

An American Friendship:

**A Critical Examination of the Life of Eddie Jacobson and
His Relationship with President Harry S. Truman**

Daniel J. Fellman

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Referees, Dr. Gary P. Zola and Dr. Jonathan Krasner

Abstract

The early and steadfast support of the United States of America helped the State of Israel during its tenuous first days of statehood. The American president, Harry S. Truman of Missouri, authorized *de facto* recognition of Israel by the United States just minutes after David Ben Gurion read the Israeli Declaration of Independence. Truman had been lobbied in many directions concerning issues in Palestine. One of the more powerful voices was that of Truman's friend, army buddy, and former business partner Eddie Jacobson.

The relationship between Truman and Jacobson has been mythologized in some quarters while denigrated in others. Many have credited Jacobson with convincing Truman to act, while some—including Truman's own daughter—have questioned whether Jacobson's activities affected Truman in any way whatsoever.

This thesis illuminates Eddie Jacobson's life and his life-long friendship with Harry S. Truman, and looks at the role Jacobson played during the critical years leading to American recognition of Israel. By analyzing their army service, business partnership, family lives, and political involvements, the thesis attempts to provide a full account of the friendship shared by these two men over nearly 50 years. It also explores Jacobson's involvement with Israeli affairs in the years following that nation's founding in 1948 until his death in 1955.

Using archival material, newly acquired oral histories, primary and secondary literature, the thesis provides a complete accounting of Eddie Jacobson's life and the Truman-Jacobson friendship. Shedding light on this important chapter of American

Jewish History, this thesis seeks to fill a gap in Truman scholarship and Israeli history concerning Eddie Jacobson and his activities on behalf of the Jewish State.

Acknowledgements

This thesis is the latest product of a long-term interest in Harry Truman and Eddie Jacobson. I first became aware of their friendship when I traveled to the Truman Library and Museum as a child with my father and brother. The intervening years have given me a chance to read more about both men. A term paper written for an American Jewish History course during my third year of studies at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion offered me a chance to write about this fascinating friendship. Encouraged by Dr. Gary Zola, I continued to research the relationship, and ultimately decided to pursue the Truman-Jacobson friendship in this thesis. I am profoundly grateful for all of the help and inspiration I have received along the way. My family—my parents Beverly and Richard Fellman, my siblings Drs. Susan Fellman and Isaac Witkowski, Deborah Fellman, Jonathan and Michelle Fellman, and my mother-in-law Dr. Carol Ellstein, have encouraged my interests in Judaism and politics throughout my life, and they have offered excellent help and suggestions throughout the writing of this project. Dr. Gary Zola and Dr. Jonathan Krasner, who guided me through the thesis-writing process, have been enthusiastic, uplifting, demanding, and enormously helpful. Other members of the staff at the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives at Hebrew Union College have provided assistance and encouragement. They include Dr. Fred Krome, Kevin Profitt, Lisa Frankel, and Eleanor Lawhorn. At the Truman Library in Independence, Missouri, Carol Briley Martin, Liz Safly, Scott Roley, and David Clark provided guidance and helpful suggestions. I am also indebted to my close friends Rick and Lori Besancon for their hospitality during my research period in Kansas City. I would like to thank those who agreed to be interviewed for this project: Frank Adler,

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INTRODUCTION

Background

In many ways, the story of Harry Truman and Eddie Jacobson epitomizes an American friendship. Theirs is the story of two young men of modest means who fought together, failed and succeeded together, and enjoyed a lifelong relationship. Loyalty, trust, patriotism, morality, and honesty framed their friendship. Through the ups and downs of life, the challenges and the accomplishments, the two men related to each other as the simple Midwesterner each professed to be. Theirs is an American tale of the rise from humble roots to the heights of the national and international scene, though at its core, the story remains the simple saga of a lifelong friendship.

Harry Truman left the presidency in January 1953 with unusually low levels of public approval.¹ His tenure as president included the end of World War II, the beginning of the Cold War, a war on the Korean Peninsula, and any number of skirmishes around the world. Truman was viewed by many as a simpleton, an uneducated, failed small businessman from Missouri who lacked eloquence and gravitas.² But for all of the criticism faced by Truman in 1952 and 1953, history has been far more kind to the man from Independence.³ Among Truman's more lauded attributes, his willingness to do whatever he saw as "the right thing" to do, without regard to political expedience or other pressures, continues to garner praise.⁴

Truman's presidency has evoked much interest from scholars. Chief among the works on Truman is David McCullough's *Truman*, an eloquent and exhaustive history of

¹ See McCullough, *Truman*, p.891 and 914.

² Ibid., p. 525.

³ Ibid., 989-992.

⁴ Ibid., 992.

the man and his life and times. Robert Farrell's *Truman* provides a positive, though not as thorough portrait of Harry Truman. Merle Miller, who specialized in oral history, paints a laudatory and earthy picture of Truman and his actions in his *Plain Speaking* by interviewing many of the people who knew him and worked with him. Michael Beschloss's history, *The Conquerors*, the most recent to be published, looks at Truman's actions at the close of World War II and the beginning of the Cold War.⁵

For many American Jews, one of the most memorable acts of Truman's presidency was his nearly instantaneous *de facto* recognition of the State of Israel.⁶ Coming minutes after David Ben Gurion read a declaration of independence, Truman's act began a close relationship between the United States and Israel that continues to this day.⁷ The decision to give *de facto* recognition to Israel was not an easy one, nor was it a choice without real drawbacks.⁸ Negative results were predicted by members of Truman's state department, and by the then Secretary of State, Gen. George Marshall. Yet, Truman made a clear and bold decision, and never wavered in his support of Israel.⁹

Truman's actions regarding Israeli statehood have been studied and analyzed by many historians.¹⁰ Some have argued that Truman's support of Israel stands as an example of moral leadership, while others have suggested that Truman's act was much more a political decision.¹¹ In all of the discussions on Truman and Israel, relatively few

⁵ See McCullough's *Truman*, Farrell's *Truman*, Miller's *Plain Speaking*, and Beschloss's *The Conquerors*.

⁶ See Truman's statement of recognition in the Truman Presidential Papers, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

⁷ See Benson, *Harry S. Truman and the Founding of Israel*, 195-196. For a different view, see Michael Ottolenghi's "Harry Truman's Recognition of Israel," in *The Historical Journal*, p. 963-988.

⁸ See McCullough, p. 619. Opposition to American support of a Zionist state was so strong at the State Department that some feared a mass resignation upon Truman's announcement of recognition.

⁹ McCullough, 620.

¹⁰ See Benson, Cohen's *Truman and Israel*, Ganin's *Truman, American Jewry, and Israel, 1945-1948* and Snetsinger's *Truman, the Jewish Vote, and the Creation of Israel*.

¹¹ See Benson, 196 for a discussion of the former point of view, and Snetsinger, 137-138 for the latter.

have dealt in detail with the role played by Eddie Jacobson beyond Jacobson's contact with Truman in the spring of 1948.

Historiography and Source Base

Among those who have studied Truman, four scholars have written extensively on the 33rd President's involvements concerning the matter of Israeli statehood. Michael Taft Benson, now the president of Snow College in Utah, published *Harry S. Truman and the Founding of Israel*, in 1997. Benson's work traces both American involvement with the cause of Jewish statehood and Truman's increasing interest in the matter. While his book discusses the role Eddie Jacobson played at a significant moment in this saga, Benson's book does not explore the role of Truman's former business partner in the years leading up to or following Israeli statehood in 1948. Michael Cohen's *Truman and Israel*, while also offering a detailed description of both Truman's statements, machinations, and Jacobson's involvement, likewise lacks a full account of the Truman-Jacobson relationship. Two other notable books mention Eddie Jacobson and his involvement with Truman: Zvi Ganin's *Truman, American Jewry and Israel, 1945-1948* and John Snetsinger's *Truman, the Jewish Vote and the Creation of Israel*. But both focus more on the political ramifications of Truman's actions. Perhaps the most complete account of Eddie Jacobson's involvement can be found in the centenary history of Kansas City's Temple B'nai Yehudah, *Roots in a Moving Stream*. Written by Frank Adler, who spent more than thirty years as the executive director of the temple, *Roots in a Moving Stream* gives an outline of the Truman-Jacobson friendship and provides a glimpse into the life story of Eddie Jacobson. The volume also includes mention of those who worked with

Jacobson and Truman during the months and years leading to Israeli statehood. Though each of these works offers the reader a view of Eddie Jacobson's activities, none offers a full account of the Truman-Jacobson friendship or a full record of Jacobson's involvements with Israel.

Eddie Jacobson's relationship with Harry Truman has been the subject of two journal articles. In 1945, Rabbi Samuel Mayerberg of Kansas City wrote "President Truman's Buddy" in *Liberal Judaism*. The piece served to introduce Eddie Jacobson to a wider audience. While recognizing Mayerberg's influence, Jacobson's daughter, Elinor Borenstine, suggests that the article was more about Rabbi Mayerberg than about Jacobson's longstanding relationship with the new American president.¹² While the article does detail the friendship between Truman and Jacobson, its date of publication precludes any mention of the influence Jacobson may have enjoyed on President Truman or of the entire matter of Israeli statehood.

A second article dealing with Eddie Jacobson, "Two Presidents and a Haberdasher--1948" appeared in the *American Jewish Archives* in April of 1968. Not a scholarly article per se, this article reproduced two significant letters concerning the Jacobson-Truman relationship. The first piece, an autobiographical letter written by Jacobson to Josef Cohn, a close aid to Dr. Chaim Weizmann, detailed Jacobson's involvement in the months leading to Israeli statehood and American recognition of the new Jewish state. This letter is followed by a second letter, from Truman to Jacobson written shortly after Weizmann's death. The two letters provide a fascinating, if brief, view of some of the interactions of Jacobson and Truman. To date, no author has

¹² See interview with Elinor Borenstine conducted by the author in November, 2004. Borenstine suggested that Mayerberg's ego and his need for attention propelled the publication of the article.

produced a complete reconstruction of Eddie Jacobson's life as well as the lifelong friendship that linked Truman and Jacobson. Filling this gap represents the primary goal of this thesis.

Main Arguments and Chapter Divisions

In some Jewish circles, Eddie Jacobson is remembered as an unsung hero who was willing to lean on an old friend to help the Jewish people in a time of great need.¹³ For others, Jacobson is viewed as a bit player in history who deserves nothing more than a passing reference in the history books.¹⁴ For the historian interested in Israeli statehood, American politics, or American Judaism, the role of Eddie Jacobson cries out for a more accurate analysis. Many recognize that Jacobson's actions helped to advance American support of the Zionist cause at a precarious moment.¹⁵ Few know that Jacobson was an active Reform Jew who regularly attended Temple services and heard sermons by a rabbi with a reputation for being anti-Zionist.¹⁶ Few know anything about the nature of the Truman-Jacobson relationship before 1945. Providing a more complete picture of Eddie Jacobson and the Truman-Jacobson friendship represents the main focus of this thesis. In attempting to fill this gap in historical knowledge, archival materials including extensive correspondence between the two men, newly acquired oral histories obtained by the author, and critical analysis of existing literature will be used to document the story of Eddie Jacobson's life and the story of the Truman-Jacobson friendship.

¹³ See interview with Frank Adler, conducted by the author, on July 29, 2004.

¹⁴ This view is espoused by Truman's daughter Margaret in her book, *Harry S. Truman*.

¹⁵ Most notably, Chaim Weizmann's wife, Vera, noted the significance of Jacobson's action in a letter to Jacobson, December 1, 1952, in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

¹⁶ See interview with Elinor Borenstine, conducted by the author on November 8, 2004 for a full discussion of Jacobson's religious observance and his relationship with Rabbi Samuel Mayerberg.

The first chapter provides a detailed look at Eddie Jacobson's involvements with matters of Jewish statehood during Harry Truman's first three years as president. The chapter chronicles Jacobson's increasing involvement, as well as Truman's evolving position in regards to Zionism and Jewish statehood. The chapter also looks at the interactions of Truman and Jacobson during those years, and provides a fuller picture of the role that Jacobson was able to play because of his friendship with Truman.

Chapter two looks at the lifelong friendship between Harry Truman and Eddie Jacobson. Details of their shared service in World War I and short-lived business partnership are explored and analyzed. In addition, the chapter illustrates the nature of the Truman-Jacobson friendship during the twenty years between the failure of their haberdashery and Truman's becoming president of the United States. The chapter also provides biographical sketches of the families of both men.

The third chapter explores the Truman-Jacobson friendship from just after Israeli statehood in 1948 until Jacobson's death in 1955. This chapter describes the ongoing activities of Eddie Jacobson on behalf of Israel, and the continuing close friendship between Truman and Jacobson. Additionally, the final chapter offers an enhanced view of both Jacobson's involvement in Truman's election campaign of 1948 and the loss felt by Truman at Jacobson's death.

Finally, this thesis will offer a critical analysis of Eddie Jacobson's activities on behalf of the Zionist cause even as it looks critically at the Truman-Jacobson friendship. This thesis will argue that Jacobson's involvement played a critical role in the months leading to Israeli statehood, and continued to be valuable throughout the Truman administration. I will also argue that the Truman-Jacobson friendship was unique among

presidential friendships, for it represents a significant friendship between a president and a Jew. In analyzing the key lessons of the life story of Eddie Jacobson, this thesis will attempt to evaluate the overall significance of the Truman-Jacobson friendship.

CHAPTER ONE:

The Force of a Famous Friendship

Eddie Jacobson recognized the sign.¹⁷ As President Truman began to drum his fingers on the desk, Jacobson realized that the president was changing his mind.¹⁸ It was the sort of act only a good friend could recognize and accurately comprehend. But by the time this meeting took place, Truman and Jacobson had already enjoyed a relationship of more than forty years. Though one man occupied the Oval Office, the two dealt with each other openly and directly.¹⁹ The years and the status changes that came with career changes and life changes had not altered the deep trust they shared for one another.²⁰

The meeting on Saturday, March 13, 1948, had begun regularly enough, with Jacobson and Truman exchanging pleasantries, the president inquiring about Jacobson's family and store, and Jacobson responding and also asking about the president's family.²¹ Jacobson came to the White House without an appointment but with a purpose, though, and soon turned to his reason for being there: the struggle for a Jewish state in Palestine.²² Matt Connelly, the president's assistant, had warned Jacobson as he entered the West Wing to avoid the topic, knowing that Truman was in no mood to deal with the

¹⁷ See Jacobson letter to Dr. Josef Cohn, March, 1952 in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri. Pages 2, 3, and 4 tell of the Truman-Jacobson meeting in the Oval Office on March 13, 1948. Jacobson recalls the entire sequence of events in this letter to Dr. Cohn, an associate of Dr. Chaim Weizmann.

¹⁸ Ibid., page 4.

¹⁹ The correspondence between the two men suggests a warm and trusting relationship. Over and over again, the two wrote of their admiration of the other. And in a number of letters Truman wrote to Jacobson, he noted that he would explain whatever issue was at hand more fully in person, but that he did not want to put into writing his particular view. This practice indicates not only a cautious politician, but also a deep trust in Jacobson, and his willingness to be open and candid in personal conversations.

²⁰ Truman would call Jacobson 'the closest thing I have to kin,' while Jacobson wrote that he had great faith in his friend the president and deeply believed in Truman's ability to keep his word.

²¹ See Jacobson's letter to Cohn, March, 1952, page 2.

²² Ibid.

thorny issue.²³ But Jacobson persisted. The issue was fast approaching its climax, and Jacobson believed the president needed to act.²⁴

Dr. Chaim Weizmann, a leader of the Jewish cause in Palestine, was in New York City, waiting to meet with Truman. Weizmann, elderly and sickly, had been working with the international community at the United Nations (UN) and with the American government to help the Jews realize the 2000-year-old dream of statehood. But Truman, angry over the treatment he had endured from American Jewish leaders, flatly refused to meet with Weizmann. Frank Goldman, the national president of B'nai B'rith, had called Jacobson to ask him to personally intercede on behalf of Weizmann.²⁵ Jacobson agreed and flew to Washington immediately to talk to his old friend.²⁶

The discussion with Truman had been tense, and Jacobson felt he was not making progress.²⁷ Finally, noticing Truman's statue of Andrew Jackson on a corner of a desk in the Oval Office, Jacobson tried one more time to convince the president to meet with Weizmann. Jacobson began to discuss Truman's hero-worship of Jackson, and all that Truman had done to honor Andrew Jackson. Then, Jacobson said that he too had a hero, a man named Chaim Weizmann, who, though trained as a scientist, had become a major leader of the Jewish cause.²⁸ It was this dialogue that caused Truman to start tapping his fingers on his desk, pull away from his desk, and turn around to face the windows looking out on the Rose Garden.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 1.

