

EAT, PRAY, NACHES ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Waverley Council, NSW

BERNIE JACOBY, Oral History Transcript

Interviewee: Bernie Jacoby

Interviewer: Ashley Roan

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Interviewer: First of all, can you tell me your name, and when and where you were born?

Bernie Jacoby: Yes. Full name? Bernie Jacoby is the name. Born in London, in the East End of London on the 26th of March, 1934. Early years in London and evacuated during the war years outside London.

Interviewer: Can you tell me what was happening in England, and London I suppose in particular, and what led to the circumstances to you leaving England?

Bernie Jacoby: My father worked for the family business, which supplied wines and spirits particularly to the Jewish community, and also to ... What I do remember is the Polish Army, who had their headquarters in London. And I used to go with him on occasion on his travels because I guess the company was good for me and we were together. So that went on for a period of time.

If you're talking about the after the war years, there was a threat of another war. It was the Cold War, as you probably know, with the Russians, and there was a fear that there would be another [hard] war. My parents, my father, in particular who's lost most of his family in Poland during the war, decided that England was a place we should leave. The decision to come to Australia was because my mother had a sister who had come to Australia before the war settled. My grandmother, who was a widow, visited my mother's sister and had a romance. She was in her sixties. She met a man who is a widower in Sydney, came back to London. He followed her to London and talked her into marrying him, so she came to Sydney.

When we were looking to move from London, there was a question of either going to Canada, or to Australia in the days of "ten pound poms", so we decided on Australia because family was here already. So we left England in July-August 1949. Arrived in Sydney I think was around about very late in August 1949. My grandmother had bought a house for us in Maroubra to move into. So we arrived in Australia, we had a house to move into, and I started to go to school. I went to Randwick Boys High.

Interviewer: Before we move on, could we just maybe hear a little bit about the actual journey to Australia?

Bernie Jacoby: Sure. The journey to Australia was by ship called the *Orcades*. One of the Orient Line boats, I remember it very clearly travelling on that ship. Took about three weeks going by the Suez Canal to what was then Aden and across to West Australia. I remember arriving in Perth, having the best ice cream I'd ever had in my life. Then we came on via Melbourne. Now, my father, who is Polish born, came from a small town in Poland, a number of whose members had settle in Melbourne before the war. We arrived in the port of Melbourne and he had a group of people to visit him from this town called Pabianice. Pabianice's community. That was a very nice surprise because he really wasn't expecting that.

So he met some friends, people he'd been to school with and hadn't seen since his days as a kid. Then we came from Melbourne on to Sydney. As I said, we arrived late in August and the house was waiting for us. It was quite interesting to see, I guess, a different lifestyle and getting used to life in Maroubra. For me it was great because we were very close to the beach. And. going to school in a new country was also quite a nice experience, I guess.

Interviewer: Do you remember your first sight of Sydney? Coming into Sydney Harbour?

Bernie Jacoby: Yes, I do. I guess it was also a surprise because we had no idea the size of Sydney Harbour. I was just trying to remember who was here to meet us. I think my mother's sister, as I said, who had been here before, I think they were on hand. My grandmother was here and they took us to the house in Maroubra. It's hard to say if there's distinct memories of Sydney other than the size of the harbour and the surprise of seeing people that I hadn't seen for quite a few years.

Interviewer: How old were you at the time, just to confirm

Bernie Jacoby: 15.

Interviewer: 15 years old at the time.

Bernie Jacoby: I was 15, yes. The people on the ship, I remember the Australian tennis team came back on the Orcades. I met up with some of those guys that had been playing at Wimbledon. If you ask me the names, it'd be hard to remember them, but yes it was an interesting experience.

Interviewer: Sounds like you quite have enjoyed it.

Bernie Jacoby: The trip?

Interviewer: The trip.

Bernie Jacoby: Oh, yes. Three weeks travelling on a ship that's semi-luxury, I suppose. Stopping in these ports and arriving at the Suez Canal, travelling through the Suez Canal and into Aden. They were all experiences which I'd certainly never had. As a kid in England we went on holidays, we went to France before the war, but as a little boy rather than a teenager I guess.

Interviewer: So you mentioned the house in Maroubra.

Bernie Jacoby: Yes.

Interviewer: Can you just give them, how did that come about? How was that organised?

