aunt Ida, whom you've probably heard about, received her PhD from Berkeley. She was a Sociologist of Technology at the NASA Research Station at UC Berkeley She was one of the leading authorities in automation in the office. The Russakoff family was a great family. As a small child in Skowhegan, I knew Susman Russakoff very well. I would go in and visit him at his store. He was a very interesting man, a nice man. Also, he had a son, Archie Russakoff, who was also in the business and his wife was Phyllis. I can remember when she came to town, she was a good friend of my mother's. I was friendly with them as a child. My mother got very close to Phyllis right up till her death.

Other Jewish people in town... the Russakoffs also ran the Oxford Hotel, and Sam Golden and his wife Lake Russakoff. She was actually my god mother; Lake was one of my mother's best friends. Lake and Sam lived at the Oxford Hotel, and in the summer he ran a resort called the Lake Parlin House (22:02). So there was another connection there with the Russakoff family. Also, Bernie Casher was married to another Russakoff sister, Beth Casher. These were all very good friends of my mother, including Mrs Sussman Russakoff. So there was a strong linkage between my family and the Russakoff family.

Other Jewish families in town included the Cohens, who were very much involved in the poultry business. And another family, of course, that was well known in the poultry business was the Lipmans (22:50). There were some others. The Goldbergs was another family in town. Mr. Goldberg ran a junk yard and recycling kind of

business. So they were also a part of the Skowhegan Jewish community. I believe his wife was English, she did come from England.... **(inaudible, 23:15)** right after World War II. Let me see what other Jewish families I can think of.

One of the interesting things that perhaps no one has talked about was perhaps the relationship of Jewish community to Lakewood. My parents used to usher at Lakewood. My father tells a story about when he invited a friend of his, who had owned Swans Down Coats, a major coats manufacturer. My parents were constantly in New York buying things for their stores and developed many business friends. When this man arrived at Lakewood he was turned away, and it turned out, my parents weren't aware, that at that time Lakewood was restricted. And Mr Sweat, who owned Lakewood, said something to my father: "the Jews we know are okay, but the ones we don't know we have some concerns about." So my father was quite outraged about that, and I think he did as much as he could to get that changed. I guess it wasn't obvious, but that was certainly part of the scene in Maine, there were a number of resorts and hotels that were restricted.

Another interesting aspect of my family's life in Skowhegan is we have a summer home on Lake Wesserunett (25:00). So that my parents would actually close their house in town and go out to the lake. They bought that summer home in 1946, and I still own that summer home with my children. The reason I'm telling you this is because it was part of a way of life to do that. It was done by lots of folks at the time. Personally though, my mother, who herself painted **(inaudible 25:45)**, and was quite an accomplished artist by the end of her life, took great interest in the Skowhegan School of Art next door. My mother served on the Maine board of trustees of the Skowhegan School of Art and also had many other involvements.

That's another thing I have on my list here that I want to talk about, that is those organizations where my parents were involved in. (26:17) Let me start by saying that my father was a Lion (26:24) for over sixty years, a 32nd degree Mason, and a Shriner (26:27). In a small town, belonging to these fraternal organizations was important. I remember when my parents were the Worthy Matron and my father was Worthy Patron, that would have been the Masonic lodge in Skowhegan (26:46). I think for them that was very meaningful, because it meant full acceptance into the general community around them. My mother was very active in the American Association of University Women (27:00) ... founded with Margret Chase Smith, the chapter for business and professional women in Skowhegan. Another thing that I think that was very important to my mother, she was part of the Skowhegan Women's Club. And I remember meetings taking place at our home.