²⁵ See Jacobson letter to Cohn, March 1952, page 1.

²⁶ Ibid, pages 1 and 2. It is not known how Jacobson funded such a last-minute trip, or for that matter, how he funded all of his trips to meet with the President. But as he did in this instance and many others, Jacobson traveled on short notice to meet with Truman.

²⁷ Ibid, page 3.

²⁸ Ibid.

After a short silence, the president turned around and said to Jacobson, "Fine you bald-headed son of a bitch, you win. I will see him. Tell Matt [Connelly, the president's aide and scheduler] to set up a meeting."²⁹ Jacobson later said that those words were the sweetest he had ever heard from Truman's lips.³⁰ Less than a week later, Truman welcomed Weizmann to the White House for a private meeting, and the basis for a strong relationship between the Truman White House and the new Jewish state began.

Eddie Jacobson and Harry Truman enjoyed a lifelong friendship. When they met as young men, neither could have predicted that their relationship would be anything other than ordinary. The two men retained their jovial, trusting relationship even as life sent them in different directions, with Truman landing in the Oval Office and Jacobson ultimately finding success as a haberdasher, the same business in which the two failed as young men. Each respected the other. Jacobson saw in Truman an honest man who had a deep interest in the public weal and worked to improve life for others.³¹ And Truman saw in Jacobson a loyal and honest friend and businessman who was both patient and tenacious. The men shared a deep and abiding trust in each other. And when the issue of a Jewish state in Palestine appeared, the longstanding relationship between these two men of Missouri provided a foundation for major national and international political action.

Harry S. Truman assumed the presidency facing controversy and crisis in nearly every direction. The death of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt on April 12, 1945 left a relatively little-known vice-president to face the daunting tasks of ending a world war, transforming a nation from a war footing to peace time, and confronting countless flairs around the globe. Truman, who had served as vice-president a mere 82 days

²⁹ Ibid, page 4. See also McCullough, *Truman*, p. 606 for a description of this meeting.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ As recalled by Elinor Borenstine in interview with the author, November, 2004.

commented that he felt "like the moon, the stars, and all the planets had fallen" upon his shoulders.³² While Truman's immediate concerns involved atomic weapons and closing out the war in Europe and Japan, those first months in office also saw Truman's entry into the issue of Palestine and the question of a possible Jewish state.

While the crisis over recognizing the Jewish state did not reach a boiling point until late 1947, the controversy surfaced early in Truman's tenure as president. Just six days after becoming President, Secretary of State Edward Stettinius informed Truman that a group of Zionist leaders wanted to meet with the new president.³³ Two days later, Truman met a delegation of the American Zionist Emergency Council led by Rabbi Stephen S. Wise. The meeting lasted just 15 minutes, and Truman's comments to them that he would follow Roosevelt's plans indicated that Truman had not yet fully engaged in the issue in his own right.³⁴ But relatively quickly, the phalanx of issues concerning the Jews and Palestine became a prominent theme and endured throughout Truman's tenure as president. The need to learn the details became clear and just weeks later, Truman received a memo from the state department.

The memo received from the state department on June 16, 1945 outlined actions for Truman to take at his upcoming meeting with Winston Churchill. The memo restated the state department view that the new United Nations should handle Palestine and that

³² See McCullough, *Truman*, p. 353. Truman was characteristically open about his dread and fear as he assumed the Presidency. The nation, used to a stoic leader as president, was stunned by Truman's words.

³³ Ganin, *Truman, American Jewry, and Israel, 1945-1948*, 22. The Zionist leaders were obviously aiming to present their case to the new President, while the Secretary of State, following the cautious mood of the State Department as regarded Palestine, was likely trying to pre-empt the meeting, thus attempting to lobby Truman to follow their thought process on the issue.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 23. Truman's statement shows that he did not yet fully grasp Roosevelt's hedging to both sides of the argument.

Truman need not comment or act on the issue until then.³⁵ This wait-and-see approach became a hallmark of the state department's policy on Palestine. Thus was President Truman introduced to an issue that citizen and Senator Truman had studied but had not been actively engaged: the return of the Jewish people to the ancient homeland of Israel. Truman had a long history of friendship with Jews, and due to his reading of the Bible, an understanding of the yearning of the Jewish people to return to Palestine. As a senator had met with Zionist leaders, but generally refrained from voicing an opinion. Instead, he followed the lead of Franklin Roosevelt who sought to appease both Jewish and Arab leaders.³⁶ However, Roosevelt's middle-ground approach became nearly impossible for Truman to hold, as both the Zionist and Arab positions gained attention and support in the post-war world. While Palestine was just beginning to emerge as a key issue for the new Truman administration, Truman's strong connection to his Jewish friend, Eddie Jacobson also began to take a new form.

Jacobson and Truman had remained friends throughout the years following the demise of their haberdashery, playing poker and enjoying an occasional fishing trip. The two also maintained contacts through their shared comrades-in-arms from World War I. While they remained friends, little correspondence between the two men can be found in the 20 years between the demise of the store and the ascendancy of Truman to the national stage.³⁷ Truman's rise, though, did not weaken the friendship. In fact, Truman

³⁵ See memo from acting Secretary of State Joseph Byrnes to President Truman, "Memorandum for the President on the subject of Palestine," in Israel File, Truman Papers, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³⁶ Cohen, *Truman and Israel*, 29. Truman followed the Roosevelt administration's position that all energies should be geared to the war effort, and that other issues would come after the war was won.

³⁷ While the two remained friendly, they seemed to both focus on their own lives and pursuits. In an interview, Loeb Granoff suggests that the two were both concerned with making a living and supporting their families. More, Granoff asserts that Jacobson was not the type to ask for favors, so the absence of correspondence seems reasonable.

gave Jacobson a copy of the telegram Franklin Roosevelt had sent to congratulate then-Senator Truman on his nomination for the vice presidency. The copy given to Jacobson includes a handwritten note from Truman, calling Jacobson a friend, buddy, and partner, and notes that Truman "repose[d] the utmost confidence" in Jacobson.³⁸ As vice president, Truman sent Jacobson a note congratulating him on his new store, welcoming Jacobson back into the retail end of the profession the two had shared decades earlier. He also warned Jacobson to not get caught in an inflation squeeze like they had in the 1920s.³⁹ Shortly after the death of Franklin Roosevelt, as Truman assumed the presidency, Jacobson wrote to offer support and prayers. Jacobson's note reads like that of a concerned and proud old friend.⁴⁰ Truman responded quickly to Jacobson, writing him on May 16 that he appreciated Jacobson's words and that he would instruct any clothing salespeople that he wanted to buy his clothing through Jacobson's store.⁴¹ Truman encouraged Jacobson to visit the White House, and in June, while on a buying trip for his store, Jacobson brought two war buddies and a clothing salesman to meet with Truman.⁴² The salesman, Charles Kaplan, operated a shirt company that Truman and Jacobson had represented in their haberdashery together. Once again, Kaplan's company was supplying shirts to Jacobson, and in time, he too would come to be involved with the situation regarding Jews and Palestine.

³⁸ See copy of telegram sent by Franklin Roosevelt to Harry Truman, dated July 21, 1944, in Jacobson Personal File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³⁹ See letter from VP Truman to Jacobson, February 19, 1945 in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

⁴⁰ See letter from Jacobson to Truman, May 10, 1945 in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

⁴¹ See letter from Truman to Jacobson, May 16, 1945, in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

⁴² Jacobson and the others had been invited for lunch, but because of a late train, they instead had a short meeting in the Oval office. They also watched as Truman pinned a military award, an oak cluster, on General Dwight Eisenhower

The friendship caught some public attention, as both the *Kansas City Times* and the *Daily Forward* published articles discussing the friendship between President Truman and Jacobson.⁴³ The rabbi of Jacobson's synagogue, Temple B'nai Jehudah in Kansas City, Samuel Mayerberg was aware of the relationship. He wanted to write an article about the friendship, and met with Jacobson in early June 1945. Jacobson made it clear to the rabbi that he would not ask his friend the president for any favors but that he would "urge the president to use every influence he has to rescue and save as many of the desperate and homeless Jews of Europe as possible."⁴⁴ Jacobson's words to Mayerberg following the White House visit reflect the rabbi's early encouragement of Jacobson's pursuit of Jewish issues with Truman. Following the visit, Jacobson wrote to Mayerberg that, "we were in such a rush that I did not get to speak to him about the Jewish situation in Europe, but you can rest assured that when I see him in Kansas City next week, I will certainly appeal to him..."⁴⁵ The following week, Truman paid a visit to Jacobson's new store, but the two did not speak of the Jewish matter. But as Truman spent more time in the White House, Jacobson would become an active voice seeking support for the Jewish cause.

As the war drew to a close, stories of Nazi atrocities against Jews increasingly filtered back to the United States. These events seem to have registered with Truman as he worked to deal with the thousands of Jews left homeless in displaced persons camps. At the Potsdam conference in July 1945, Truman attempted to lobby the British to ease immigration policies so that 100,000 Jews could enter Palestine. But he was rebuffed; the

⁴³ See "Truman, Former Partner Talk Palestine with Rabbi" in *Kansas City Times*, June 18, 1945, and "President's Partner" in *The Daily Forward*, June, 1945, in Jacobson Clippings File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

⁴⁴ Adler, *Roots in a Moving Stream*, 203.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 198.

British worried that such a move could create massive revolt among Arabs.⁴⁶ Truman saw in the Palestine situation not so much the realization of a centuries-old Jewish dream, but rather a solution to the problem of refugees in Europe.⁴⁷ Later, with pressure mounting to act on the Palestine question, Truman announced the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry to further study the situation and find an adequate solution.⁴⁸ This solution was temporary at best; an investigating committee could not by itself solve the problem. In fact, Truman saw the Palestine problem as actually two problems. The first problem was the immediate issue of refugees, and the other was the long-term issue of what to do with the land, an issue he thought best handled by the United Nations.⁴⁹ But it did buy time for all of the parties—for the British, who knew they had a crisis but were not quite willing to act, for Truman, who was still figuring out what the United States should do, for the Zionists, who still needed to convince more people of the need for a Jewish homeland, and for the Arabs, who still sought to deny any Jewish state in Palestine.

At home, Truman was inundated not just by the Zionists and those in the state department defending the Arab position, but by others as well. The American Council for Judaism (ACJ) was also active in the debate over Palestine. In a proposal on December 4, 1945, Lessing Rosenwald offered Truman a seven-point solution to the Palestine problem. Rosenwald, on behalf of the ACJ, suggested a state free of any religion to be

⁴⁶ Cohen, 51. Truman found himself caught in the uncomfortable position of being pushed in opposite directions by multiple groups. Both the State Department and the British feared Arab revolts and saw the need to appease Arabs for oil, while Zionists were pushing hard on the emotional reasons for supporting Jewish return to Palestine.

⁴⁷ See Benson, *Harry S. Truman and the Founding of Israel*, 59.

⁴⁸ See Presidential Statement on Palestine, November 13, 1945, in Israel File, Truman Papers, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri. Truman announced American participation with the British in the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry. Truman's statement speaks of the atrocities faced by Jews in Europe, and the serious need to provide safe haven for the thousands of Jewish refugees. The statement also contains a letter written by Truman to the British Prime Minister seeking the acceptance of 100,000 Jewish refugees in Palestine.

⁴⁹ See Benson, 67.

overseen by all nations of the world. The proposal saw a land that gradually grew into its own control, was funded by all nations of the world, with policies such as immigration based on the opinions of those already on the ground in Palestine. The proposal recognized the dire situation faced by the displaced refugees, and sought to ameliorate their predicament while still refraining from supporting a Jewish state.⁵⁰ Such varying positions among American Jews must have been both confusing and challenging for the new president.

At the same time, political pressure on Truman was mounting from the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue. The Senate passed a resolution in favor of Jewish Statehood in Palestine offered by Sen. Robert Wagner of New York and Sen. Robert Taft of Ohio in December of 1945. The House of Representatives also passed the measure. New to the realm of international diplomacy, Truman found himself in the midst of opinions flying in nearly every direction: Jews in the United States were on both sides of the issue; members of Congress applied pressure on both sides; the British position was nearly intractable; and the State Department was nearly equally immovable..

Documents show a sophisticated approach used by State to pressure Truman into supporting the Arab position. In a letter in December 1945, Loy Henderson, the director of Near Eastern and African Affairs at the State Department, carefully avoided promoting one position over another as the Anglo-American committee began its work. Instead, Henderson chose to highlight the importance of the tasks faced by the committee and the

⁵⁰ See the document entitled 'Proposal Made by Lessing J. Rosenwald, President of the American Council for Judaism, to President Harry S. Truman at their meeting in the White House, Tuesday, December 4th' in Israel File, Truman Papers, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri. Rosenwald lays out the ACJ position opposing a Jewish state or any other religiously based state in Palestine in the proposal.

gravity of the situation faced both by those in Palestine and by the refugees in Europe.⁵¹ The State Department also framed the work of the committee in terms of world affairs, arguing that angering the Arabs could lead to their allegiance with the Soviets and thus causing even more problems for the United States.⁵²

The committee ultimately agreed that the British should immediately allow 100,000 Jewish refugees to enter Palestine and left the question of statehood for later. However, the British did not agree and sought to ignore the committee's report. Clement Atlee, the new British prime minister, was not in favor of opening immigration to Palestine. His foreign secretary Ernest Bevin was even more vociferous in his opposition. Winston Churchill, unceremoniously turned out of office, seemed the only British voice actively advocating open immigration of Jews and a Jewish state in Palestine.⁵³

As Truman continued to push for the easing of immigration in Palestine, he also moved forward, voicing his support for the Jewish cause. Just before Yom Kippur in October 1946, Truman issued a statement supporting a Jewish state in Palestine. With this statement, Truman became the first American president to publicly support the Zionist cause.⁵⁴ Truman's statement, however, did nothing to calm the situation. Instead, the Zionist leaders increased their pressure on Truman, the British continued to stonewall, and the Arabs became more irate.

Zionist leaders in America, while continuing to pressure Truman directly, also looked for alternate means of connecting with the president. One such attempt occurred

⁵¹ See 'Memorandum for Mr. Connelly,' December 11, 1945, in Israel File, Truman Papers, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri. The lack of a clear position on the part of Henderson is noteworthy, as his partiality in the Palestine situation ultimately led to his reassignment by President Truman.

⁵² See Benson, 67 for a description of this tack taken by the State Department.

⁵³ See Benson, 68-69. The British saw Truman as hell-bent on Zionism, and thought his belief misguided and dangerous for future relations with Arabs.

⁵⁴ See Benson, 70-71 for a discussion of Truman's Yom Kippur statement of 1946.

less than a month after Truman's oath of office. On May 9, 1945, Dr. Israel Goldstein, a Conservative rabbi and the president of the Zionist Organization of America, visited Kansas City.⁵⁵ The director of the Jewish Community Center in Kansas City, Max Bretton, brought Eddie Jacobson to the speech, and later, to a private parlor meeting in the home of the local Conservative rabbi, Gershon Hadas.⁵⁶ At the meeting, the leaders hoped to persuade Jacobson to intervene with the president on their behalf. However, Jacobson was not one to be quickly moved or to easily use his lifelong friendship with Truman in this manner.⁵⁷

This first attempt to bring Jacobson into the Zionist cause did not work, and a second attempt occurred just a few weeks later. Just a few days before President Truman returned to Kansas City for the first time since assuming office, Jacobson was present at a meeting in a private living room. Hosted by Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Peiser, Jacobson met Reform Rabbi Arthur J. Lelyveld, then the director of the Committee on Unity for Palestine. As Jacobson's meetings with Truman in June 1945 involved no mention of the Jewish cause, these two attempts seem to have failed.