Bernie Jacoby: Dad was pretty conservative. He said, "Oh well, we came to Australia, we came to Sydney. Where are we going to live?" My grandmother who was very keen for us to come to Sydney said, "Well, I'll find you a place to live in". As I said, she bought a house in Cooper Street. Top of the hill in Maroubra. So, that's how it came about. It was a residence to move into which was quite good. It was a little bit of a shock, I guess, to the system because we'd never seen ... In England, while there are a lot of deliveries made to your house, I'd never had the ice man that'd come around with the ice blocks to put in your ice box at home and the milk man delivering the milk and the baker delivering the bread. They were all sort of things that stick in your memory that we've really, something new.

And going to school at Randwick. I did one year at school in Randwick. I done what was called the matriculation in England, which was similar to the Leaving here. But I didn't do the Leaving at Randwick Boys High because I caught pneumonia so I didn't do the exams at the same time as all the other kids. And had to do them separately later on. So they're the sort of memories that stick with you.

Interviewer: Bernie, at which point did you move into the Eastern Suburbs area?

Bernie Jacoby: Okay. Well, what happened was, I'd say after the finishing of the school year I got my first job in Sydney. Can I go back over that? I'll start again. I'd say, my parents were not happy in Sydney, well at first. Dad had always worked, as I said, with the family business in London. He was very, very unsettled. For about a year, he couldn't find anything, any business to get into, and decided that he wanted to return to London. We were all booked to go back to London and about a week, 10 days before, my dad had a fall and broke his arm. He took that as an omen. He said, "Okay we better give it a bit further of a go". He didn't want to start travelling with a broken arm. Then he found a neighbour in a couple of streets away who was also Polish that he'd become friendly with and they decided they'd try and go into business together. They found a delicatessen in the city and they bought the delicatessen. So instead of going back to England, we stayed in Maroubra while he went into this shop.

The period of time that he had the shop was about four years and he was also still very unhappy. He could not settle down although he was in business. We're a little bit unhappy about being in Maroubra. He thought that was the end of the world. In Dover Heights, there were new housing developments in Dover Heights. There was a lot of empty spaces and they found a house in Dover Heights. We moved then to Dover Heights. I did go to school, as I said, in Randwick for a year. Ended up after school, after I'd finished school, looking for something to do. Took a job and then decided to study accountancy and started my studies.

After four years of really fairly hard work in the deli, they found somebody to buy the business from them. Dad said, "I've got to go back to England. I've just got to see the family and see what it's like there." So he went back with my mother. I stayed in Sydney because by then I was studying for an accountancy degree. I stayed with my sister in Dover Heights while they went on a trip back to see family. They were gone for about six months. My sister was very unhappy because my mother wasn't around. She went back to England too with an uncle of mine who had come to Sydney. He was a widower. He'd come to Sydney to settle. Also didn't settle too well so he went back with my sister to London. They were gone for I think about six months. That cured my dad. He said, "All right. Australia is the place we're going to end up". He returned and found another delicatessen, which happens to be next door to here in Bellevue Hill, with a different partner.

That's really, I guess, if you're asking for reasons, a reason we moved from Maroubra because he thought it was the end of the world.

Interviewer: What year did you move to Dover Heights?

Bernie Jacoby: Well, let's see, it was four years, would have been early, about 1953/1954, I guess. If you asked me exactly the years, I can't tell you because I haven't looked at the history of it. But in the early '50s we moved from Maroubra to a new house in Dover Heights, in the early '50s.

Interviewer: What were your first impressions of Dover Heights and the Eastern Suburbs in general?

Bernie Jacoby: Well, my first impressions, The house in Dover Heights in Myuna Road was four houses from the edge of a very high cliff. I've never lived in that proximity before. It was an enjoyable place to live in because I had a few friends around the area. It was not that hard to get to

Bondi Junction. I would say that one of the other things that my grandmother did prior to our arrival in Sydney was to buy us a seat at the Central Synagogue in Bondi Junction. So we not only had the house to come to, we also had a synagogue to go to. Dover Heights was much closer and easier to get to Bondi Junction than Maroubra had been. It was nice and open. A lot of open space in Dover Heights at that time. It was a good place to be in, very handy.

Interviewer: Not so much open space anymore.