And actually, that home was an interesting point of discussion. My parents built a very traditional, colonial home and furnished it in a very lovely and authentic way with lots of excellent pieces befitting of such a house and decorations. I remember our house was very different from most people I went to school with. There was a Steinway piano in the living room, which we all played. It was, I would say, a bastion of culture. My mother always talked about the fact that she was always trying to

maintain a high level of culture and lifestyle that was perhaps not typical of Skowhegan. And I think that was probably true. ... My parents felt very much accepted into community, they were involved in all sorts of local organizations. My father was president of the Chamber of Commerce. He was president of the hospital in Skowhegan. When the Redington Hospital (28:38) joined forces with the Fairview Hospital, there were two hospitals in Skowhegan. After one of the principal physicians passed away, the two hospitals combined. My father was the first chairman of the board of directors and helped bring everything together, and to build a new hospital. So that was certainly one of his things that he was very proud of. In fact, my father felt fully accepted in every way in that community, but the one thing that he did not feel... the one thing that didn't happen, and would seem unusual to someone of his stature and business stature, was that he was never asked to be the director of a bank. So that was the one thing that maybe separated him for being Jewish in that community. (29:27)

KK: That actually works perfect. 'Cause I wanted to ask you... Since I know that the Jewish community in Skowhegan was relatively small compared to Waterville. Maybe you could describe your relationship with some Jewish people in Skowhegan.

HS: Well, I was the only Jewish child within three or four grades each way when I was in school. So I think today we are very much concerned about creating a politically correct environment in our schools. When I was growing up, for instance, every morning the Lord's Prayer would be recited. When various holidays came up, Halloween, Christmas, those were celebrated in the school. Valentine's Day, all those things were celebrated, and I didn't give it personally a second thought. We always celebrated Hanukkah; we did not have a Christmas tree at holiday times. But the presents were put by the fireplace, I think as a young child I thought Santa made an extra special visit to Jewish kids on the Hanukkah calendar. ... If I wanted to decorate a Christmas tree I would go next door to one of my neighbors and stay and decorate his Christmas tree.

Of course, our stores always had Christmas decorations. And by the way, Christmas time was a lot of fun growing up, because I worked at the store, and also the store parties that my father did for his employees were a lot of fun. (31:20) So actually, those kinds of holidays were very positive in my mind. I can still picture my father after Christmas passing out bonuses to his employees one by one. The store closed just before Christmas, there would be a big party, food would be brought in and so forth (31:53). And separately there would be a big get together for having a good period. That event was a formal dinner that my father gave for his employees, maybe a month before that. So that's another little piece of it.

... My brother was a five-letter man (32:22), outstanding athlete, football player. I always like to point out that I played in the band. (laughter) I was accepted into all-state on the violin for the orchestra and on the band for the bass clarinet. So I was more of a musician, and that's one of the reasons that my parents thought it would be a good idea if I went away for school; because I wasn't exactly totally fitting into

the jock culture of Skowhegan. But I had many very close friends. Three of my closest friends, actually, interestingly, all became college professors. By the way, the name I couldn't think of for my father's... was Spike Bunier, who was my father's assistant manager for 20 years and then became the head of SenatorMargret Chase Smith's office in Washington. Let me go on to say that we were talking about... (33:26)

KK: Your brother.

HS: My brother, yeah. My brother did play football and my father had played football, and also football for Colby. So he was very much apart of that. My brother then went on to Yale, and actually played football for Yale. So that was part of the sports culture for Skowhegan. I actually enjoyed orchestra, bands, those kinds of things. And had many good friends because of that. Also was involved in some dramatics and so forth. So I actually had a very good relationship with my friends in Skowhegan. Even though I didn't graduate from Skowhegan High School, I was asked to come back for the 40th reunion a few years ago, and did. There were lots of folks that I haven't seen for many many years, who I felt very close to because many of us grew up and went to school together from kindergarten all the way up. What's sad today is when you go back to Skowhegan how few of those folks are still around. I said two or three of my closest friends became college professors. A number of us still get together, one of my best friends, Susan Allen Thomas...Her husband Norman was commander of the Navy. I visited a number of cities where they lived. I just saw them last summer again. Jim Henderson, another good friend, was the archivist for the State of Maine and taught political science at the University of Maine. Thomas Mickerwich (35:17), another good friend. So there were good, close relationships, and a number of these folks I still stay in contact. One of the problems is in a small town like Skowhegan, is that people who are looking for jobs, and find it's very hard for them to find in the immediate area so many go to Connecticut and so forth. So there aren't too many people when I go looking for people when I go back in the summer. There aren't too many people around. So that's part of it.