Yet another attempt to involve Jacobson in lobbying the president came later, with a call from Frank Goldman, the national president of B'nai B'rith, to AJ Granoff in Kansas City.⁵⁸ Granoff and Goldman knew each other through Granoff's involvements in B'nai B'rith, as a president of both the local chapter and as a district president. Goldman asked Granoff if he knew of "an Eddie Jacobs or Jacobson" who was supposed to be

⁵⁵ Adler, p. 203.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Recalled by Elinor Borenstine, Jacobson's elder daughter, in interview with the author, November 2004.

⁵⁸ Recalled by Loeb Granoff, son of AJ Granoff, in interview with the author, July 2004.

friendly with the president.⁵⁹ Granoff replied that he did indeed know Jacobson, and that Jacobson was his best non-paying client. Granoff and Jacobson met through their children, who attended religious school together. The two families lived near each other and had a regular carpool to religious school. Granoff did legal work for Jacobson, and Jacobson, in lieu of payment, gave Granoff clothing from his store. Shortly thereafter, Granoff called Jacobson and began a sort of private tutorial to help Jacobson better understand the details of both the refugee crisis and the movement for Jewish statehood. The first tangible evidence of any of these attempts to involve Jacobson can be seen in a meeting in 1946, when Jacobson brought Rabbi Lelyveld to meet with President Truman.

On June 5, 1946, Jacobson brought two men with him to meet with Truman at the White House. As with the meeting in June of 1945, Charles Kaplan of Baltimore again accompanied Jacobson to the White House. Jacobson also brought along Rabbi Lelyveld. The purpose of the meeting was clear: a discussion of the Palestine situation.⁶⁰ As they left the White House, Jacobson, always quick with a line, quipped that "Kaplan sells shirts, I sell furnishings, and the Rabbi sells notions!"⁶¹ Thus, Eddie Jacobson entered the national discussion on Jewish affairs and Palestine.

President Truman released another statement on Palestine in October 1946. In this statement, the president again reiterated his support for increased immigration of Jews to Palestine.⁶² He also suggested that the United States could itself loosen its immigration laws thereby allowing Jewish refugees from Europe a new home.⁶³ More, the president

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ See, "Truman, Former Partner Talk Palestine with Rabbi" in *Kansas City Times*, June 18, 1945.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² See Statement by the President, October 4, 1946, in Israel File, Truman Papers, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

⁶³ Ibid.

suggested that should a workable solution be found for Palestine, he would encourage the congress to provide economic assistance to those living there.⁶⁴

Jacobson returned to Washington, D.C. in December 1946 to attend a national B'nai B'rith convention. While there, he contacted his friend the president, and Truman arranged for tickets for Jacobson to attend the National Press Club's annual gridiron dinner. The next day, the *Cleveland News* reported that the "biggest ovation of the evening was given to Eddie Jacobson, clothing merchant and former partner of Mr. Truman in the business, who was brought...as a combination reward and attraction."⁶⁵

By spring 1947 the British had tired of dealing with the Palestine situation. Thus, in April of that year, the entire matter was turned over to the United Nations. The matter moved from being one dominated by Britain and the United States to one handled by the global community at the United Nations.⁶⁶

The United Nations formed a committee to study the Palestine problem, called the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP.) As the new commission began its work, Truman also shifted his focus from diplomacy with Great Britain on the Palestine matter to dealing with the United Nations and the leaders of the new world body. The stress of the situation was starting to show on Truman. By May 1947, Truman appeared to be tiring of the whole affair. In a note to his aide David Niles, Truman wrote, "I surely wish God Almighty would give the children of Israel an Isaiah, the Christians a St. Paul and the sons of Ishmael a peep at the Golden Rule. Maybe He will decide to do

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Adler, 207.

⁶⁶ See Sachar, *A History of Israel*, 279-280.

that."⁶⁷ Truman saw that none of the parties were likely to be pleased, and yet, as the leader of the United States, Truman had no choice but to continue forward working the problem to find a solution.

Among the many influences on Truman, his own advisors were split on the Palestine question. Gen. George Marshall was opposed to a Jewish state, and his deputies at the State Department were equally keen to take the side of the Arabs.⁶⁸ They saw America's growing dependence on oil, the possibility of Soviet influence over Arab leaders and Arab countries and concluded that whatever moral or humanitarian claims were made by the Jews, the best interest of the United States remained with the Arabs. Two of Truman's personal advisors, Clark Clifford and David Niles, stood as the only vocal supporters of the Jewish cause in Palestine within Truman's administration.

By 1947, Jacobson, who had no record of asking favors from his now-powerful friend, began to lobby more forcefully on behalf of the Jewish cause in Palestine. Truman reacted to this move of Jacobson's writing later that,

...When the day came when Eddie Jacobson was persuaded to forego his natural reluctance to petition me and he came to talk to me about the plight of the Jews...I paid careful attention.⁶⁹

In a letter to Truman in October 1947, Jacobson sought Truman's help for the Jewish refugees in Europe seeking admittance to Palestine. Jacobson wrote of the difficulties faced by the Jewish refugees still living in displaced persons camps in Europe. Noting that the issue was before the United Nations, Jacobson wrote that "...if it were

⁶⁷ See Truman's handwritten response to Niles' memorandum of May 12, 1947, in Israel File, Truman Papers, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri. Truman's plainspoken midwestern speech stands out from nearly all the statements made throughout the controversy.

⁶⁸ See Benson, 78.

⁶⁹ See McCullough, 599. These words came from an article in the Washington Star and Daily News, December 31, 1972.

possible for you, as leader and spokesman for our country, to express your support of this action, I think we can accomplish our aims..."⁷⁰ More, Jacobson sympathized with the tensions faced by Truman. He wrote,

I think I am one of few who actually knows and realizes what terrible heavy burdens you are carrying on your shoulders during these hectic days. I should, therefore, be the last man to add to them; but I feel you will forgive me for doing so, because tens of thousands of lives depend on words from your mouth and heart. Harry, my people need help and I am appealing to you to help them.⁷¹

Jacobson's letter was astonishingly candid, and his use of Truman's first name illustrates the closeness of the two men and the comfort Jacobson felt in writing to the president.

Truman's response shows an equally open relationship with Jacobson, and the response shows the extent to which Truman trusted Jacobson. In his response, dated October 8, 1947, Truman noted that the matter was before the United Nations, and that Gen. Marshall was handling the issue. Then Truman concluded with a fascinating sentence that sheds light on the relationship between the two men. Truman wrote, "I don't want to be quoted on the subject at all. When I see you I'll tell you just what the difficulties are."⁷²

Truman's quick response illustrates much about the Truman-Jacobson relationship. On the one hand, Truman's quick and direct response illustrates his respect for Jacobson and his desire to act appropriately to a friend. And with the closing sentences, Truman showed that he trusted Jacobson to a high degree. He knew that the Palestine issue was volatile, and that any written record could cause a reaction. But still

⁷⁰ See letter from Jacobson to Truman, October 3, 1947 in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² See letter from Truman to Jacobson, October 8, 1947 in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri. The letter's signature illustrates Truman's feelings towards Jacobson. Instead of any sort of formal signature, the note is simply signed, 'Harry.'

he wanted to keep Jacobson in the loop. Thus, Truman wrote to Jacobson that he would fill him in, but in person, and in private. Truman seemed more than willing to open up to Jacobson, but was cautious in writing something that could cause problems. Jacobson's role in the Palestine crisis would increase significantly as the controversy intensified, with Jacobson ultimately playing perhaps the pivotal role in Truman's decision-making process.

November 1947 saw significant action on Palestine by the United Nations. UNSCOP, which had produced a majority position favoring partition of Palestine into two states, a Jewish state and an Arab state, and a minority opinion favoring a federated entity controlled by Arabs, turned the partition proposal over to the General Assembly for a vote. On November 29, the vote was held, with the majority position favoring partition into two separate states with the Jerusalem-Bethlehem corridor under international control. The vote passed, 33 to 13, more than a two-thirds majority, with both the United States and the Soviet Union in favor. The vote was viewed as a significant victory by the Zionists, while the Arabs became more enraged, and in short order, more militant.⁷³ A state of civil war developed, as battles between the Jews and Arabs, and the Jews and the British became common. As the year drew to a close, Jacobson again traveled to Washington, D.C., this time to thank Truman for his involvement with the successful passage of the partition plan at the United Nations.⁷⁴ As 1948 dawned, and the UN deadline for turning over control of Palestine on May 14 loomed, Truman faced increased pressure to support the Zionist cause.

⁷³ See Sachar, 294-296 for a fuller description of the partition vote.

⁷⁴ Adler, 207.

On February 17, 1948, Truman received a draft of policy options for the United States in regard to Palestine. The document offered four possible positions for the United States: 1. Support the partition plan as passed by the UN, including a willingness to use armed forces under the command of the UN; 2. Continue supporting the partition plan with all measures except the use of armed forces; 3. Adopt a neutral or passive role in the whole matter, acting neither for nor against the partition plan; 4. Change the current U.S. policy of support for the partition plan and seek a new solution to the problem.⁷⁵ Each possibility was explored in the document, with pros and cons given. The State Department suggested following the second option: continued support of the partition plan with no use of armed forces. However, the document noted that military members of the State Department staff disagreed and instead endorsed the fourth option, throwing the entire situation back into the hands of the Security Council and General Assembly of the United Nations. Both sides of the State Department believed that the British should be pressured to maintain control over the area past the May 14 deadline.⁷⁶

Just as the State Department continued its lobbying efforts aimed at the president, Zionist leaders also continued to push for support. In the early months of 1948, the Palestine issue dominated the work of the United Nations. Truman had not moved beyond his statements supporting partition and a two state solution. The State Department continued to lobby Truman to delay any action and not commit any actions that could anger the Arabs. Meanwhile, the American Zionists continued to push Truman for support. As 1948 was also an election year, the Palestine crisis became a political issue

⁷⁵ See 'Draft of The Position of the United States with Respect to Palestine,' February 17, 1948 in Israel File, Truman Papers, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

⁷⁶ Ibid. The State Department clearly wanted to avoid the issue as much as possible, and used this document to try to influence President Truman.

for candidate Truman. Democratic leaders in New York threatened to withhold support, while others argued that Truman was supporting the Zionist cause only to appease the large block of Jewish voters in New York and elsewhere. Thomas Dewey, the eventual Republican nominee was quick to voice his support for the Zionist cause. The politization of the issue only further infuriated an already annoyed president as he sought a solution.

The American Jewish Zionists so frustrated Truman that he ultimately refused to meet with them. Chief among those Truman detested was Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver. In a meeting in the Oval Office, Silver raised his voice at Truman and banged his hand on Truman's desk.⁷⁷ In a later cabinet meeting, Truman became so frustrated dealing with American Jewish leaders that he commented, "Jesus Christ couldn't please them when he was on earth, so how could anyone expect that I would have any luck!"⁷⁸ Truman not only disliked the manner of Silver, but because Silver was a close advisor to Sen. Robert Taft of Ohio, Mr. Republican himself, Truman doubted Silver's goals as well.⁷⁹ Throughout all of the pressure from American Jewish leaders, Eddie Jacobson remained close to Truman, and in the end, was able to connect with Truman when all of the organized Jewish leadership failed to do so.

Throughout the crisis, Chaim Weizmann filled the role of elder statesman for the Zionists as they sought a state. Weizmann, by then already advanced in age and infirm, moved adeptly from his life as a scientist to the halls of diplomacy in New York City, Washington, London, and around the world. Weizmann arrived in New York City in late February 1948, waiting to meet with Truman. But Truman refused to meet with

⁷⁷ See McCullough, 598-599 for a discussion of Truman's frustrations with American Jewish leaders.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Cohen, 63.

Weizmann or any other Zionist leaders, saying that he had heard all they had to say.⁸⁰

This rejection by Truman caught the attention of American Jewish leaders, and again Jacobson was called upon to intercede.

On February 20th, late at night, Frank Goldman called Jacobson seeking his assistance on behalf of the Zionist cause. Truman was refusing to meet with Weizmann, and American Jewish leaders were looking for every possible angle to reach the president. Jacobson could not make travel plans at the late hour, so instead he wired Matt Connelly, the president's aide. The cable asked Truman to meet with Weizmann, noting that he knew that Truman

...had very excellent reasons for not wanting to see Dr. Weizmann. No one realizes more than I the amount of pressure that is being thrown on you during these critical days, but as you once told me, this gentleman is the greatest statesman and finest leader that my people have. He is very old and heartbroken that he could not get to see you. Mr. President, I have asked you for very little in the way of favors during all our years of friendship, but am begging of you to see Dr. Weizmann as soon as possible. I can assure you that I would not plead to you for any other of our leaders.⁸¹

Jacobson waited for a reply, and on February 27, received a note from the president, who was vacationing at the submarine base at Key West, Florida. Truman responded to Jacobson's telegram matter-of-factly, noting that the whole situation had become a "headache," with every side, the Jews, Arabs, and the British, acting impossibly difficult.⁸² Truman reiterated his support for the UN partition plan passed in November 1947. He added that he did not feel the need to meet with Weizmann, as there

⁸⁰ See note from Truman to Jacobson, February 27, 1948 in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri. Truman wrote to Jacobson to explain why he had not seen Weizmann and had no plan to do so.

⁸¹ See cable from Jacobson to Matt Connelly, February 21, 1948 in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

⁸² See letter from Truman to Jacobson, February 27, 1948 in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

was not anything he could say that he Truman did not already know.⁸³ Jacobson noted that the president's reply indicated that he was not likely to change his mind.⁸⁴ So, as soon as the president returned from Key West, Jacobson flew to Washington, D.C. to see him. Thus, on Saturday, March 13, Eddie Jacobson encountered Matt Connelly just before his fateful meeting with Truman.

Truman, after some cajoling by Jacobson, agreed to see Weizmann, and at that meeting, held on Thursday, March 18, 1948, Truman assured Weizmann that the United States supported partition, and would do all it could to make it a reality. The meeting was held after hours to avoid press coverage, and both men later remarked that they reached an understanding during that meeting.⁸⁵ But the State Department had other ideas, and within days, Truman found himself in an even more difficult situation.

Without Truman's knowledge, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Sen. Warren Austin delivered a speech to the UN signaling a major shift in U.S. policy involving Palestine. The speech, delivered on March 19, 1948, just one day after Truman's unpublicized meeting with Weizmann, noted that the U.S. no longer saw partition as a viable option, and that the United States instead supported trusteeship for Palestine.⁸⁶ This turn in policy shocked all parties, not least of which was Harry Truman himself. A month earlier, Truman had approved a draft of a State Department position paper without reading the document carefully. State, wanting to delay any action on Palestine, took Truman's approval of the document as acceptance of a new policy of

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ See aforementioned letter from Jacobson to Cohn, page 2.

⁸⁵ See McCullough, 608-609 for a description of the Truman-Weizmann meeting.

⁸⁶ See Benson, 137.

delay, and instructed Austin to speak accordingly.⁸⁷ Still believing that the United States should side with the Arabs, it did all it could to slow Truman's drive towards full support of the Zionists. This apparent shift in American policy caused troubling reactions for Truman in all directions, and was seen as a major setback for Zionist leaders. Some Jewish leaders termed that day "black Friday," for they feared it signaled the United States' unwillingness to assist in the establishment of a Jewish State.⁸⁸ As Truman awoke on Saturday March 20, he faced not only an international crisis, but also a new and growing domestic political predicament over the Truman administration's seeming about-face on the Palestine crisis. Truman recorded his frustration in his personal diary:

The state department pulled the rug from under me today. I didn't expect that would happen. In Key West or en-route there from St. Croix I approved the speech and statement of policy by Senator Austin to U.N. meeting. This morning, I find that the state department has reversed my Palestine policy. The first I know about it is what I see in the papers! Isn't that hell? I am now in the position of a liar and a double-crosser. I've never felt so in my life. There are people on the third and fourth levels of the state department who have always wanted to cut my throat. They've succeeded in doing it. Marshall's [the Secretary of State General George] in California and Lovett's [undersecretary of State Robert] in Florida.⁸⁹

The speech by Sen. Austin represented a major misstep for the Truman administration, and portrayed an administration out of control, vacillating on one of the most important issues of the day. Backlash came from all directions.