Bernie Jacoby: No, but if you went to Dover Heights at that time ... I mean, there had been the fear of, I think there had been ... during the war years that the Japanese were going to attack Sydney and it was a place that people didn't buy houses and all these new developments were occurring. As you said, it's a lot different and we'd been in, I suppose, apart from Myuna Road, I lived in three other places in Dover Heights over the lifetime of the Jacobys in Australia.

Interviewer: Can you talk about one of the challenges that you and your family had when you first arrived in Australia?

Bernie Jacoby: The biggest challenge was for dad to get into a business. That was what made him very unsettled because he couldn't find anything that really had suited ... As I said, he'd always worked with family in what was in England called the Wines and Spirits, the liquor business, wholesale and retail. He had no other business background or professional background so finding the business made a very big difference because it settled him. My mother also worked in the business. It was the first job, I think, that Frank Lowy from Westfield had, working for mum and dad. That's one of the experiences; we became quite friendly with Frank.

I think the business was, apart from the fact of the unsettlement of being in Sydney, the business itself was all consuming. As I said, it lasted four years in the city.

Interviewer: Why do you think the Eastern Suburbs and, I suppose, Bondi are a popular place for settlement of Jewish people?

Bernie Jacoby: Well firstly, not that I'm religious, but there was the Central Synagogue which was a meeting place, I guess, for people. There were two or three other synagogues around the area. There was an established Jewish community. It was a natural place for people to meet each other. For myself as a school boy going to a school in Randwick, that was also not that far away. I met two or three friends that became very good friends. There was, though I was not that involved with the Hakoah Club in those days, soccer was always my passion. I started to play within a couple of months of arriving in Sydney. I did been introduced to the Hakoah Club as the soccer team. Started playing soccer there.

Actually started to arrange or help to arrange a few functions in the Eastern Suburbs for Hakoah because in those days they didn't have any clubhouse or any real permanent meeting place. Then there were the Hakoah directors, or the people that were running Hakoah were always Eastern Suburbites. They had places to meet in the area so I guess it's a melting pot if you like. The Jewish community has always has been centred around that area for so many years, well established.

Interviewer: How do you think that the Jewish community has shaped the area?

Bernie Jacoby: Well, if you say shaped the area ... it's made it perhaps more a cosmopolitan type place for a city, Most, virtually all the Jewish community that arrived after the war were from Europe and they brought with them their background. They brought with them a big, long history of Jewish life. So it's just a natural that you get almost like the ghetto-type existence. Your friends are around the place, your family's around the place, organisations are handy to you. That sort of thing.

Interviewer: How do you think the Jewish community has shaped you as an individual?

Bernie Jacoby: Shaped me? Well, if you ask me how it shaped me, I guess just being involved with the Jewish communal organisations. Particularly the Hakoah Club where I spent a lot of my time. Meeting people that maybe I wouldn't ... If I'd stayed in England, as a kid in England growing up, I'd have my English mates, but I wouldn't have had the mix of people from different parts of Europe and that sort of wider communal experience, I guess, that I've had in Sydney.

Interviewer: How has your sense of culture and lifestyle changed through living in Australia?

Bernie Jacoby: My sense of culture and lifestyle. Well, the lifestyle. The difference in lifestyle, of course, is that we've always lived in Australia near the beach. The summers are much longer. It's very hard to really make a comparison because having left London as a 15 year old, I didn't have the experiences as an adult. Most of my life in England was as a schoolboy and a kid. I played soccer with a Jewish club over there, but I didn't have any other real communal activities in London. Whereas here, I guess, I've developed more of a relationship through communal organisations and through friendships that maybe I would not have been able to have had, had I stayed in England.

Interviewer: This is just a random question, to maybe when you were still in England. Some of our interviews have been from people who've migrated from Russia and India and all over the place. In some places, the Jewish people were not looked upon as basically being ...

Bernie Jacoby: Discriminated.

Interviewer: They were discriminated [against]. Have you got some comments as to how the Jewish people were treated in England?

Bernie Jacoby: Look, I can't honestly say. What I do remember, is as I said, soccer was always my sport. Playing football for the school in England, I had to deal with my dad. That I would play soccer one weekend, and go to the synagogue another weekend, so that I couldn't play soccer every week. That created some angst amongst my school mates.