I think many people, when I was growing up in Skowhegan, thought I'd had it made. Because I was part of this family business, but my brother was, as I said nine years older, he went to Yale and then NYU School of Retailing, then became an executive at Bloomingdales in New York, and then was drafted into the army, went to Seattle, got married there. Then he and his wife came back to Skowhegan because the dream of most of the executives at Bloomingdales was to have their own department store. So my brother became involved in the business. And when it became apparent that retailing was going to be more difficult my brother went back to law school and also picked up a law degree at the University of Southern Maine in Portland. When we eventually got out of business my brother transferred over to being an attorney. And I think that's something that's part of the history of small towns, where quality department stores that were part of the fabric of many small towns no longer exist.

It's always amazing to me... You wonder how... Why would you have a store in Waterville, Maine and a store in Skowhegan, Maine? Those twenty miles for people were a big difference. Skowhegan had its own center of people shopping there, and its own draw that was different from Waterville. One of the things that we would do on Sundays, after I attended Sunday School, there was a ritual, we would visit my grandmother. My grandmother would always make bagels on Sunday morning. The family was very close for many years. The Sterns family had their own apartment house 20 College Ave, so I could visit my uncle George, Aunt Florence, and my Uncle Herb and Myra. And after things got more affluent in the '50s, my cousin Ruth and Harvey Brandwein built a house on Mayflower Drive. My uncle George and Aunt Florence bought another prominent home on Mayflower Drive. My uncle Herb built a Frank Lloyd Wright-type house on.... Johnson Heights. And so there was quite a change from that earlier Depression of 1940s period of time. So you know, all through the '50s and '60s, people became quite affluent in that regard.

Let me just say that my father continued to run his business in Skowhegan until about '72, '73, when my sister-in-law had a major fire in her restaurant, it was the Candlelight. She decided, rather than rebuild, to take over a floor in my father's department store for her restaurant and then kept two floors for business. And that helped to make it possible for my father to retire. That was a real positive for them, they ran retailing for a few years, and then eventually the whole building became a restaurant. In those days, the Candlelight was one of the best restaurants in the state. And my father then, after he retired at age 72, worked until he was in his mid-80s, kind of helping out around the restaurant, (39:55).

My parents almost from the late '50s would spend time in Florida, by the time they were in their '60s they were spending two or three months in Florida every year, in St. Petersburg Beach (40:09). What's also interesting about the Florida thing was in the building that they lived in became a condo were friends from Maine, people who they went to college with, people who lived in and around Skowhegan, or **(inaudible 40:30)**. So there was always a connection there. And they even owned a duplex with some friends from Portland, the Chaisons. Saul Chaison owned the ferry line out of Portland to all the islands. (40:54) So there were all kinds of relationships both in Maine, both in Florida. I think the friendship networks were very interesting.

When I think about my brother, my brother had a roommate in college by the name of Marvin Karp. Marvin is a prominent attorney in Cleveland, his father Harry Karp ran a store up in Milo, Maine. There were these kinds of friendships from all over the state. And my parents had friends from all over the state, so it wasn't just Skowhegan per se. It was Bangor. And for me Bangor was a major place, because I had many cousins there my age, whom I would do things with socially when I was in high school. So I never really felt that I didn't have an exciting and rich childhood, even when I was off to Germany (42:10) as an exchange student I felt very comfortable.

And because I had gone to this progressive private school in Massachusetts, the Stockbridge School (42:20), which was devoted to international peace. It was written up as one of the great international education models, half the students came from around the world. Joyce Grey from Waterville also went there, as did her older sister, Sherrie. So that let me then on to a more progressive campus at Bard in New York, as you know, it's a wonderful liberal arts school. So I pursued my work there in biology and psychology, I had a double major.