With the Austin statement at the UN, no one seemed to comprehend the U.S. position on Palestine. In a letter to Undersecretary Levitt, Robert Nathan, an economist working in U.S. intelligence and a supporter of the Zionist cause, wrote that he found the

⁸⁷ See Benson, 133-136 for a fuller description of these events.

⁸⁸ See Cohen, 188-198 for a full description of the events on March 19 and reactions following.

⁸⁹ See Margaret Truman, *Harry S. Truman*, 424-425. The President's daughter writes of her father's frustrations with the State Department.

U.S. move "disturbing and discouraging."⁹⁰ Nathan noted that the U.S. move had sent the UN into chaos, and that the prestige of both the UN and the U.S. was hurt by Austin's statement. Truman, meanwhile, was cornered. If he acknowledged that he had been hoodwinked by his own State Department, then he looked weak and ineffective. If he announced an immediate change back to a course supporting partition, then he looked indecisive and inept. And on a personal level, Truman hated the fact that he looked deceptive to the likes of Chaim Weizmann.⁹¹ But Weizmann trusted what he had heard from Truman, and kept silent in the aftermath of Austin's statement. He made a significant phone call late that Friday, to Eddie Jacobson in Kansas City. Weizmann assured him that Truman was not behind Austin's new move, and encouraged Jacobson to continue his pressure on Truman.⁹² The call had been much needed, as Jacobson himself wrote later to Josef Cohn.⁹³ In that call, Weizmann reassured Jacobson, saying,

Mr. Jacobson, don't be disappointed and do not feel badly. I do not believe that President Truman knew what was going to happen in the United Nations on Friday when he talked to me the day before. I am 72 years old, and all my life I have had one disappointment after another. This is just another letdown for me. Don't forget for a single moment that Harry S. Truman is the most powerful single man in the world. You have a job to do, so keep the White House doors open.⁹⁴

Jacobson's deep faith in his friend the president had been shaken by Ambassador Austin's remarks, and Weizmann found a way to revive his spirit and remind Jacobson of the enormity of the task at hand.⁹⁵ Even with these new questions, Jacobson was not

⁹⁰ See letter from Nathan to Lovett, March 24, 1948, in Israel File, Truman Papers, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

⁹¹ The aforementioned diary entry quoted by Margaret Truman shows Truman's disgust with the situation.

⁹² See Cohen, 191.

⁹³ See aforementioned letter from Jacobson to Cohn, March, 1952, pages 6-7.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

pushed enough to contact the president for clarification. Instead, he chose to continue to trust his old friend.⁹⁶

Finally, on March 25, the Thursday following Austin's speech at the UN, Truman released a statement trying to bridge the seemingly opposite positions the U.S. appeared to support. Truman said that while he fully supported partition, "the plan cannot be carried out at this time by peaceful means."⁹⁷ Thus, Truman suggested a modified temporary trusteeship until partition could become possible. Publicly, Truman tried to remain somewhat neutral, but privately, he had begun the final push that would lead to American recognition of the new Jewish state.

Jacobson returned to Washington, D.C. on April 12, having met with Dr. Weizmann in New York City the previous day.⁹⁸ Truman reaffirmed his commitment to the partition plan, and gave Jacobson permission to pass this information on to Weizmann. Jacobson's vague language describing the meeting indicates Truman's disgust with the events involving Ambassador Austin at the UN.⁹⁹ Nonetheless, Jacobson was mollified, and Truman turned toward a major hurdle facing his decision to recognize the coming Jewish state.

As the deadline for British withdrawal from Palestine grew closer, the pressure on Truman intensified. Internally, David Niles and Clark Clifford continued to be the strongest voices urging Truman to support the Zionist position, while nearly every voice in the state department preached patience and non-commitment. The end of the British mandate was scheduled for May 14, 1948. Truman turned to his close aid Clark Clifford

⁹⁶ According to Elinor Borenstine, in interview with the author, November, 2004.

⁹⁷ See Statement by the President, March 25, 1948 in Israel File, Truman Papers, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

⁹⁸ See aforementioned letter from Jacobson to Cohn, March 1952, page 8.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

on May 7 to make one last effort at convincing Gen. Marshall that support for the Jewish state was the correct move. The need for Marshall's acquiescence was two-fold: on the one hand, Marshall headed the State Department, the government's entity for dealing with foreign matters, and on the other hand, Marshall was clearly the most popular man in the Truman administration and Truman knew he needed Marshall if he had any hopes of being elected in the coming election. Truman instructed Clifford to prepare an argument for recognition of the Jewish state as if Clifford were arguing a case in front of the Supreme Court. The meeting was set to take place on May 12, two days before the British mandate was set to end.

On May 12, Marshall arrived to meet with Truman. Accompanying the general were the undersecretary of state, Robert Lovett, and two other aides, Robert McClintock and Fraser Wilkins. Along with Clifford sat David Niles and appointments secretary Matt Connelly. The gathering did not include two State Department members who had been active in the Palestine issue but had had significant disagreements with Clifford: Dean Rusk and Loy Henderson.¹⁰⁰ As the meeting opened, as Clifford recalled, Lovett and Marshall opened with criticism of the Jewish Agency's military actions in Palestine. As he spoke, Marshall was interrupted by one of his aides with a note stating that Moshe Shertok, the political representative of the Jewish Agency, had delivered a note written by Marshall to David Ben Gurion, the leader of the Jewish Agency. Marshall commented, according to Clifford, that he had not written the note, and had not even heard of Ben Gurion!¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ See Clifford, *Counsel to the President*, 10.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. This assertion seems hard to believe. Marshall surely had to know who the Jewish leader was in Palestine. His anger, and his attempt at distance, must also have caused a reaction inside Truman's mind.

After delivering his perspective, Marshall sat quietly as Clifford began to argue the case for recognition of the new Jewish state. Clifford delivered a seven-point argument supporting recognition. As he finished, Clifford recalled that Marshall's face reddened and he asked Truman why Clifford, a domestic advisor, was even present in the room.¹⁰² Truman answered bluntly: "Well General, he is here because I asked him to be here."¹⁰³ Marshall's disgust was evident in his comments, which he restated for his own personal records. He wrote:

I remarked to the President, that speaking objectively, I could not help but think that suggestions made by Mr. Clifford were wrong. I thought that to adopt these suggestions would have precisely the opposite effect from that intended by Mr. Clifford. The transparent dodge to win a few votes would not in fact achieve this purpose. The great dignity of the office of the President would be seriously diminished. The counsel offered by Mr. Clifford was based on domestic political considerations, while the problem which confronted us was international. I said bluntly that if the President were to follow Mr. Clifford's advice and if in the elections I were to vote, I would vote against the President.¹⁰⁴

Marshall's visible disgust signaled defeat to Clifford, for he knew how important Marshall was to Truman. But the president gave Clifford another chance, instructing him to wait for the dust to settle a bit. Robert Lovett, one of the aides to Marshall who sat through the Oval Office meeting of the 12th became a conduit for Clifford and Marshall. Finally, around 4 o'clock in the afternoon on May 14, Lovett called Clifford to say that Marshall still did not agree with recognition of the new state, but he would also not oppose it. With this agreement, Clifford readied the statement of recognition, and barely 11 minutes after Israel declared its independence, Presidential Press Secretary Charles Ross delivered the following statement to the press:

¹⁰² Ibid, 12.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Repeated in Clifford, *Counsel to the President*, 14-15.

Statement by the President. This government has been informed that a Jewish state has been proclaimed in Palestine and recognition has been requested by the provisional government thereof. The United States recognizes the provisional government as the *de facto* authority of the State of Israel.¹⁰⁵

With this statement, the United States became the first nation to offer *de facto* recognition of the new State of Israel.

Eddie Jacobson's actions significantly enhanced the relationship between Harry Truman and the Zionist movement in Palestine. When no other leader could convince Truman to act, it was Jacobson, Truman's old friend, fellow soldier, and business partner who convinced the president to see Chaim Weizmann and help the Zionist cause. Jacobson, who would have been content to live the life of a Midwestern haberdasher, understood that history had landed him in an unusual position. And while lesser men may have recoiled from this realization, Jacobson comprehended his place, and acted to help his people while maintaining utmost respect for his friend and his own country. The values of loyalty, patriotism, faith, and friendship guided Jacobson and Truman in their friendship and in their actions which contributed to the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine.

¹⁰⁵ For a fascinating sidebar, see the original copy of the statement in Israel File, Truman Papers, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri. Truman's handwriting can be found on it as he changed a phrase to include the name of the new nation in the statement.

CHAPTER TWO:

The Early Years: A War, a Business, a Friendship

When Eddie Jacobson and Harry Truman met each other in 1905, one may fairly assume that neither man could have imagined sitting in the president's office at the White House. Neither man's life to that point gave any indication of greatness, nor could either man have guessed which of them would one day sit behind the desk of the Oval Office while the other coaxed, cajoled, and convinced the president to act. The two were young men, both having left home to find employment and make their own way in the wider world. And for both Truman, who had been raised on a family farm in rural Missouri and then in the small town of Independence, Missouri, and Jacobson, who was born in New York City and grew up in Leavenworth, Kansas, the bustling streets of Kansas City, Missouri seemed the right place to find opportunity.

The lives of Truman and Jacobson became intertwined when both were young men in the early days of the 20th century. By the midpoint of the century, however, the two men would figure prominently in national and international affairs. Their story is the classic American story: two men of average means, acquaintances who solidified a friendship during the rigors of battle and upon their return from war sought to improve their lot in life. The story of their lives and their friendship could be the story of any two people. By looking at the details of their friendship, an extraordinary story comes to light. World events were affected by the metamorphosis of the Truman-Jacobson friendship from the mundane to the extraordinary. A close look at the details of their shared lives

provides a glimpse of the transformation of a normal friendship into a unique relationship that had profound results in world affairs.

Eddie Jacobson was born on June 17, 1891, and was the fourth of six children born to David and Sarah Jacobson, immigrants who had traveled from Eastern Europe to New York City.¹⁰⁶ The young Jacobson family moved from their urban home in New York to the small town of Leavenworth, Kansas in about 1893 as David and Sarah Jacobson sought more success and security for their children, Harry, Rose, Florence, Eddie, Abe, and Ben. Family members give reasons for the move—Sarah's health was not good, David was not finding financial success in New York, and life in the tenements of the Lower East Side presented more problems than benefits.¹⁰⁷

The move to Leavenworth may have helped Sarah's health, but material success was slow in coming. Within 10 years or so, the family moved again, this time to Kansas City, Missouri. According to Elinor Borenstine, elder daughter of Eddie Jacobson, Leavenworth was not the best fit for the Jacobson family.¹⁰⁸ While the boys had left the trouble-making streets of New York City, they continued to be somewhat rambunctious, though none found major trouble.¹⁰⁹ Borenstine recalls hearing of the Jacobson boys and some of their more exuberant acts, and wonders how her grandparents, who spoke only Yiddish, possibly explained the behavior of the young Jacobson boys to neighbors or

¹⁰⁶ The birth order placing Eddie fourth was given by Gloria Shusterman in an interview with the author on November 8, 2004. The interview can be found in the appendix to this thesis, and is on file in the Eddie Jacobson holdings of the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati, Ohio. In answering a question about birth order, Shusterman equivocated to the author, stating that she was not 100 % positive that this was correct. Herb Jacobson, a nephew of Eddie, corroborated this birth order.

¹⁰⁷ Interviews with Herb Jacobson in July of 2004, Gloria Shusterman in November of 2004, and Elinor Borenstine in November of 2004 provide some details on this matter. None of the three could identify Sarah's ailments. The interviews can be found as appendices to this thesis, and are in the Eddie Jacobson holdings of the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁰⁸ See Borenstine interview.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

authorities.¹¹⁰ The Jacobson family moved to Kansas City at the close of the 1904-1905 school year.¹¹¹

Eddie Jacobson's arrival in Kansas City marked the end of his formal schooling. With an eighth-grade education, Jacobson quit school and began to work to help support the family.¹¹² He found employment as a stock boy in a clothing store, Burnham, Hanna, Munger Dry Goods Store on 8th and Broadway streets.¹¹³ It was during that first year in Kansas City that Jacobson met a young man named Harry Truman, who was employed by the Union National Bank.¹¹⁴ The two would meet when Jacobson would bring the store's deposits to the bank.¹¹⁵ The friendship faded in 1906 when Truman returned to the family farm, where he lived for the next 11 years, leaving only to become a soldier in World War I.

During the following twelve years, Jacobson continued to work in clothing stores in Kansas City. He worked for the Palace Clothing Company, and for the Baltimore Shirt Company.¹¹⁶ In 1917, as war loomed in Europe, the 26-year-old Jacobson enlisted in the Missouri National Guard as a private. Among the officers of the unit to which Jacobson was assigned was Harry Truman, Jacobson's acquaintance from his early days in Kansas City.¹¹⁷

Raised on a family farm in Grandview, Missouri, and later in the small town of Independence, Missouri, Harry Truman's outlook was shaped not only by the

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ In Adler's *Roots in a Moving Stream*, Ben Jacobson gave this date in an interview in 1970. Elinor Borenstine corroborates this information in her interview with the author.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ See Adler, *Roots in a Moving Stream*, footnote four on pages 429-430.

¹¹⁴ See Adler, note four, page 429-430.

¹¹⁵ Ganin, *Truman, American Jewry, and Israel, 1945-1948*, p. 20.

¹¹⁶ Adler, 429.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 199.

socioeconomic conditions of his family, but by the Southern Baptist Church attended by the Truman clan.¹¹⁸ After graduating high school in 1901, Truman moved to Kansas City to begin his working life. He worked in Kansas City for five years, as a timekeeper for a railroad and at two banks, returning home to the family farm in Grandview, where he lived until America's involvement in World War I. For Truman, the 12 intervening years between working in Kansas City and becoming a full-time soldier were greatly influenced by two sources: his family of origin and Bess Wallace. These influences can be seen in the letters Truman wrote to Bess during those years.

Bess Wallace, the woman who would become Truman's wife, hailed from a society family in Independence. Though Truman and Wallace met as young teens, classmates in Sunday school, only Truman was immediately smitten, for Wallace thought Truman to be beneath her.¹¹⁹ Their courtship was unusually long; they finally married at age 35, having known each other for more than 20 years. While much of the courtship can be viewed in the letters Truman wrote to Wallace, Truman's early provincial ideas are also visible in those early letters. In a letter dated June 21, 1911, Truman professes a prejudice against African Americans and Asians.¹²⁰ He wrote,

"...Uncle Will says that the Lord made a white man from dust, a nigger from mud, then threw up what was left and it came down a Chinaman. He does hate Chinese and Japs. So do I. It is race prejudice, I guess. But I am strongly of the opinion that negroes ought to be in Africa, yellow men in Asia, and white men in Europe and America."¹²¹

While Truman does express some racial prejudices, his letters to Bess do not contain any direct anti-Semitic prejudices.

¹¹⁸ See David McCullough, *Truman*. McCullough's chapter on Truman's roots contains a full explanation of the influences on the young Harry Truman.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. McCullough also offers a full explanation of Truman's long courtship of Bess Wallace.

¹²⁰ See Ferrel, ed., *Dear Bess*, 39.

¹²¹ Ibid.