Oh, yes. In England had to deal with my dad that I'd play. Well, that caused some feeling I remember as a kid. The dude can only play alternative weekends. I wouldn't say I experienced anti-Semitism. Not as a kid in London. I didn't find that and it didn't trouble me to go ... I went to synagogue at the alternate Saturdays. No, I wouldn't have said that I experienced any ill feelings.

Female: That's good, that's good. Well, we'll move on to the Hakoah Club.

Bernie Jacoby: Hakoah Club? Okay. What do you want to know about the Hakoah Club? Okay. Well, I started playing with Hakoah, as I said, when I arrived in Sydney; I was 16 when I first started to play. That was sort of all consuming sometimes to the annoyance of my parents. Hakoah at that time was playing in about the equivalent of second division here. The directors were, what should I say, they

wanted to move up. They wanted the team to be the best team in Australia. It was through the directors of Hakoah that the Break Away Movement occurred in soccer to allow ethnic teams, if you like, to come into the top level of soccer. It had always been a closed shop. Just thinking back, there was the Break Away Movement of a few ethnic clubs such as Hakoah, Prague, there was this Panhellenic ... A few other teams of different nationalities got together, created a new league. We started to play in that league and one or two imports were brought to Sydney from overseas. That was the start of Hakoah's moving to the higher circles. I was the captain of Hakoah when I was 18. We were one of the top soccer teams certainly in Sydney. The directors were always ambitious to do better and eventually Frank Lowy came into the picture. He'd worked in the delicatessen for my father and used to come to the Hakoah games as soon as he could get out of the shop after work. Slowly he became involved and became president of the club.

I went on playing for Hakoah until my early to mid '20s. Until such time as my fiancée at the time said, "Listen, enough's enough. You've got to get a bit more serious". I was studying accountancy. So I finished, I retired from playing soccer. I played one more season for an English, non-Jewish team, after Hakoah. Then gave it away. Then I was building my accountancy practice for a number of years. I was approached some years later by Frank and a guy they called Robert Sardy to join Hakoah again.

At that time, the Hakoah Club had some premises on Hall Street ... not in Hall Street, on the beach front, above the cinema ... I can't recall the name. Anyway, they had premises there on the beach front. Then bought a property in Hall Street and developed that property which became the Hakoah Club as a registered licensed club. I then became more involved with Hakoah. After Frank had been president for 16 years, I was asked if I'd take over at the presidency, which I did. Hakoah, I think, it was very successful in the Jewish community in Hall Street. We built the membership up to over 11,000 members, Licensed and it was certainly a place that a lot of community enjoyed.

I don't know if you know anything about the Hakoah Club at all or have heard of it, but it was a place for not only... There was a lot of entertainment there. It was a centre where people could have their meetings. Certainly, it was very well patronised particularly with European migrants and people who liked to play the pokeys. After I had two periods as president. I was on the board I think for about 24 years including treasurer, president, and director.

The club property was sold about now six years ago. The property, the White City Tennis Centre was purchased in order to have a Hakoah White City which is at present in the throes of big plans for redevelopment of that whole area. I could go on a long time about Hakoah. I've got mega scenes and booklets on it.

Female: The bombing?

Bernie Jacoby: Oh, the bombing, okay, yes. There was, I can't remember exactly which year, but we used to have ... My firm had the Christmas party at Hakoah every year because of my involvement. We took a room there. One Christmas, while we were in the club having our Christmas party, there was a bomb exploded in the car park area, in the parking area, and caused a lot of disruption. There was no actual damage to the building. A lot of smoke went through. The bomb in the car park, it was a car bomb. It was in the boot of a car and very close to the air conditioning system. Smoke went

right through the building in no time at all. The place had obviously had to be evacuated and it was a lot of excitement at that time.

The same time there was an attack in Westfield, I think in the Westfield building. Because there was a Jewish ... There was an Israeli organisation that had offices in Westfield. So that was, I guess, not a very pleasant experience.

Interviewer: Did the police get to the bottom of who ...

Bernie Jacoby: It took them a long time. If you ask me what happened, they're all a little bit of a mystery because I think there was somebody that was, say, apprehended, but there are all sorts of rumors that whoever was involved was shunted out of the country. To be honest, I can't tell you what the end result was, but it was certainly exciting.

Simone: Did you want to expand us on the essence of Hakoah Club and how it was such an important meeting place for social ... Anything apart from you've said?