One of the things that coming from Maine that did manifest itself in that I became a research intern for a field period at Bard at Jackson Memorial labs in Bar Harbor was then invited back to be in their NSF program the next summer when I was an undergraduate and then I was invited back to be a counselor in their high school program. So that launched into my research career. I think one of the reasons that I got in there initially was that I was from Maine.

I think that growing up in a small town like Skowhegan is a unique experience. I know when my wife, who is from New York, came to visit the first time, and you walk down the street and people were saying hello to you, how are you, and they really know you. Up until maybe a year or two, I could walk into the bank and there were still people who knew who I was. I'm now 68, so that's quite a few years. I think that there is a sense of... One of the things that strikes me now is that enough time has elapsed so that very few people know a lot about the history of my family's business or even its presence in that town because most of the people around who would have known it are all old or no longer living.

Just a quick story: because of Lakewood, many different famous actors and actresses came to Skowhegan and would like the shop in Skowhegan because it was very convenient. And I can remember my father talking about one of his friends was Mrs Florence Ziegfeld (44:56). What was always interesting to me was the actor James Daly (45:06), he had appeared at Lakewood. And I remember when I was at Stockbridge, there was a parents weekend, and my parents were there. And I went to school with Pegeen Daly (45:17), one of his daughters. I was just amazed how James Daly came over and was just so glad to see my father, remembered him well from his time in Skowhegan. I think one of the really kind of interesting things was that many celebrities used to spend time in Skowhegan. And also many of the parents of people who came to Camp Modin, (Camp Modin is no longer located in Canaan), Lake George, now a state park, (45:50) and they moved the camp to another site. For years and years, the Jewish communities from Canada and all over the United States came to Camp Modin, which was whether one of the oldest or the oldest Jewish summer camps in the United States. So there were many people who were very friendly with my father, I still have friends who regularly came to Skowhegan, second or third generation whom I know.

What I think is interesting is that Camp Modin played a role in a number of the family relationships. My cousin Ruth Brandwein, Louise was George Sterns' daughter, met her husband Harvey Brandwein at Camp Modin. And my Uncle Herb

(46:49) met my Aunt Mira dating girls at Camp Modin. So there's that little link. Boys in search of girls from somewhere (laughter). Oh, finding Jewish girls in Maine isn't that easy sometimes.

KK: So the camp clearly helped facilitate that. (laughter)

HS: I think so. So, another thing I'd like to mention is that my grandmother Hoos lived with us in Skowhegan for many years. My grandmother had a stroke at our summer home in Maine and then went to... My mother arranged for her to go to the Beth Israel Jewish Memorial Hospital in Boston. This is back in 1954, '55. My grandmother had stroke rehabs, speech rehabs, probably the best care that would be hard to equal even today. And then returned and then she lived in our home in Skowhegan for about fourteen years with an RN on duty (47:52) daily and someone overnight. So one of the things that my mother felt very strong about was having her mother cared for at home. So that was something that my parents were very supportive of. And my father had a very supportive relationship to my grandmother Sterns, I felt very close to my grandmother and my great-uncle Jack. (48:23) My own grandfather had died in 1934. It was very interesting: my grandmother, her brother-in-law lived with her when I was growing up. Uncle Jack worked in the store and my grandmother, who was a quite well-off woman, (48:43) would go to the store and climb three flights of stairs and do sewing and pants shortening and everything because she had grown up doing that and felt very comfortable doing that. I mean, coming to this country through the sweatshops in New York. And it's a whole other story about the entrepreneurial nature of my grandfather and how he got started. By the time my family was done, Sterns' in Waterville was one of the largest department stores north of Boston. So it's quite a story. But I think I made a list of things to talk about, are there some areas that you'd like to pursue?

KK: I mean, you read my mind for most of it. I always start thinking, okay I'll ask the next question that you were already onto. So you are my most prepared interviewee. (laughter)

HS: Oh, I do this kind of work myself for people's life reviews. So you know I am a psychologist and I am a specialist in aging so...