Truman, who had spent 12 years in futile attempts at material success, felt moved by President Woodrow Wilson's leadership and sought to become an active duty soldier. He had been in the National Guard, but at the age of 33, had been out for nearly six years.¹²² He decided to return to the military and reported for duty, only to be elected a first lieutenant in the 2nd Field Artillery of the Missouri National Guard. Among the men in Truman's new unit was Eddie Jacobson. By the end of the summer of 1917, both Truman and Jacobson, though in different batteries—Truman in Battery D, Jacobson in Battery F—were mustered into the 129th Field Artillery and sent to Camp Doniphan, Oklahoma to prepare for war.¹²³

Truman's first mention of Jews in a letter to Bess came as Truman was at Camp Doniphan.¹²⁴ Truman wrote to Bess in October of 1917 that he had a Jew in charge of the canteen who was a "crackerjack."¹²⁵ The Jew was Jacobson. In the same letter, Truman also mentioned the Jewish barber in his unit. Truman wrote of neither man derisively, though no other soldiers mentioned in his letters are identified by religion. Later, in a letter in February of 1918, Truman commented on his successful canteen by saying that he should have been proud of his "Jewish ability."¹²⁶

His comments to Bess aside, perhaps no other event in Harry Truman's life shaped his views on Jews and Judaism more than his friendship with Jacobson.¹²⁷ Their friendship became strong during their military service in World War I, as they faced the challenges and uncertainties of war.¹²⁸ For both men, the war was a time of great growth,

¹²² See David McCullough, *Truman*, 102.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 105.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 233.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 242.

¹²⁷ See, Ferrell, *Dear Bess*, xi.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

and while both seemed to have matured during their military service, Truman in particular seems to have grown significantly during those years, discovering his own abilities to lead, and the first realization of his desire for success.¹²⁹ The exposure to Jews through Jacobson, and the personal challenges of life as a soldier combined to make Truman's war experiences truly transformative. Although he was already a mature adult at age 34 when he was shipped off to Europe, Truman's mindset changed as a result of his military experiences.

Truman's relative lack of success was a matter of concern for the future president. In letters to Bess, his longtime sweetheart, Truman wrote of his lack of accomplishments in life.¹³⁰ He professed great dreams, but knew not how to achieve those goals.¹³¹ His service as an officer in World War I gave him the confidence to become a leader, and the trajectory of his life changed dramatically in the years following his return from the battlefields of Europe.

Among his duties as a first lieutenant, Truman was in charge of the canteen. To help him run the canteen, Truman chose his old friend Jacobson. While other canteens struggled to stay in business, the canteen run by Truman and Jacobson was succeeding, due in part to a clever financing plan they created.

Truman and Jacobson needed capital in order to stock the canteen and make it successful. So, they levied a two-dollar fee on all the soldiers in the regiment, which produced an instant realization of \$2,200. This new funding allowed the two men to fill the canteen, and in a matter of months, the two were able to pay back all of the seed

¹²⁹ See McCullough for a full discussion of the effects of World War I on Truman.

¹³⁰ See Ferrell, *Dear Bess*, 39.

¹³¹ Ibid.

money and realize a profit.¹³² When their units were shipped off to Europe, they again operated a canteen while also seeing battle. Both men received promotions while serving in the war. Truman reached the rank of captain, and Jacobson became a sergeant, however he was stripped of his rank late in the war and ended his service where he began, as a private.¹³³ Jacobson never explained his demotion, acknowledging only that he was "bucked down in the last ranks."¹³⁴ The success of Truman and Jacobson's canteen led to an agreement made on board their return ship to open some sort of business together in Kansas City.

For both Truman and Jacobson, the experience of serving as a soldier at war became a turning point. Jacobson recounted Truman's courage and bravery during a harrowing battle experience during the war. Said Jacobson:

...Battery D had been bracketed by enemy fire. German shells fell to one side of the battery's position and then, equidistant, to the other, in range. The next round would find the battery. One of the sergeants went chicken and hollered 'every man for himself!' Captain Truman was standing near by, studying fire-order reports and preparing to make counterbattery on the enemy positions. He heard the sergeant yell, whipped out his automatic and shouted, "I'll shoot any _____ who leaves his gun!" The men went back to their jobs, and we got the German battery in the next few minutes.¹³⁵

With the lessons learned on the battlefields of Europe, both returned with a stronger sense of self.¹³⁶

¹³² Ibid, 107.

¹³³ See McCullough for Truman's war record. Elinor Borenstine supplied the information about Jacobson's rise and fall in rank.

¹³⁴ See Borenstine interview. Borenstine noted that he must have done something wrong, but that Jacobson seemed proud to note that he was demoted and left the army with the same rank with which he entered.

¹³⁵ See "Truman's Integrity an Outstanding Trait in Opinion of Old Companions" in the *Kansas City Times*, January 14, 1949, found in Battery D file at the Truman Library, Independence, MO.

¹³⁶ Both men returned to civilian life with zeal, as both quickly got married and made the bold decision to enter into business. Truman decided to stay in Kansas City rather than return to the family farm, and Jacobson, who had been on his own for some time, became closer with his new wife's family.

In fact, upon their return from the War in Europe, Truman and Jacobson both experienced two major life-changing events. Truman married Bess Wallace, and Jacobson married Bluma Rosenbaum. The two men, who as soldiers had found success running a canteen, also entered into a business partnership. Because Jacobson had experience in the clothing business, a haberdashery was chosen as their goal.¹³⁷ Truman seems to have had no qualms about entering into a business partnership with a Jew. And throughout their partnership and for years later, Truman spoke of Jacobson in trusting and glowing terms.¹³⁸

On May 27, 1919, Truman and Jacobson signed a lease for a prime downtown retail space at the corner of 12th Street and Baltimore Avenue, across from the Muehlbach hotel in Kansas City.¹³⁹ Rent for the store was set at \$350 a month for the duration of the lease, five years.¹⁴⁰ Because of delays in procuring finances and stock, the store opened a bit late, on November 29, 1919.¹⁴¹ Truman and Jacobson saw early financial success, and the store became a meeting place for the soldiers of Battery D, Truman's unit in World War I.

The haberdashery thrived throughout all of 1920, and into the first part of 1921, as Truman recalled in his memoirs.¹⁴² Their initial investment in merchandise totaled \$35,000, and in their first year of business, Truman and Jacobson sold over \$70,000

¹³⁷ Adler, 200.

¹³⁸ Truman would refer to Jacobson as 'the closest thing I have to kin.'

¹³⁹ See lease agreement for Truman and Jacobson, in Haberdashery file at the Truman Library, Independence, Mo.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ See transcript of 'I knew him when' written by Eddie Jacobson about Harry Truman, in 1949. The letter can be found in the haberdashery files at the Truman library, Independence, Missouri.

¹⁴² See *Year of Decisions: Memoirs by Harry S. Truman*, 133.

worth of goods.¹⁴³ The store stocked all kinds of men's furnishings, including silk shirts, a luxury item that sold well during the prosperous days of 1920.

Though they both worked as salesmen on the floor of the store, Jacobson was mainly in charge of buying, while Truman kept the books. The store kept long hours, staying open until 9 p.m. six days a week. The Battery D veterans were a regular fixture at the store. Jacobson noted that he could tell by the words used to address Truman if a sale would occur or if Truman would be giving a special deal or loaning money.

...If someone came in asking for Captain Harry, I knew it was a touch and not a sale. When someone asked for Captain Truman, a cash sale was likely. But an inquiry for Captain Harry invariably meant goods on the cuff or a request for a loan.¹⁴⁴

As 1921 dawned, the store had \$35,000 in inventory, and the outlook was so good that the two businessmen turned down an offer to be bought out. In February of 1921, Truman and Jacobson incorporated the business and even sold stock.¹⁴⁵ The capital stock shares were for a total of \$30,000, with \$20,000 as preferred stock and \$10,000 to be sold as common stock.¹⁴⁶ Shares in the company sold for \$100.¹⁴⁷ In the articles of incorporation, Truman and Jacobson each received 50 shares of common stock.¹⁴⁸ Truman received 30 shares of preferred stock, while Jacobson received 29.¹⁴⁹ And a silent partner, a soldier from Truman's Battery D, Harry Jobes, received 10 shares of preferred stock for his investment of \$1,000.¹⁵⁰ All three men comprised the board of directors of the new

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ See "Truman's integrity..." in the *Kansas City Times*, January 14, 1949, found in Battery D file at the Truman library, Independence, Mo.

¹⁴⁵ See Articles of Incorporation in Haberdashery file, Truman Library, Independence, Mo.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

corporation.¹⁵¹ While the company found success in its first year and a half, it also faced typical problems associated with running a business. One such problem involved an employee accused of stealing from the cash register.

In March 1920, a police stake out occurred at the Truman and Jacobson haberdashery.¹⁵² Truman and Jacobson had sensed something wrong with the activities of their clerk Oliver Solinger, so they requested that the police monitor his behavior. On March 26, 1920, three police agents entered the store at different times to observe the clerk. One reported purchasing goods worth \$8.80, yet the register was rung for only \$3.80.¹⁵³ Truman and Jacobson confronted the clerk on the following day and fired him. They also managed to have him sign an affidavit admitting to stealing \$8 over the course of a number of transactions on March 26, the day of the police activity.¹⁵⁴ Truman and Jacobson decided against pressing charges, instead allowing Solinger the chance to pay back what he had taken. But by August 1920, having still not received any payment, Jacobson wrote a letter to the former employee. The letter shows not only the anger and pain felt by Truman and Jacobson, but also shows the confidence the two men were gaining as businessmen. Jacobson wrote:

...your obligation to us is a deep one. The mere payment of the money is about the least thing you could do. If you have any manhood left in you come clean. This is a small world and Harry Truman and I are getting a little bigger each day. Don't be an ungrateful pup like you have almost made me believe you are; you need us. God only knows how much more than we need you. There is only one answer. Come Clean.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² See police reports in Haberdashery file, Truman Library, Independence, Mo.

¹⁵³ See police report of B.H.P, found in Haberdashery file at Truman Library, Independence, Mo.

¹⁵⁴ See affidavit in Haberdashery file at Truman Library, Independence, Mo.

¹⁵⁵ See Jacobson letter to Solinger, August 13, 1920, in Haberdashery file, Truman Library, Independence, Mo.

Solinger apparently did not meet his obligation and instead asked for more leniency from Truman and Jacobson, and he even asked them for a recommendation so that he could get another job. Solinger did not pay, and another letter, written by Jacobson in January 1921 includes a threat to open the whole affair to Solinger's mother, an act Solinger had specifically asked Truman and Jacobson to avoid.¹⁵⁶ Jacobson recounted his willingness to forgo criminal charges, choosing instead to have Solinger repay the funds stolen. Jacobson also noted that he gave Solinger bus fare so that Solinger could return to New York to live with his mother and find a job.¹⁵⁷ Solinger responded a week later, and again asked for more time. But time was running out on Truman and Jacobson, as the first half of 1921 would be the end of financial success for their haberdashery. The year 1921 had begun with high hopes for the store, and the two men enjoyed success through the spring and early summer. But by the second half of 1921 the economy slowed, and the store faced significant financial challenges.

The haberdashery carried an inventory valued at \$35,000 at the beginning of 1921, but within a year, that same inventory was worth only \$10,000.¹⁵⁸ The economy had taken a turn for the worse, a fact Truman would later blame on Republican leadership in Washington.¹⁵⁹ Deep in debt, Truman and Jacobson decided to close the store in early 1922 after attempting to persevere through the economic downturn. Facing major debts, the two considered bankruptcy, but instead they both decided that they wanted to repay every debt in full.¹⁶⁰ The two men consulted an attorney, Phineas Rosenberg, and made

¹⁵⁶ See Jacobson letter to Solinger, January 11, 1921, in Haberdashery file, Truman Library, Independence, Mo.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ See Truman, *Year of Decisions*, 134.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

arrangements to repay all of their creditors.¹⁶¹ They began by selling their inventory and paying their merchandise creditors. Other loans and the lease of the store remained.¹⁶² Even though Truman and Jacobson continued to pay the debts, Jacobson faced more financial challenges and filed for bankruptcy in 1925.¹⁶³ Still, the two men continued to repay their debts until the final loan on which they owed was auctioned by the bank holding the note, as the bank itself was facing difficulties.¹⁶⁴ The loan was purchased by Vivian Truman, Harry Truman's brother, ending all of the store's debts.¹⁶⁵ Following the closing of the haberdashery, Jacobson found work as a traveling shirt salesman, a job he held through the Great Depression and throughout World War II, while Truman entered politics.

Although Truman's business partnership failed after just a few years, his path to political success would become meteoric. After the store closed, another friendship from Truman's World War I Battery D provided an opportunity. This time it was Jim Pendergast, who served with Truman and was a nephew of Kansas City's political boss Tom Pendergast. A seat as a Jackson County Judge, the equivalent of a county commissioner, was open, and Jim Pendergast suggested Truman's name to boss Tom Pendergast.¹⁶⁶ Truman ran and won the race with Pendergast's help, and which launched his political career.¹⁶⁷ Even with the failure of the haberdashery business, the friendship

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid. Interestingly, Jacobson never spoke of his bankruptcy to his children, as both recalled in interviews with the author.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 135.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ McCullough, 159.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

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¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

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¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 135.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ McCullough, 159.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

between Truman and Jacobson remained strong.¹⁶⁸ The two remained committed to paying off the debts of the haberdashery and worked to do so.¹⁶⁹ But for the next 20 years of their lives, the bulk of their interactions occurred at poker games, during hunting and fishing trips where Truman served as camp cook, and at annual Battery D celebrations on St. Patrick's Day.¹⁷⁰

While Truman lacked a formal education, he was a voracious reader. A lover of history, Truman devoured books on ancient Rome and Greece, and had a passion for studying the Bible. Even with his extensive reading, Truman remained bothered by his lack of formal education. In the late 1920s, while serving as a Jackson County Judge, Truman entered the night law school program at the University of Kansas City, but he did not complete the course. Reading remained an outlet for the rising Truman, and his education continued as he continued to devour books.

Truman's religiosity, while a key ingredient of his intellect and moral core, was not as visible in his daily life.¹⁷¹ He boasted of reading the entire Bible twice by the age of 12 and regularly surprised his advisors and aides with his quick quotation of biblical verses.¹⁷² And while he attended church in Independence, he rarely attended church as president and was not a vocal religionist, even though the Bible was a self-acknowledged cornerstone in his life.¹⁷³

The other major cornerstone in Harry Truman's life was his family. Both Truman and Jacobson were married in 1919, the year they returned from World War I. And with

¹⁶⁸ Elinor Borenstine recalls many interactions between Truman and her father during the years of Truman's service as judge and senator.

¹⁶⁹ Truman, *Year of Decisions*, 134.

¹⁷⁰ See interviews with Borenstine, Shusterman, and Granoff. Borenstine suggests that though not a member of Battery D, Jacobson was treated as an honorary member because of his friendship with Truman.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² See Michael T. Benson, *Harry S. Truman and the Founding of Israel*, 31-33.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

the arrivals of Elinor Jacobson in 1920 and Margaret Truman in 1924, both men became fathers. Even though the men had been business partners and remained friends, their wives and children had little if any interaction. Jacobson's daughter explains this lack of interaction as a result of the Wallace family's negative attitudes towards Jews, views that were commonly held during the first half of the 20th century.¹⁷⁴ Both men continued to focus on their families and careers. Jacobson's family grew with the birth of a second daughter, Gloria, in 1930. And Truman's political rise continued with his election to the U.S. Senate in 1934. While both men became more consumed by their own families and careers, their friendship continued. Gloria Jacobson Shusterman recalls being taken as a young child to the train station to see Senator-Elect Truman depart for Washington, D.C.¹⁷⁵ As Shusterman recalled, Eddie and Bluma Jacobson argued over whether Eddie should take Gloria to see his friend the new senator as Truman prepared to leave Kansas City for Washington, D.C.¹⁷⁶ Gloria was scheduled to start kindergarten the same morning, and Bluma did not want her daughter to miss the first day.¹⁷⁷ Eddie won the argument, finally telling Bluma that Gloria would just be smart a day late!¹⁷⁸ The two men lived different lives, yet their doting ways with their daughters mirrored each other. Truman's love of and concern for Margaret is well documented; Jacobson's affections for his daughters shine brightly in the memories of his two daughters.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁴ See Borenstine interview.