Bernie Jacoby: Well, I guess it was ... Hakoah Club has always been a very good meeting place. Firstly, where it was located in Bondi, it was the heart of the Jewish community. The Club always tried to bring in members particularly new migrants as a place for Jews to gather together. There was the Russian migration. It was at its height, I guess, the club ran English courses, classes for migrants. We had functions that were appealing to the community. I guess with 11,000 members. As I said there was always something you could do for people to come for a good meal. There was a kosher restaurant there. There was the bistro and a lot of activities going on. Gaming has always been a big thing in Australia or certainly in New South Wales. The pokeys were, as I said, very popular. Social activities are almost nonstop in the Club. At that time, when we built it up to its highest point, we'd run movie nights. The general run-of-the-mill entertainment that most Clubs had, but particularly good for the Jewish community.

Female: I was just going to say, one is obviously the big sadness that it's not there anymore. Maybe I don't know if you talk about that, but also just if had the Hakoah Club not been there, what would the Jewish community do? It's just so incredible.

Bernie Jacoby: Well, the Jewish community would not fall apart because the Hakoah wasn't there.

Look, I think Hakoah Club was an institute that benefited the community. There's no question about it. If you ask what the Jews would do, well they wouldn't close shop and go away. There are synagogues around in the Eastern Suburbs. There are other activities and organisations to cater for them. One of the things I did as a kid after arriving was go to a place called the Maccabean Hall. The Maccabean Hall is probably the centre of activities for young Jews at that time. We had dance nights at the club, at the Maccabean Hall. There was a basketball area. I wouldn't say that there were no activities. It's just that Hakoah enhanced the experience of the community. That's what was good about it. You didn't have to be religious, you didn't have to be non-religious, you could come and enjoy yourself as a member.

Female: You met Vera at Maccabean Hall.

Bernie Jacoby: I met Vera at Maccabean Hall, yes.

She's not here so I have to be careful what I say. Well, I first met Vera, I think ... The Maccabean Hall used to have dance nights, I think on a Sunday night, and Vera was 15 or 16 at the time, came to those dances with an older cousin. I met her there and we danced together and then... It wasn't an immediate romance, let me say that. She was fairly well sheltered by her parents and she was one of a number of girls that I went out with. It was company I enjoyed, let me say, over the years. We got together, later I took her out, and if you call it a romance, that's what we had. We had a romance. Vera went to the States for a period of nine months with a friend, to her cousin, and we kept up a correspondence, and when she came back we got together again and became more serious and I married her! That's the story. It's been a very happy marriage for, I have to remember how many years. Let's see, it's close to 56-57 years.

Interviewer: Fantastic.

Bernie Jacoby: It's been pretty good. We have three adult kids. The youngsters are all Aussies, very proud to be. It's a good family unit.

Interviewer: Do you want to move on to the food questions?

Bernie Jacoby: Food? Okay. That's my wife's area.

Interviewer: Food is an important part of the Jewish culture of course.

Bernie Jacoby: Yes.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about the native foods from England that you remember? Something about eating your favourite food as a boy.

Bernie Jacoby: Well, let me begin by saying my parents had a continental delicatessen. It was one of the first continental delis in Sydney at that time. So there was always a good range of different styles of food around the place. If you ask me as a kid what I ate in England ... During the war years, of course, there was rationing. And so there was a restriction on the variety of foods. Going to school, the schools in England provided the lunch meals for all kids which were fairly basic. Potatoes, peas, and meat.

I don't know exactly that there's anything exciting about the food, but we had at home in England, we had a kosher home. Which means kosher food. It was never really a problem because in obtaining food to eat, my father as I said was in the wine and spirit business which meant he also dealt with a lot of caterers. He had connections that meant we certainly didn't go short of food. My grandmother had a grocery business, as I mentioned, in this little town and groceries provide food. If you ask me if there's anything special as far as my memories of what I ate, I can't say there's anything. In England, you go to outings after the war. They were in the east end of London which is where Dad's, the business was located. There were always restaurants to eat in, not that we had ate out a lot. I guess it was basic good English fare with a kosher flavour.

When you talk about food in Australia, well, my wife who comes originally from Vienna, will cook a variety of foods with a continental aspect to it. I don't know that I make food as an important factor of life, but in Sydney everything is plentiful. We have plenty of good continental cooking if you

like. I don't know if you want to know anything about food styles, baking, bakery, that is Vera's forte, not mine.