KK: Yeah, I was actually gonna... I figured after we were done doing the serious stuff, I'd ask you about what you do now. Since I'm a bio major and pre-med. So when I saw everything, all your titles on your emails. I was like, he is so accomplished, so that was my first feeling when I saw it. And I saw that it was... A lot of it seemed like more medical, kind of medically based fields. I don't know how to describe it.

HS: I.. this is my 40th year at the University of Akron. My 35th year as Institute Director. And I had been involved in the office of geriatric medicine at my medical school since 1978, and with Case Western Reserve University and a number of other schools... Co-directed the Western Reserve geriatric education center for training physicians, nurses, physiologists, social workers(50:35). But I was very lucky, after

Bard, I did my masters at the State University of New York in Buffalo in experimental psychology that I happen to work as a TA (50:48) and did memory research in aging with one of the early pioneers in the field, Irene Hulicka. And because of her guidance, I then went to the first program in lifespan developmental psychology in the world, believe it or not at West Virginia University. And I did my doctoral work with Paul Baltes (51:11), who is probably... now should be the most important lifespan developmental psychologist in the world before his death. When he finished his career he was the head of the Max Planck Institution for Education and Human Development in Berlin. So I was very lucky to have this special training in lifespan psychology, I was one of the earliest graduates of that program. I also had additional training at the University of Southern California with James Birren (51:39) and other faculty there. And as part of my training at West Virginia I also spent a year at Penn State working with the gerontology group there. And then I came to Akron in 1971 where I was involved in building a number of doctoral programs here. And I still chair the specialty in aging and work as part of our industrial site PhD program. Also..... **(inaudible 52:07 – 52:12)** And I also had been very much involved on campus. The University of Akron has close to 30,000 student in the university. This is my fourth year as chair of the faculty senate. (52:20) So I've kind of been around a while. I always thought Colby was interesting, I always think it would be fun to spend some time there.

KK: Yeah, you should do a sabbatical year here.

HS: Oh, it might be fun. I don't know... I've never seen anyone who has taught a course on aging at Colby. I'm a past president of the division on aging in the American Psychological Association, and also a past president of the association for gerontology in higher ed (52:56). So I've been very active nationally in gerontology education. So you know the whole area of gerontology and geriatrics has you know become more important... All those baby boomers growing old. So it's very interesting... Actually the head of the gerontology program at the University of Maine is a good friend of mine. I don't know what Colby has done. But I'd be very glad to help them in any way I could in that regard.

KK: Yeah, no that would be interesting...

HS: You know, my father and my two uncles are all Colby graduates. An interesting story by the way, about... My father graduated first, he then helped put his older brother to school so he could graduate. And then by the time my younger uncle Herb came along, his father had died. They actually put him through college, and then Harvard Business. So education was clearly a big issue. When my mother graduated from the University of Maine about two per cent of women were attending college. And when my father graduated from Colby, would be about twelve per cent of men attended college. So you have to think about what an absolutely strong emphasis on education it was. And by the way, Jewish student life at Colby was interesting. There was a Tau Delta Phi chapter, which was a Jewish fraternity. Some of my father's old Tau Delters and you know... I think.... Probably.. That was the generation that was

kind of bridging the traditional... Maintaining life in a Jewish way but at the same time also modernizing.

So Waterville... The synagogue there was basically Orthodox, conservative, although as you can imagine, within the last few years, obviously they had ordained rabbis for the Conservative movement. I did attend Yom Kippur services in Waterville, probably approximately eight years ago now. There was a family wedding that I went to. So I saw people... Wolmans. The Wolmans were very good friends with my Aunt and Uncle Herb and Myra Sterns. Many people who went to Colby, faculty at Colby, knew my aunt and uncle quite well. I remember meeting a couple in Germany, who had been at Colby who knew my aunt and uncle. And then James Fozard, who was a very famous gerontologist, taught at Colby, who also knew my aunt and uncle quite well. So there was quite an integration with the college itself.