¹⁷⁵ See Shusterman interview.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ See McCullough for a discussion of Truman, and see author interviews with Borenstine and Shusterman for a discussion of Jacobson.

Throughout the years of the haberdashery and for years following, the Jacobson family lived with Bluma Rosenbaum Jacobson's parents in Kansas City.¹⁸⁰ A great outdoorsman, Jacobson was convinced that his first child was going to be a son with whom he could hunt and fish. He bet his wife \$5 that the baby would be a boy, but when Elinor was born, not only was Eddie Jacobson surprised, he also did not have the money to pay the bet!¹⁸¹ Years later, when Bluma and her daughters cleaned out Eddie Jacobson's safe deposit box, they found 2 two-and-a-half dollar gold pieces.¹⁸² Bluma had the gold pieces mounted on a bracelet and wore it for the remaining years of her life. Elinor now wears the two pieces on a necklace.¹⁸³ Even though his first child was a girl, Eddie Jacobson still taught her to fish, and to love the outdoors as he did.¹⁸⁴

Jacobson came from a family of happy-go-lucky people, and he loved a good joke.¹⁸⁵ Quick with a smile and eager to bring a smile to the face of another, Jacobson's daughters both recall a practical joke he played on each of them at different times. When Elinor was young, and the family was living with Bluma's parents, Jacobson decided that his daughter should have a garden.¹⁸⁶ So late one afternoon, they went to the backyard, dug up some ground and planted a garden. The next day, Jacobson woke his daughter at the crack of dawn to tell her that her garden had sprouted overnight.¹⁸⁷ Looking out the window, Elinor recalled years later, she saw that the patch of ground they had planted was filled with artificial flowers. Gloria recalled a similar set of events. Gloria was a sickly child, and spent a significant amount of time in bed. Sometime around 1944, when

¹⁸⁰ See Borenstine interview.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ See Borenstine interview.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

Gloria was about 10 years old, Eddie Jacobson decided that it was time for Gloria to plant a victory garden. They planted vegetables, and just as Elinor recalled, Gloria was roused the next morning to look at the incredible growth of her plants.¹⁸⁸ Looking out the window with her father, Gloria saw all sorts of fake vegetables covering the new garden. Both women recalled a father who adored his little girls, and who was deeply connected to his family.

Jacobson's desire to reach out to others extended beyond his family. One example of Jacobson's attempts to help another became known years later when Elinor Jacobson Borenstine visited a square dance resort in the Ozarks in Southern Missouri with her husband and children in the late 1940s.¹⁸⁹ Borenstine recalled that during this particular visit, they were given royal treatment, including the best cabin, the best table at meals, and constant attention from the staff.¹⁹⁰ Borenstine finally asked the owner/manager about the special treatment, and he replied that he knew that Borenstine was the daughter of Eddie Jacobson.¹⁹¹ He continued, telling Borenstine that during the Depression years he had worked as a traveling salesman selling neckties.¹⁹² Things were so bad that he could not get a single merchant to look at the ties he was selling.¹⁹³ On a visit to small towns in Kansas, a clothing store owner finally agreed to look, saying that he did not want to look, but that Eddie Jacobson had visited recently and told the merchant that he did not have to buy, but that he did have to look.¹⁹⁴ The owner/manager told Borenstine

¹⁸⁸ See Shusterman interview.

¹⁸⁹ See Borenstine interview.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

that every merchant he visited gave him the same story.¹⁹⁵ Jacobson's actions helped the man earn enough money to eventually leave the road and open the resort.¹⁹⁶ Jacobson spent nearly 20 years as a traveling salesman, spending significant time away from his young family.

Jacobson's religious involvement became steady during his years as a traveling salesman. Though his territory included eastern Missouri and all of Kansas, he managed to be home for most Sabbaths. Late on Friday afternoons, Elinor Borenstine recalls seeing her father turning the corner and driving towards home in the new Chevy he bought every year.¹⁹⁷ The family would usually go to Jacobson's parents' home for a Sabbath meal, followed by services at the Reform Temple: B'nai Jehudah. Although Elinor recalls her father dozing during the rabbi's sermon somewhat frequently, Jacobson found value in regular temple attendance, an activity that became a staple of the Jacobson home.¹⁹⁸ During his years as a traveling salesman, Jacobson's Jewish involvements were limited to temple attendance and his service as an usher for the High Holy Day services. Only after Truman's elevation to the presidency did Jacobson begin to become involved with Jewish national concerns and consider calling himself a Zionist. Truman, however, became more involved with such issues earlier as he faced major national and international issues in the U. S. Senate.

Truman's involvement in political life was closely linked to the Pendergast political machine in Kansas City. As a soldier, Truman had served with James Pendergast, a nephew of Thomas Pendergast, the political boss in Kansas City during the

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ See Borenstine interview.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

early 20th century. It was Jim Pendergast who initially suggested Truman's name to Tom Pendergast, and the boss, who knew Truman's father, John Truman, agreed that Harry Truman might make a good candidate for office. After serving as a county judge, Truman ran for the U.S. Senate in a long-shot campaign in 1934. With Pendergast's support, Truman won, and left for Washington D.C. where he was derisively called "the senator from Pendergast."¹⁹⁹

As a senator, Truman began to engage in debates and discussions on larger issues. Truman had limited, if any, involvement in Jewish or Zionist issues while serving as a county judge. This low level of involvement continued through Truman's first term in the Senate. But as the issue became more prominent, and as Truman's roles grew in stature, Truman's understanding of Zionism grew.²⁰⁰ Throughout his first term as a senator, Truman's primary involvement with either Jewish or Zionist issues revolved around issues of immigration, as American Jews tried to rescue Jews from the tightening grasp of the Nazis.²⁰¹ He was approached by Jacobson and other Jews from Missouri seeking assistance in obtaining immigration papers for Jews living in Europe. Truman wrote letters to the American consul in Berlin and succeeded in assisting in the rescue of a limited number of German Jews in the late 1930s.²⁰² It was at this point that Truman made his first recorded comments on Jewish suffering in Europe. Responding in July 1937 to a constituent seeking Truman's assistance in saving Jewish relatives in Europe, Truman wrote, "You are perfectly correct about all the technicalities that the German Government is using to harass the Jewish people. I don't approve of it and I am morally

¹⁹⁹ See McCullough, *Truman*, 193-252.

²⁰⁰ See Cohen, *Truman and Israel*, 28-29.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid.

certain that they will be properly taken care of for their attitude at some time in the future."²⁰³ During his second term in the Senate, as the United States became involved in World War II, Truman's understanding of the crisis facing European Jewry grew.

Truman's involvements with Zionist and Jewish causes also grew during Truman's second term as Senator. In addition to continuing to respond to constituent requests for help in rescuing Jewish relatives in Europe, Truman also responded to the unfolding Jewish tragedies occurring at the hands of the Nazis. In a 1943 speech to the United Rally to Demand the Rescue of Doomed Jews in Chicago, Truman attacked Hitler and spoke of the problems facing European Jewry as an American problem. He said:

...Through the edict of a mad Hitler and a degenerate Mussolini, the people of that ancient race, the Jews, are being herded like animals into the ghettos, the concentration camps, and the wastelands of Europe. The men, the women and the children of this honored people are being starved, yes! Actually murdered by the fiendish Huns and Fascists. Today these oppressed people, still with spirit unbroken look for succor to us, we people of the United States, whose flag has always stood for liberty, freedom and justice for all... So on down through the pages of the history of America, you find these efforts of the Jews—as of all Americans—striving for all those things that have made America great... Today—not tomorrow—we must do all that is humanly possible to provide a haven and place of safety for all those who can be grasped from the hands of the Nazi butchers. Free lands must be opened to them... This is not a Jewish problem. It is an American problem—and we must and will face it squarely and honorably.²⁰⁴

Truman's words illustrate a deep comprehension of the plight of the Jews, and with a call for safe havens might have provided early hope for support of a Jewish state. Throughout the major events facing America, Sen. Truman remained friendly with his old business partner, Jacobson.

²⁰³ See Cohen, 31.

²⁰⁴ The text is in the Senatorial and Vice Presidential Files in the holdings of the Truman Library in Independence, and quoted in Cohen, 36-37.

Poker games, held in the homes of Truman's buddies, took place whenever Truman was in Kansas City.²⁰⁵ And while Truman never hosted the games, he did invite his friends, including Jacobson, to family events.²⁰⁶ Gloria Jacobson Shusterman recalls traveling with her father to the Truman farm in Lamar, Missouri for a birthday party for Truman's mother. As they passed through the receiving line, Truman leaned toward his mother and said, "Mom, this is Gloria, Eddie's daughter."²⁰⁷ Shusterman recalls a friendly greeting with the elderly Mrs. Truman, and recalls that Truman did not use last names in identifying Eddie Jacobson and his daughter Gloria.²⁰⁸

But even though Truman remained a warm and easygoing presence to his friends and family in Kansas City, he faced serious international issues as a U.S. senator. As the war progressed, Truman became less vocal on Jewish issues, instead standing with President Franklin Roosevelt as he prosecuted the American war effort. In an exchange with a rabbi from his home state of Missouri, Truman asked for patience from Jewish Americans. Rabbi Phineas Smoller of Joplin, Missouri, sent Truman a petition seeking assistance for European Jews.²⁰⁹ Truman's response, while acknowledging the ghastly aims of Nazism, shows this turn towards supporting the American war effort. Truman wrote, "...There is nobody on earth who dislikes more than I do the actions of Hitler and Mussolini; but it is of vital importance that the Jewish congregations be patient and support wholeheartedly the foreign policy of our government."²¹⁰ Truman maintained this position through the Senate vote on a resolution sponsored by Sens. Robert Taft of Ohio

²⁰⁵ See Borenstine interview.

²⁰⁶ See Shusterman interview.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ See letter from Smoller to Truman, December 2, 1943.

²¹⁰ See letter from Truman to Smoller, December 12, 1943.

and Robert Wagner of New York. The resolution sought to pressure the British government by advocating a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine. Truman followed Roosevelt's lead, and voted against the resolution, not wanting to interfere with British 'internal' issues. Truman's willingness to follow Roosevelt's lead lasted until, shortly after assuming the presidency himself, Truman began to deal with the Zionist cause directly.

As a new President in the summer of 1945, Truman initially followed the wait and see approach of the Roosevelt administration as regarded Palestine and Zionism.²¹¹ But relatively quickly, Truman's own views began to shift into greater focus, and his deeply held affinity for Jews, and his desire for a Jewish state in Palestine became more apparent.²¹² Truman's views, steeped in his reading of history, understood the plight of Jews and the Jewish desire to return to a national entity in Palestine. Jacobson continued to be Truman's closest Jewish friend, and became more influential as Truman the president faced Zionist and/or Jewish issues.

Just as 1945 saw a major change for Truman with his elevation to the presidency, Jacobson's life also changed significantly that year. In 1944, after much discussion, Jacobson decided to open his own clothing store. He had to go into debt to open the store, but did so with the approval of his wife Bluma.²¹³ The store, located on 39th and Main Streets in the Westport section of Kansas City, was called Westport Men's Wear. Shortly after Roosevelt's death and Truman's ascendance, Jacobson's store began to receive

²¹¹ Truman received memos pushing this course of action, or course of inaction during his first months in office. While he did push the British to ease Jewish immigration to Palestine, he was otherwise limited in his involvements with Palestine during this early phase of his presidency.

²¹² Truman began to seek guidance from advisors on how to help displaced Jews in Europe immigrate to Palestine. Clark Clifford and David Niles both record Truman's desire to help this cause.

²¹³ See Shusterman interview.

publicity because of the friendship between Truman and Jacobson.²¹⁴ During one visit to Kansas City, Truman came to Jacobson's store looking for white shirts only to find that Jacobson was temporarily out of stock.²¹⁵ The shortage made national headlines, and Truman was inundated with shirts from all over the country.²¹⁶ Jacobson sent Truman a note apologizing for the shortage and included a bottle of Hennessey cognac. Truman responded to Jacobson on July 5, 1945, with a two-sentence reply: "I appreciated the volume on the life of General Hennessey very much. We made good use of it."²¹⁷ Throughout his presidency, Truman used Jacobson's clothing store as his primary supplier of shirts and other garments.²¹⁸ Jacobson usually sent the items without a bill, an event that the president noticed and protested from time to time.²¹⁹

On another visit to Kansas City in 1945, Truman came to the Jacobson home for a poker game. Gloria, who was then 15 years old, was sitting at the piano in the den waiting for a date to arrive as the president entered the house. Truman asked Gloria if she played, and when she replied in the affirmative, Truman asked her for a song.²²⁰ Gloria demurred, but finally agreed to a duet with the president. Gloria's date arrived to see the young girl sharing a piano with the president of the United States!²²¹ Even though as president, Truman faced many major issues as he pursued a conclusion to World War II, he remained a familiar friend for the Jacobsons.

²¹⁴ Truman made a much-publicized visit to Jacobson's store in June of 1945.

²¹⁵ See *Kansas City Star*, June 29, 1945.

²¹⁶ See White House correspondence file at Truman Library, Independence, Mo.

²¹⁷ Letter from Truman to Jacobson, July 5, 1945, in Jacobson correspondence files, Truman Library, Independence, Mo.

²¹⁸ See Borenstine interview.

²¹⁹ See Truman letters asking for a bill in Eddie Jacobson correspondence files, Truman Library, Independence, Mo.

²²⁰ See Shusterman interview.

²²¹ Ibid.

With the end of the War, the growing reports of Nazi atrocities committed against Jews and the crisis of displaced persons in Europe, Jewish affairs became a major international issue. With a call from Rabbi Samuel Mayerberg asking Jacobson to address these issues with President Truman, Eddie Jacobson's involvement in world affairs began.²²²

Truman's views on Zionism were tested during his first term as president, and while his overall support of the Jewish cause remained constant, his fondness for its spokespeople and its diplomacy faltered somewhat regularly.²²³ Truman sought to persuade the British to open immigration to Palestine after the war, but was rebuffed. He met with many American Jewish leaders and often found them pushy and obstinate.²²⁴ The emergence of Eddie Jacobson as a passionate spokesman to the president on behalf of the Zionist cause perhaps gave Truman the only fully amicable interaction with Zionist leaders or the issue of Zionism in general. In Jacobson Truman saw an old and trusted friend, one who sought to do what was right without regard to political or other pressures.²²⁵ Jacobson's visits to the White House, both on the record and off the record, became a vital piece of the genesis of American support of Israel.²²⁶ According to

²²² Mayerberg recalled his contacts with Jacobson in "President Truman's Buddy" in *Liberal Judaism*, August 1945, 4-10.

²²³ Truman held to a consistent position favoring Jewish immigration and the ultimate goal of Jewish statehood. Yet as American Jewish leaders continued to lobby the President, Truman became exasperated with the demands made by these leaders and on more than one occasion complained to Clifford, Jacobson, and others about their behavior.

²²⁴ Truman was most annoyed with Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, both because of Silver's pushiness and because Silver was a close friend of Republican Senator Robert Taft of Ohio.

²²⁵ Truman would later say that when Eddie Jacobson was moved to act on the issue, he (Truman) paid attention.

²²⁶ Many, including Dean Acheson and Clark Clifford, aides of Truman, credit Jacobson's efforts on behalf of the Zionist cause.

Truman's appointments records, Jacobson met with Truman on 24 separate occasions during the Truman presidency, with 13 of those meetings occurring off the record.²²⁷

While Jacobson's role has been illustrated fully in chapter one, Margaret Truman, the daughter of Harry and Bess Truman, has discounted the role played by Jacobson. In her 1973 biography of her father, Margaret Truman wrote that Jacobson's role was minor at best. She wrote:

...I have been told by very intelligent people...that Eddie Jacobson was responsible for Dad's entire stand on Israel. There is even a myth that Eddie saw Dad secretly innumerable times during his White House years, using his friendship to bring Dad over to a pro-Jewish point of view. The whole thing is absurd. Eddie Jacobson was one of the hundreds of army friends my father made during World War I. After the clothing store folded, Dad saw comparatively little of him. I don't believe they ever discussed politics, except in the most offhand fashion.²²⁸

Margaret Truman's views of her father's relationship with Jacobson stand in contrast to many published documents, including Truman's own memoirs, published in 1956.²²⁹

Truman wrote favorably of Jacobson's visit in March of 1948, when Jacobson convinced the president to meet with Chaim Weizmann.²³⁰ "...I have always had the warmest feelings towards him. It would be hard to find a truer friend," Truman said.²³¹ The difference between Margaret Truman's view and the views of others can be explained.