Interviewer: Is there anything that you would eat now that triggers memories of when you were a child?

Bernie Jacoby: Nothing special, I guess. Just during the Passover period of when you restrict yourself to Pesach style meals. I wouldn't say there's anything that particularly stands out as special to me. I like my wife's cooking, she cooks on a continental style, there's a good variety of whatever she feels like making. She's a terrific pastry cook, I might tell you, but that's just one of the aspects of life that I don't find is over important.

Interviewer: Were there any special foods that were prepared or eaten during family get-togethers or Jewish holydays?

Bernie Jacoby: Well, family get-togethers occur on a Friday night. Most Friday nights we have 12 to 15 family members here. That's my three kids with my grandchildren. The variety, well, it varies between chicken, roast chicken, chicken soup, Jewish style of meals that a lot of Jewish families would eat on a Friday night. I was talking with Vera today. I have relations here from Israel at the moment and they're coming for dinner Friday night. What should we cook them? That's the basic, what do you want me to make? Well, I am not so particular. We'll have some fish, or we'll have three good courses with kosher wine, non-kosher wine. I rely, I would say, on my wife knowing she's a good cook to turn out a meal that everybody enjoys.

Interviewer: Fair enough, fair enough. Final question. Would you have a favourite Jewish dish?

Bernie Jacoby: Favourite Jewish dish. No, I wouldn't say, I mean, roasted chicken is always good on a Friday night. Look, I would not say I'm such a, so keen to have a particular dish. I eat what's in front of me.

Interviewer: I eat what's in front of me.

Bernie Jacoby: Well, I know that Vera's going to make ... It's usually chicken, it's roast beef, it's fish. It's the cooking itself that important rather than the ingredients and she's an excellent cook.

Interviewer: I suppose the first thing that I'd like to discuss is the religious practices that you may or may not have now and how they compare to families' religious practices maybe back in England.

Bernie Jacoby: Well, I mentioned before in England the arrangement was that I'd go to synagogue one Saturday, play soccer another Saturday and that's what I did up to a point. I think there was a time at which that ceased because it became a little bit you're either religious or not religious. My father's family were very religious frumkins. His aunt and uncle who'd come from Poland many years before to England who had the wine and spirit business also created a sort of family synagogue in a place called Manor House. That synagogue is where I had my Bar Mitzvah. We used to go on Saturday to the synagogue, have lunch with my dad's family who lived a few doors away from the synagogue, and then go to the Arsenal to watch the football match afterwards thousands. I learned my portion, my parsha for my Bar Mitzvah with a gentleman who was a member of that little

synagogue in Manor House and that's where I had my Bar Mitzvah. That's the same spot that the previous Chief Rabbi of the Commonwealth Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, grew up because he was a member of the ... he was a third cousin of my dad's. We called it a little shtiebel.

That was my religious background, if you like, in London. Saturday would be the routine. The soccer, prayer, and until we left when I was 15. In Sydney, as I mentioned, my grandmother had bought me a seat in Central Synagogue which was in Bondi Junction. We were members there almost forever, of all our time in Sydney. When the old synagogue ... I'm just trying to think of the street that the synagogue was in. Well, Central Synagogue was the synagogue I got married in. Most of my religious activity was there. When the synagogue moved to a new building, we moved with it. Been a member of Central until the building burned down in Bondi Junction. That's where I used to go to pray. Not very regularly I might add. I became less and less.

I'm now a member of the Emanuel Synagogue. I'm not very religious, but I go for the High Holidays and when there are particular family events, just Bar Mitzvahs and other celebrations. If you ask me, am I a religious Jew, the answer is no, I'm not a religious Jew, but Friday night is the family night of a little bit of prayer and a nice meal.

Interviewer: Bernie, what learnings, beliefs and traditions do you feel are most important or the most passionate about?

Bernie Jacoby: Learnings, okay. Well, pride in being Jewish. Knowing that my kids are also aware of their Jewish heritage. Not necessarily being religious, but I guess ... I wouldn't say that religion plays a large part in my life at this stage other than the knowledge of who I am and what our background is.

Interviewer: What about traditions?