You might ask why did my brother and I go out of state to college. [KK: Oh yes!] My parents, who both had attended school in Maine, thought it was very important for us to have a broader set of experiences than just Maine. And I'll tell you... I had friends from other prominent families whose children basically stayed in the community, who really suffered from you know... legend (56:20) in their own mind syndrome. You know what I mean? They thought they were hot stuff because their family had a big business. [KK: Hmmm] And my parents were very good about making sure that didn't happen. But it was very easy to get sucked into a sense of importance that might not have been justified (laughter, 56:49). Because the family was very prominent at the time, you know, and a major part of the business community.

There was the traditional rivalry between the Sterns and Levines. And also, of course, Dunham's in Maine. I can remember going into... Mr. Brown was the manager of Dunham's. Dunham's was very famous because they carried Hathaway shirts. [KK: Right](57:17) I was selling ads in my junior high school year book. So I went in to sell Mr. Brown, I think it was a half page ad. He asked me, "Harvey, how big is your father's ad?" (laughter) And my father was only taking a quarter of a page. So I had to say, "Well, he's taking a quarter of a page." He said, "Well, in that case I'll only take a quarter of a page."

But you know it was interesting, even as a little kid, people knew I was a Sterns. I think people used to think, why was I even working hard? You know, in school, that I had it made. But I think that's not a good situation. I was very lucky in that I could do the things that I wanted to do. And since my brother was already in the business, and there were other family in the business, it wasn't necessary that I be in the business. Although I always liked the business. And I think I've used a lot of what I learnt from being in business in other settings. But I think the reality of being able to choose the way you are... Now I remember going to the University of Maine shortly after I got my PhD, and said, "Wouldn't you like to have a lifespan developmental psychologist," and the answer was no. Even though I have friends there who teach there. But if I had waited to return to Maine, and I always thought I would, they were

about ten years behind the progress we made in Ohio. And then when I really was competitive to come back to Maine, my parents said, "You can't come back, the salaries are terrible here, the legislatures aren't supporting any of the universities appropriately," and so forth. (59:01)

But you see the other reason is I had very much being involved in masters and doctoral educations, and that is something you know, you need have the right setting. My specialty of aging and work and careers and self management of careers is something you need a fairly large university to work in. The program that I chaired at the University of Akron as an institute has about 60 faculty representing 21 different departments involved in aging across campus. So you know, you only can do that at a fairly large university. [KK: Right.] So I'm still... Obviously I'm going to retire sometime (laughter). Next decade I guess. (59:43) Is there anything else you'd like to ask me?

KK: Oh actually, there is something. And then I was just gonna ask you some more about what you do now. I just want to clarify something, so it was your Uncle Sidney and your Aunt Ida who were both at UC Berkeley.

HS: That's right, she was at the space sciences laboratory. And she worked for NASA.

KK: Right, I remember you telling me that. So did they not know each other in Skowhegan?

HS: No. No, my mother fixed them up on a date.

KK: So did they just never both live in Skowhegan? Or how did that work?

HS: Because my mother's family lived in Old Town.

KK: Oh right! There you go. Now I put it together, that took me a little bit.

HS: The Hoos family lived in Old Town. Earlier on they all lived in Bangor but then my grandfather moved to Old Town, and my grandfather took his family. My grandfather Sterns had a head store at Hartland but he also had one at Newport, he had one at Dover-Foxcroft. So my grandfather would float around and my grandmother would take care of the family and run the store in Hartland. [KK: Hmmm] That's a whole other story.

KK: But, no this was great. Thank you so much, you have so much information, it's fantastic.

HS: Well, hopefully it's not just all rambling.

KK: No, no no no. It's never just rambling. Trust me, I mean if not all of this is used this year, next year somebody and his project years from now will you know quote you on some story or something.

HS: It would be very good to talk to my brother Richard. Who lives right in Skowhegan.

KK: Right, I know. The problem is there is now so many people I need to interview. And my professor actually wants me to interview somebody else. But I'm not quite sure when I'm gonna start this paper now. Since this is the last week of classes.

HS: Oh yes, I understand. I'm just correcting term papers and finals myself.

[conversation transitions into discussion of Harvey's current work]