Some suggest that Margaret Truman's book was written by a ghostwriter, and that it lacks credibility in everything except the image a loving daughter had of her father.²³²

Eddie Jacobson's daughters surmise that Margaret Truman's words reflect the influence

²²⁷ See in the appointments files of the Truman Library, Independence, Mo.

²²⁸ See Margaret Truman, *Harry S. Truman*, 423.

²²⁹ See Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope*, p. 160. Also, see Frank Adler's review of Margaret Truman's book in the *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, June, 1973, volume LXII, number 4.

²³⁰ See Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope*, 160-161.

²³¹ Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope*, 160-161.

²³² Archivists at the Truman Library suggested that Margaret Truman's use of ghost-writers was a known fact.

of Bess Wallace and the Wallace family's attitudes towards Jews in general.²³³ While the historical record contains many mentions of Jacobson and his role, only Margaret Truman's biography suggests a less-than-favorable view of Jacobson's involvement with Truman on the Zionist issue.

Although Truman spent 18 years in Washington, almost eight of them as president, he struggled with the pressures of public life. Truman's style differed sharply from both his predecessor in the White House and many in the Washington elite. Truman spoke with a simple and straightforward style, liked a shot of bourbon, and loved a good poker game. Another aspect of Truman's upbringing that remained with him as he held the presidency involved his earthy language.

While Truman is today remembered for a willingness to speak the truth as he saw it, many have criticized his use of vulgarity and uncouth language. Some have argued that Truman's language represented his beliefs, while others have explained away his colorful speech as merely a reminder of his background. Either way, one issue that has continued to overshadow Truman's actions regarding Jews and Israel involves the question of anti-Semitism.

Truman had Jewish friends and advisors throughout his life, yet he also uttered words and phrases that have been labeled anti-Semitic. While Truman's early writings indicate a level of racism, his actions as president indicate a far different outlook. During his presidency, Truman not only gave aid and assistance to the new Jewish State of Israel, he also helped integrate the American armed forces. And while he did not have many Jews as overnight guests at his Missouri home or at the White House, he did host some

²³³ See Borenstine and Shusterman interviews.

Jewish guests, including Jacobson, who spent a night at Truman's retreat in the Florida Keys and was a guest on Truman's train during the 1948 presidential campaign.²³⁴

Many have recently questioned whether Truman harbored anti-Semitic beliefs. A recently unearthed diary entry from July 21, 1947 included complaints about the Jews.

Truman wrote:

Had ten minutes conversation with Henry Morgenthau about Jewish ship in Palistine [sic]. Told him I would talk to Gen[eral] Marshall about it. He'd no business, whatever to call me. The Jews have no sense of proportion nor do they have any judgement on world affairs. Henry brought a thousand Jews to New York on a supposedly temporary basis and they stayed. When the country went backward—and Republican in the election of 1946, this incident loomed large on the D[isplaced] P[ersons] program. The Jews, I find are very, very selfish. They care not how many Estonians, Latvians, Finns, Poles, Yugoslavs or Greeks get murdered or mistreated as D[isplaced] P[ersons] as long as the Jews get special treatment. Yet when they have power, physical, financial or political neither Hitler nor Stalin has anything on them for cruelty or mistreatment to the under dog. Put an underdog on top and it makes no difference whether his name is Russian, Jewish, Negro, Management, Labor, Mormon, Baptist he goes haywire. I've found very, very few who remember their past condition when prosperity comes. Look at the Congress[ional] attitude on D[isplaced] P[ersons]-and they all come from D[isplaced] P[erson]s.²³⁵

Clearly Truman was frustrated by the words and actions of American Jewish leaders when he wrote this entry. Hershel Shanks, in a signed editorial column discussing the diary entry openly labeled Truman an anti-Semite.²³⁶ Shanks stated that Truman's words in the diary entry confirm his anti-Semitic beliefs, though his actions indicate a willingness to help Jews and Jewish causes, including the realization of the Zionist

²³⁴ Newspaper accounts record Jacobson's presence on the campaign train. Jacobson traveled to Florida to meet with Truman to discuss the Palestine matter, and was a guest of Truman at the 'little White House' there.

²³⁵ See Truman diaries, 1947. The diary was found among other papers in the summer of 2003. The diaries can be viewed on the website of the Truman Library.

²³⁶ See "Editors Viewpoint" in *Moment*, February, 2004.

dream.²³⁷ Shanks wrote that one can help Jews, have Jewish friends and advisors, and still be an anti-Semite.²³⁸

Others, including Jacobson's surviving family members, disagree, suggesting that Truman, who had Jewish friends and advisors and helped Jews and Jewish causes, was not an anti-Semite at all and that his words were meant to be a private exercise of complaint.²³⁹ Many, including Jacobson's daughters, believe that the diary entry was nothing more than Truman privately venting frustration.²⁴⁰ They both believe that Truman's anti-Semitic remarks were at worst only the kinds of remarks that were commonly accepted at the time.²⁴¹ They believe that Truman was a great friend to Jews and to Israel, and that the random negative remarks made by Truman about Jews deserve no great attention.²⁴² More, both of Eddie Jacobson's daughters believe that their father saw Truman as a deeply honest and honorable man who harbored no anti-Semitic sentiments.²⁴³

During Truman's presidency, Jacobson continued to enjoy a successful business. He also remained active in the affairs of the State of Israel and remained active in his own temple. Jacobson warmly embraced his identity as a Reform Jew and grew proud of his affiliation with B'nai Jehudah.²⁴⁴ Jacobson spoke of his attitude towards Reform Judaism while in Israel, enjoying a trip with his wife Bluma that was filled with privileges usually reserved for diplomats. In a meeting with the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ See Borenstine, Granoff, and Shusterman interviews.

²⁴⁰ In separate interviews with the author, both sisters vehemently defended Truman, and both suggested that Truman's words were only private ramblings never meant to see the light of day. Loeb Granoff shared the same view in a separate interview.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

Israel, Jacobson was asked about his affiliation with the Reform Temple. The chief rabbi noted that Jacobson had been raised Orthodox, and that his brothers had remained Orthodox. Jacobson responded by noting that his brothers were indeed Orthodox and attended their Orthodox Synagogue annually for the holidays, while he, Eddie, who was Reform, attended weekly Sabbath services in addition to Holiday services.²⁴⁵

The Jacobson family grew during the years of Jacobson's Westport Menswear, as Elinor and Dr. Joseph Borenstine were married and had two daughters. The Borenstines lived close to the Jacobsons, and Eddie regularly stopped by to see the grandchildren. He would stand at the bottom of the stairs and yell "eeeeee," for which he earned the nickname "gee."²⁴⁶ Jacobson also gave gifts. Noticing that Elinor did not have a clothes dryer, Jacobson had one sent to the Borenstine home, surprising his daughter.²⁴⁷ He later sent a television, after noticing that whenever he visited, the kids were at the neighbor's house watching television.²⁴⁸ When daughter Gloria was married, the Trumans were invited, but they did not attend. Jacobson and Truman followed each other's families and reported on the birth of their grandchildren. At the end of one letter, Truman noted that his daughter "Margie" was singing in Kansas City, and that he was upset to miss the performance.²⁴⁹ At the end of another letter, Jacobson wrote to Truman, "for your information, the score is now 3 queens and one jack. Gloria just had a baby boy, so it's now four grandchildren."²⁵⁰

²⁴⁵ Recalled by Elinor Borenstine in an interview with the author.

²⁴⁶ See Borenstine interview. Mrs. Borenstine explained that the kids heard Jacobson yelling and thought he was saying 'gee' so they began to call him 'gee.'

²⁴⁷ See Borenstine interview.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ See letter from Truman to Jacobson, December 15, 1947, in Eddie Jacobson correspondence file, Truman Library, Independence, Mo.

²⁵⁰ See letter from Jacobson to Truman, September 19, 1951, in Eddie Jacobson correspondence file, Truman Library, Independence, Mo.

Truman and Jacobson's friendship flourished through the second Truman administration. After Truman left the White House and returned to Independence, Truman and Jacobson saw more of each other as the poker games became more frequent. Although Truman had left the presidency with unusually low public approval, Jacobson and other friends welcomed him home with open arms.²⁵¹

Harry Truman's words about Eddie Jacobson in a 1966 conversation illustrate the significance of the friendship and the changes that occurred in his outlook and thinking over the course of his lifetime.²⁵² A random acquaintance turned business partner had become a trusted friend. Even though they came from distinctly different families of origin with different customs and beliefs, the two men recognized in each other the American values that they each held dearly in their own lives: hard work, decency, and honesty. Truman's words as an 82-year-old former president illustrate the impact of the Truman-Jacobson friendship. In 1966, a young Israeli soldier, Yehuda Avner, stopped by the former president's home in Independence to deliver a personal note from the then Israeli Prime Minister, Levi Eshkol.²⁵³ The note thanked Truman for his assistance in the early days of the new state of Israel. As Truman was about to begin his regular morning walk, he invited Avner to join him. As they began, Truman said it was nice to be thanked, but that the one who really deserved the credit was Eddie Jacobson.²⁵⁴ Truman added that when he wavered, it was Jacobson who made certain that he "kept America's weight behind Israeli statehood."²⁵⁵ He continued, "Dear old Eddie, best friend a man could ever

²⁵¹ See Borenstine interview.

²⁵² The conversation took place between Truman and a then-young Israeli army officer, Yehudah Avner. Avner recalled the conversation in his article, "A Walk with Harry Truman," in the *Jerusalem Post*, August 2, 2004.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

have. May he rest in peace.”²⁵⁶ At the end of the walk, Truman gave Avner a copy of his memoirs. Avner asked Truman to autograph the books for his son, who was about to celebrate his *bar mitzvah*. And Truman, the Southern Baptist from rural Missouri, responded that his old friend Eddie Jacobson used to say “*mazal* something or other” at such occasions. Avner responded that the word was “*tov*,” and Truman responded, “yeah, that’s right, *mazal tov*.”²⁵⁷ The exchange seems almost pedestrian at first glance, but a deeper truth emerges. Truman, who in earlier days wrote words some construed as anti-Semitic, was now, at an advanced age, actually attempting to use the proper greeting used by Jews.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

CHAPTER THREE:

Reaping the Rewards of Loyalty and Accomplishment

The year 1948 saw great challenges, and ultimately triumphs, for both Harry Truman and Eddie Jacobson. Not only did the year begin with continued attention to the situation in Palestine, but Truman faced the biggest challenge of his life: his first and only campaign for the presidency. For Jacobson, who had become involved in the Zionist cause in 1945, the dawning of 1948 saw both continued work for American support of a Jewish state in Palestine and a strong desire to help his friend win election to the presidency. As the year unfolded, both Truman and Jacobson relied upon their friendship during the trials and tribulations of 1948. The aftereffects of that year would ripple through the next seven years of their lives.

The events leading to Israeli independence in May 1948 and the involvement of both Truman and Jacobson have been discussed in an earlier chapter. The interactions of Truman and Jacobson concerning Israel continued from May 1948 until Jacobson's untimely death in October 1955. A close look at the involvements of Truman and Jacobson and their roles in relation to Israel will expand our understanding of the Truman-Jacobson friendship during the years following the establishment of the state of Israel.

Just minutes after David Ben Gurion announced the establishment of the State of Israel, the United States, by means of a brief statement by President Truman, recognized the new nation.²⁵⁸ Truman signed and dated the statement, which was a typewritten document, and made two corrections in his own handwriting. The president added the

²⁵⁸ See chapter one for the full statement.

word "provisional" to the first sentence and changed the end of the second sentence to include the phrase "State of Israel." While Jewish leaders had been planning to announce an independent Jewish state, an announcement of the name of the new country did not occur until independence was declared on May 14.

Jacobson, who had labored on behalf of the Zionist cause, celebrated the events in Kansas City that Friday evening. Within a day, Jacobson the haberdasher became Jacobson the diplomat, as he became an unofficial envoy for the new country to the president of the United States. On Saturday, May 15, 1948, Jacobson was contacted by Josef Cohen, Chaim Weizmann's assistant, with a plea to travel to New York City to meet with Weizmann immediately.²⁵⁹ Jacobson, as he had before, dropped everything and found a flight. He left Kansas City at 2 a.m. on Sunday, and flew to New York, arriving around 8 a.m.²⁶⁰ He arrived at the Waldorf Astoria hotel, and prepared to meet again with Weizmann.²⁶¹

Jacobson assumed that he would meet with Weizmann in the afternoon and attend the rally of American Jews celebrating the new State of Israel at Madison Square Garden Sunday night.²⁶² Instead, Weizmann, an elderly and infirm man, spent most of the day resting.²⁶³ Late that afternoon, Weizmann and Jacobson met to discuss major concerns facing the new country.²⁶⁴ Weizmann noted that Israel did not yet have any kind of diplomatic corps, and asked Jacobson to become a temporary unofficial envoy for

²⁵⁹ See letter from Jacobson to Josef Cohn, March 27, 1952, in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

²⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 8.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

Israel.²⁶⁵ Jacobson immediately agreed, and the two men spent the evening not at the celebration, but instead dealing with issues facing Israel.²⁶⁶ Jacobson, who had only an eighth-grade education, quickly immersed himself in the details of the situation and without any great fanfare undertook this new challenge. In a letter to his friend AJ Granoff, Jacobson recounted that he had been invited to the rally, but was happy to skip it. He wrote, "They want me to attend...but I don't know... too much excitement for me. I don't like to be amongst honored guests—I belong to the common people."²⁶⁷

The next day, Monday May 17, Jacobson left New York for Washington, D.C. with a thrill. Early Monday morning, word came to Weizmann's suite at the Waldorf that he had been elected president of Israel.²⁶⁸ Thus, Jacobson left with not only geopolitical concerns, but also official greetings for the president of the United States from the president of Israel.

Arriving at the White House around 1 p.m., Jacobson entered the Oval Office to meet with Truman. As Jacobson later wrote:

The first thing I did was to deliver President Weizmann's greetings to President Truman. My friend's reaction to these greetings was such that I am sure he got as big a thrill out of the incident as did I. I then told him my reasons for coming to see him, that the new little state had no ambassador or anyone else to speak for it as yet.... All in all, the President (Truman) was very patient and understanding in his discussions on these matters. Our talks were thorough, even detailed. He was sympathetic and understanding. Characteristically, he made no definite promises but indicated that he would do everything possible to further favorable action if he found that doing so would in no way be detrimental to the best interests of our country. This led me to say once again, as I said many times, that I never wanted him to do anything for the oppressed Jewish people abroad if in doing so would result in the slightest damage to the

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ See Jacobson letter to Granoff, on Waldorf-Astoria letterhead, May 16, 1948, in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

²⁶⁸ Jacobson letter to Cohn, p. 9.

best interests of my country. On this subject my friend and I could never have any disagreement because I was willing to do everything I could for the remnants of my people if my own country was not hurt in the process.²⁶⁹

This incident illustrates key lessons in the entire Truman-Jacobson relationship. First, Jacobson was willing to help his people even though he accrued no personal, political, or financial gain from the situation. Truman seems to have concluded that Jacobson was acting because his conscience compelled him²⁷⁰, and Truman reacted with friendship and support. Second, Truman trusted that Jacobson's allegiance and concern was first and foremost with the United States, and that anything he promoted was based on the premise that the United States would not lose anything by helping the new Jewish nation.²⁷¹ Third, the role of their shared friendship cannot be underestimated. While Israel had no one to immediately serve as a representative to the United States, surely others existed with better knowledge or more command of the details of the situation. But Jacobson's friendship with Truman, as Weizmann must have concluded, far outweighed any other background or training. The personal relationship between Jacobson and the president had proved itself to be an effective tool for the Zionists prior to the Israel's independence; Weizmann was convinced that Jacobson could be equally useful in continuing to communicate with Truman on behalf of the new nation.