Bernie Jacoby: Traditions? Well, the traditions, what traditions we follow or the traditions of what we would call the High Holidays. The Pesach, Passover, the Jewish New Year, certainly Yom Kippur, the days that are meaningful. Other than that, we just live a normal life. I don't think that there's any particular religious influences that are that important. The kids know who they are, the grandkids know who they are, and my wife knows who she is. I'm being grilled on my religious beliefs!

Interviewer: Getting back to traditions, you mentioned before that every Friday you have your family over here. Now, I would say that that would be a tradition even though you may or may not see it as a Jewish tradition. It kind of is isn't it?

Bernie Jacoby: Oh, it's definitely a Jewish tradition. Friday night is the night that the family gets together. We certainly don't pray a lot. We start with a, I'd call it a Jewish meal. We have the challah and we have kosher wine and we say a few prayers and we enjoy a good meal. As is always guaranteed by my good wife.

Interviewer: That Jewish tradition is quite important in keeping your family very, very tight. Tightly knit.

Bernie Jacoby: I think it keeps them together and the grandchildren get pleasure out of it. It's a routine that's followed and I would say nine Friday nights out of 10, we have most of the family

around. If they're not going to ... There's the other side of the family too! The girls also have parents and family that they go to, but Friday night's an important night.

Interviewer: How's it feel to belong to a group of people with common history and traditions?

Bernie Jacoby: How does it feel? I don't know that I give a lot of thought to it. It's just part and parcel of our life. I would say the feeling, the friends we have are mainly Jewish friends. We meet together not because of the religion, but because of a feeling of comfort that we've been friends with for so many years. We mentioned before places that we've met that there's been a long background of a comforting feeling together with people that you know and feel comfortable with.

Interviewer: Okay, Bernie, what Jewish traditions have your parents and grandparents passed on to you?

Bernie Jacoby: Well, passing on is just a question of the routine of life that we've followed. As I said, the Friday nights, the Jewish holidays, such as Passover, and Jewish New Year. They've all come from the background of family life and prior generations being handed down. I guess my father came, as I mentioned, from a very traditional orthodox background. My mother not quite so orthodox, but it's been a background always of the Jewish community. Being in a community of people that you're comfortable with and share, I guess, your beliefs and your religion.

Interviewer: What do you think is the best thing about being Jewish in the Waverly region?

Bernie Jacoby: Being Jewish in the ... Well, the ease of life in while we don't emphasise the fact that we need to have Jews all around us. The fact that the synagogue is close by. The fact that our friends, who I mentioned, are nearly all Jewish around and close to us. The fact that the rest of the family, my family, is close by too, are important. Whether it would be different if we were non-Jewish, I couldn't honestly say, but that's just a feeling of comfort.

Interviewer: Okay, fair enough. Do you think Bondi's become a melting pot for different cultures and do you think it's influenced the character of the local area?

Bernie Jacoby: I think Bondi's always been a melting pot. We had the different waves of migration, a lot of whom have settled in the Eastern Suburbs. If you go down to Bondi Beach you'll hear plenty of Russian spoken. They're mainly Russian Jews that have migrated to Australia. The Eastern Suburbs has always been a place that's, I guess, comfortable if you like for new Jewish migrants to settle in. They don't have to go far, as I mentioned, to the synagogue, they can find kosher places to eat, and they can find kosher food without going too far.

Interviewer: What do you think that the effect that that has had on the area in general?

Bernie Jacoby: Well, if you say the effect it has had on the area, I don't know if it's had a marked... I can't really compare it with other suburbs. I guess it's given a slightly European influence because of the background of the descended people that come from Europe.

Interviewer: What we'll do, we'll move on to the last section which is about [nachas]

Bernie Jacoby: Nachas, yes.

Interviewer: Every Jewish person wants some naches in their life.

Bernie Jacoby: Yes.

Interviewer: Naches can also be seen as success in learning and giving back to the community. I'd like to know what does the word nachas mean to you and does it have any special significance?

Bernie Jacoby: Well, the word itself I don't think about terribly much. However I suppose the significance of it is that you get pleasure out of your family and seeing them grow up and an environment that you enjoy being in. You get a feeling of well-being, I guess, knowing that your family's not very far away from you, very handy to you. As far as, how would you describe nachas beyond that? Feeling satisfaction over your life, I guess. Whether that's because of Bondi or not, I can't honestly tell you, but it's a feeling of comfort and a feeling of pride I guess certainly in your family.

Interviewer: What do you hope for your children and grandchildren?

Bernie Jacoby: My children and grandchildren. Success in their endeavours. My children, I believe, are successful human beings. Let me put it that way. My kids are people that I'm proud of. They're happy in their marriages, their relationships. My grandkids are great. I'm sure most grandparents will say that anyway, but I think that we've got a lot to be thankful for, and living in peace. If you look back as a kid, the experiences of England during the war years, it's so different. You're here in a peaceful country and that's terribly important. The kids are growing up in an enjoyable environment so I don't know that you can ask for terribly much more than that.

Interviewer: Fair enough. What do you think your grandparents would make of your life in Australia?

Bernie Jacoby: My grandparents. Well, my paternal grandparents I never knew. They were murdered. Excuse me, I get emotional.

Interviewer: Apologies, Bernie.

Bernie Jacoby: It's all right. Don't usually end that way. Very hard to know. My father's parents, as I said, were killed during the war. I did meet my dad's father once when he came to England before the war, but it just was on a trip to see us. I was four, five years old. I certainly can't remember very much of that. I really didn't know my paternal grandparents.

My grandmother ... I didn't know my grandfather very well because he died when I was very young. My grandmother was quite a character, as I said. She's probably the principal reason we came to Australia. I'm sure that she'd be happy if she was still alive to be within our family environment. She didn't have a privileged life. She was born in Russia. She left Russia as a young girl to go to England and spent most of her life there and just the later years here. I'm sure she would have been very happy had she been alive today to be within our family situation.

Interviewer: Thanks for sharing that with us. Appreciate that. What do you think is your biggest achievement in life?

Bernie Jacoby: Biggest achievement. I guess the family is the biggest achievement. Might sound like a cliché, but it's true. If your family is happy, then you've got no reason not to be yourself. Friday nights are always very special. Being together and knowing they're all healthy and well. Having a great marriage. They're all you really need to look for. Excuse my emotion.

Interviewer: It's all right, Bernie. Nothing to be ashamed of.

Bernie Jacoby: I don't usually get overcome that way.

Interviewer: Well, we'll go to something a little bit less emotional. What activities are you involved in the wider community that also includes nachas?

Bernie Jacoby: Those involvements are pretty well in the past. I certainly got a lot of pleasure with my relationship with Hakoah. I was a little involved with the Jewish National Fund for a period of years, but they don't need old men anymore. I guess that's the real extent of communal involvement. Beyond that, there's not a lot I would have to say about it.

Interviewer: That's all right.

Simone: Maybe during the presidency, what changes happened? Or key moments in your mind that ...

Bernie Jacoby: Changes as far as Hakoah's concerned? Well, as I said, I had 24 years on the board of Hakoah. Six years as president and 16-17 years as treasurer. During that time, the Club ... When I started playing soccer for Hakoah as a kid, we didn't have anything. We used to organise a function every few months in a private house or the directors would do the same. Hakoah grew into a well-known, well respected institution in Sydney. Meeting a lot of people, helping to build the Club up to ... Well, at the moment, it's a little bit dormant, but needs to be, I won't say resurrected that would be unfair, but needs to be brought back to a leading place of entertainment and enjoyment for the community. My relationship has been seeing it grow and helping it to give pleasure to the community as a whole and meeting a lot of people that were influential in the community. Also, I've had a lot to do with the success of the community itself.

Other than that, well, it's been an interesting journey with the Club. It's a place I spent a lot of time in for a long period of time. Can't want more than that, that's also given a lot of pleasure. I'm sure some frustrating moments for Vera at times when I probably spent more time there than I should of, but that's all history.

This collage of photos includes pictures of my Bar Mitzvah in London. Photo of the family as we left England on our first trip to Australia. It includes photos of my grandmother. Also, two of my dad's brothers who I never met who fought in the Russian army and were killed during the war. The other photos are just families. My mother, my father with a friend, myself and my sister, and the one taken with the one time I met my grandfather. There's a very nice photo of my mother as a gorgeous young woman and my grandmother who was instrumental in our coming to Australia. The cartoon was presented to me as a memento of my time with Hakoah, both as a player and later as a member of the board and president. The other presentation which was made on my retirement from the board. I don't think there's a lot more to say about it. That's what they are.