Jacobson asked Truman for help with three major issues facing Israel: ending the American arms embargo, loan guarantees, and help with the British.²⁷² Each of these

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Much later, Truman commented that he knew when Jacobson entered the discussion concerning a Jewish state that it was a deep belief, not any other desire that fueled Jacobson. See note 53 in chapter one for more discussion.

²⁷¹ A lifelong friendship that had cemented in shared battle experience during World War I and the ups and downs of business likely allowed Truman and Jacobson the ability to understand and trust each other to a high degree.

²⁷² See Jacobson letter to Cohn, p. 8.

issues loomed large for the new country. Almost immediately after declaring its independence, Israel was attacked by all of her neighbors—Lebanon to the north, Syria to the northeast, Jordan to the east, and Egypt to the south. Though battles had raged in Jerusalem and other parts of the country for some time, the provisional government in Israel almost immediately found itself facing declarations of war with nearly no materiel and nearly no funds to buy weapons. More, the United States, bowing to pressure from Great Britain, had a long-standing embargo on weapons sales to the Jewish militias in Palestine.²⁷³ Consequently, Israel desperately needed funds and weapons. Additionally, the British, who had publicly supported a Jewish national home in Palestine beginning with the Balfour Declaration of 1917, were nonetheless reticent to oppose Arab leaders in the Middle East.²⁷⁴ Accordingly, Israel also sought assistance in dealing with the British. While Truman did not offer any concrete promises to Jacobson, he ended the meeting by asking for an official meeting with the new president of Israel.

Jacobson returned to New York, prepared to give a report of his visit to Weizmann. But when he arrived at the Waldorf-Astoria, Jacobson was not at all prepared for what he saw. A crowd had gathered, and all were looking at the flags flying in front of the building. There, next to the American flag, flew the new flag of the State of Israel. Jacobson wrote, "I also looked up and saw the flag of Israel beside the stars and stripes of my own country—that was the pay-off!"²⁷⁵ Jacobson's comments illustrate the intense pride felt by the unusual opportunity to participate in the events leading to the reconstitution of the State of Israel. After giving Weizmann the details of his meeting

²⁷³ The embargo was largely an accomplishment of the State Department, whose leaders generally sided with the British in their unofficial support of Arabs. While continuing its own embargo against weapons sales to Zionist entities, the British continued to provide weapons to Arab nations during this period.

²⁷⁴ For a full discussion, see section 13 of Sachar's *A History of Israel*.

²⁷⁵ See Jacobson letter to Cohn, p. 10.

with Truman, Jacobson suggested that Truman wanted to host the new Israeli president in Washington, D.C. before Weizmann left for Israel.²⁷⁶ Just days later, Dr. Chaim Weizmann, now the president of Israel, stayed at the Blair House as the official guest of the president of the United States.²⁷⁷

During Weizmann's visit, he presented Truman a Torah as a gift from the State of Israel to the United States. The gift of a Torah, which illustrated the deep feelings of gratitude of the Jewish people, had an interesting history. Weizmann, who had been in New York, was having difficulty deciding what kind of gift to bring to Truman. So, he called Louis Finkelstein, then the chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS).²⁷⁸ Finkelstein suggested the Torah, and offered a scroll that he had commissioned for the *bar mitzvah* of his son Ezra.²⁷⁹ Subsequently, the Torah had been used during World War II by a Jewish chaplain before being returned to JTS.²⁸⁰ A few months after the gift was made, Finkelstein offered Truman, via a letter to Jacobson, the ark that had been made to house the scroll.²⁸¹ A few years later, Finkelstein tried to get the Torah back, writing to Jacobson to ask if Truman would consider donating the scroll to the JTS museum.²⁸² While no records indicate any action on the part of Truman, the Torah and ark are now displayed at the Truman Museum in Independence, Missouri.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ See letter from Finkelstein to Jacobson, May 29, 1953, in Jacobson Correspondence File at the Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ See Truman Library Website, which offers a picture of Weizmann and Truman with the Torah and a brief explanation.

²⁸¹ See letter from Jacobson to Truman, August 6, 1948, in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

²⁸² See letters from Finkelstein to Jacobson, May-November 1953, in Jacobson Correspondence File at the Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

After Israeli independence was declared and American recognition announced, the focus of both Truman and Jacobson turned more and more towards the looming presidential election. Though lurking throughout the affairs leading to the establishment of Israel, increased attention on the Jewish vote became much more apparent after Israeli independence was declared and American recognition announced.²⁸³ Throughout all of the dealings concerning Palestine and a Jewish state, political ramifications had never been far from Truman's mind, though he insisted his goal was to do the right thing rather than the politically expedient thing.²⁸⁴ But while some thought Truman's act of recognition was borne of his own belief, others saw Truman's move as a shrewd political move meant to outwit both the Soviet Union and Republican leaders in the United States.²⁸⁵ Republicans had been vocal concerning their support of the Jewish cause, and had sought to make Jewish statehood a campaign issue.²⁸⁶ The Soviets, with whom the Cold War was just beginning, seemed willing to recognize the Jewish state once it was declared.²⁸⁷ It seems that Truman realized that quick recognition of the new State of Israel limited the ability of both the Soviets and the Republican Party in America to make political gains on the president.

By 1948, the United States and the Soviet Union were already deeply competitive and moving further apart from their World War II alliance. And the Republicans, who

²⁸³ See chapter one for a full account of the involvement of Clark Clifford in Truman's deliberations. Clifford's participation was viewed as a political act, as Clifford was one of Truman's chief political advisors. More, when General Marshall suggested that he would not vote for Truman should Truman move forward and follow Clifford's arguments for recognition of Israel, the politics of the issue were boldly displayed.

²⁸⁴ See Truman, *Memoirs: Years of Trial and Hope*, p.132-169 for a full description of Truman's views in his own words.

²⁸⁵ Among others, General Marshall leveled this accusation against Truman during the infamous May 12 meeting at the white house. See chapter one for a discussion of the meeting.

²⁸⁶ Among leading Republicans, Senators Taft of Ohio and Wagner of New York, as well as Governor Thomas Dewey of New York had all voiced support for the Jewish cause.

²⁸⁷ Snetsinger, *Truman, the Jewish Vote, and the Creation of Israel*, p. 162.

had soundly defeated Truman's Democratic Party in the congressional election of 1946, saw the issue of a Jewish state as one more instance of a president who was weak and not a forceful decision maker.²⁸⁸ The Republicans had inserted a plank supporting a Jewish state into the 1944 platform, and seemed poised to do so again in 1948.²⁸⁹ Republican leaders, including Sen. Robert Taft of Ohio and Gov. Thomas Dewey of New York, the 1944 nominee, had been vocal concerning their support of a Jewish state. Both were vying for the 1948 nomination, and Truman knew that both men would use the issue of a Jewish state to criticize Truman if they could. Truman's political advisors, led by Clark Clifford, suggested that immediate recognition could undercut both the Soviets and the Republicans, thus giving Truman a visible, even if short-lived, public relations victory.²⁹⁰ In an election year that looked uncertain for Truman, every vote would be essential, and Truman's advisors saw the significant numbers of Jewish votes in states such as New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, California, and Illinois.²⁹¹ Thus, Truman's announcement of American recognition of the State of Israel accomplished many goals at once for Truman. But the issue did not end with the statement issued on May 14. Instead, Truman's actions in regard to Israel, and the political ramifications of those actions, both domestic and international, continued to factor into the words and actions of the president.

Throughout the summer and fall of 1948, Truman relied on Jewish friends, including Jacobson, for both political and financial support.²⁹² For Jacobson, the election of his old friend became a major focus just as the Zionist cause had before.²⁹³ Jacobson

²⁸⁸ See McCullough, *Truman*, p. 596.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁰ Snetsinger, p. 113.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 134.

²⁹² In addition to Jacobson, Jewish friends included P. Rosenberg in Kansas City, B'nai B'rith leaders Maurice Bisgyer, Phil Klutznick, and Frank Goldman.

²⁹³ See Borenstine interview.

turned to the Jewish leaders and wealthy in Kansas City who had been involved in the Zionist cause and asked for support for Truman.²⁹⁴ Jacobson's daughters recall the multiple solicitations Jacobson made on behalf of Truman's campaign for the presidency.²⁹⁵ More, Jacobson also traveled with the president and offered to do all that he could to help Truman's campaign.

When Truman's campaign train was stopped due to lack of funds, Jacobson was one of the friends called upon to raise more money.²⁹⁶ Another friend who helped raise money to keep the train moving was Rabbi Herb Friedman.²⁹⁷ Friedman traveled ahead of the train, soliciting donations from Jewish leaders in cities Truman was scheduled to visit.²⁹⁸ He raised funds by suggesting that support for Truman would lead to greater support for Israel.²⁹⁹ Every few days, he would return to the train, deliver the funds he raised, and spend some time onboard the train. Jacobson also spent time on Truman's famous "Whistle-Stop" campaign train, including riding along on the final campaign trip from New York City back to Kansas City.³⁰⁰ On one campaign trip to Oklahoma in September 1948, Jacobson gave Truman the hat off of his own head after Truman had admired the hat.³⁰¹ Truman continued to wear that hat throughout the campaign, and pictures of Truman in the hat at the back of the campaign train are now well known.

In August 1948, Jacobson and Weizmann corresponded again, discussing the issue of loan guarantees. Another matter, the question of *de jure* recognition of Israel,

²⁹⁴ Ibid. See also Shusterman interview.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ See Borenstine interview.

²⁹⁷ See Friedman, *Roots of the Future*, 146-147.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ See "Truman's Former Partner Loaned Lucky Chapeau" in *The Cleveland Press*, found in Jacobson files at the Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³⁰¹ See letter from Jacobson to Truman, undated but from 1949, in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

also developed. Truman's statement of recognition on May 14, 1948 had been a *de facto* recognition. *De jure* recognition provided more international acceptance and the possibility of Israeli participation in the United Nations. In a letter from Truman to Weizmann in September 1948, Truman revealed not only his ongoing support for Israel, but one of the main reasons behind his support. Truman wrote that he hoped peace would come to Israel and that a "proper location of all those Jews who suffered so much during the war" could be found.³⁰² The matter of the form of recognition was settled in early 1949, after Israel held its first elections on January 25, 1949. Six days later, on January 31, 1949, the United States issued *de jure* recognition of Israel.

As Election Day neared, and rhetoric criticizing Truman's handling of the Israel situation increased, Jacobson bought a full-page advertisement in the *Kansas City Jewish Chronicle* supporting Truman. With the election nearing and war raging between Jews and Arabs in Israel, Republican and some Jewish leaders continued to criticize Truman's handling of the entire situation. In the advertisement, published on October 29, 1948, Jacobson highlighted Truman's actions in support of Israel and offered his own recollection of Truman's quick and decisive choices to support the Jewish cause.³⁰³ The outcome of the 1948 election, and the surprises it produced, are now well known. The image of Truman holding an edition of the *Chicago Tribune* proclaiming Thomas Dewey the victor over Harry Truman has become iconic. In the days following the election, Jacobson received many congratulatory letters and cables, including a letter from Weizmann which notes the importance of the Truman victory. Weizmann wrote, "...on

³⁰² See letter from Truman to Weizmann, September 10, 1948, in President's Personal File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³⁰³ See copy of the advertisement in Jacobson files, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

this day which means much to all of us and I know means particularly much to you."³⁰⁴

Weizmann continued,

...Much will depend on the attitude of the President of the United States who has been elected under such auspicious circumstances and with such a large measure of national support. And a great responsibility devolves upon you, my dear friend. I need not say much on the subject, for I know that you are deeply alive to that responsibility.³⁰⁵

Jacobson's daughters recall the delight Eddie Jacobson felt with Truman's election, and the excitement that came with plans for Truman's inauguration.³⁰⁶

Truman's inauguration in 1949 became a grand celebration. Not only was this the first inauguration for Truman, as he ascended to the presidency after the death of Franklin Roosevelt in April 1945, but the Republican majority in Congress, so sure of a Republican presidential victory, had allocated an unprecedented sum of money for the celebration.³⁰⁷ Special train cars carried friends and supporters from Kansas City to the inaugural festivities in January 1949. Among those on the train were Eddie Jacobson and his wife Bluma, their daughter Gloria Jacobson and AD Jacobson and his wife Dora, brother and sister-in-law of Eddie Jacobson.³⁰⁸ The year 1949 would be a time of celebration and continued friendship for Truman and Jacobson.

At the end of 1948, the first of many tribute dinners honoring Jacobson occurred. The dinner, held in Kansas City in December, raised \$2,500 which was earmarked for two recreation rooms in Israeli military hospitals.³⁰⁹ One of the two rooms was to be dedicated in honor of Jacobson, while the other was to be dedicated to the memory of

³⁰⁴ See letter from Weizmann to Jacobson, November 4, 1948, in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ See Borenstine and Shusterman interviews.

³⁰⁷ See Truman Library Website for an article on the Truman Inauguration.

³⁰⁸ See Shusterman interview.

³⁰⁹ See letter from Jacobson to Weizmann, December 10, 1948, in Jacobson Correspondence files, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

Martha E. Truman, the president's mother. Jacobson sent the check with an explanatory letter to Chaim Weizmann in late December, and received a response from Vera Weizmann, wife of Chaim, in early January 1949.³¹⁰ In her letter, Vera Weizmann suggested that other needs were more pressing than the recreation rooms, and suggested that the funds be used for a retraining and rehabilitation center.³¹¹ Jacobson responded almost immediately to the letter, offering a gesture of friendship for Israel.³¹² In his letter, Jacobson recalled his earlier letter, which noted that the funds raised in December were to go to two rooms for relaxation for soldiers.³¹³ When Vera Weizmann wrote suggesting a change in the use of the funds, Jacobson also changed his plans. Writing that "...in view of the fact that my friends in Kansas City contributed the money for the original purpose of equipping the recreational rooms...I feel that the money should be used for that purpose alone," Jacobson included another check, this time for \$1,500 of his own funds, to meet the needs mentioned in Mrs. Weizmann's earlier letter.³¹⁴ Just weeks later, Vera Weizmann sent another letter to Jacobson, confirming receipt of the second check and offering thanks. The letter also mentioned Jacobson's upcoming trip to Israel, a trip that would garner international attention and allow Jacobson to see the results of his interactions with Truman on behalf of the Jewish state.

For Jacobson, a trip to Israel in 1949 provided one of the few visible "perks" of his lifelong friendship with Truman. The trip, the culmination of years of calls, visits, fundraising, advocacy, and diplomacy, became a high point in the lives of both Eddie and

³¹⁰ Ibid, and letter from Vera Weizmann to Jacobson, January 12, 1949, in Jacobson Correspondence files, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² See Jacobson letter to Vera Weizmann, February 10, 1949, in Jacobson Correspondence files, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

Bluma Jacobson.³¹⁵ Because of his work and his contacts with Zionist leaders, Jacobson's trip had the trappings of a diplomatic mission, including the fact that the Jacobsons stayed with the American ambassador in Israel, James McDonald.³¹⁶ Some speculated that Jacobson's trip was at the behest of Truman, and constituted a secretive diplomatic visit.³¹⁷ One report stated that Jacobson was on a one-month trip to serve as an unofficial envoy for Truman.³¹⁸ But Jacobson disputed this fact, and more than once explained that he and his wife were "just a couple of tourists."³¹⁹ While such a trip would have seemed out of the ordinary for a Midwestern haberdasher, Jacobson was no ordinary clothier, and his involvements in Zionist affairs easily influenced his decision to travel to Israel. The Jacobson family had not traveled much, enjoying only the occasional visit to a square-dance resort in the Ozark Mountains of southern Missouri. So, as his daughters recall, the trip to Israel was an extraordinary experience for both Bluma and Eddie Jacobson.³²⁰

The trip began with a flight from Kansas City to New York City, followed by a flight to Paris. The Jacobsons spent two days sightseeing in Paris before flying to Tel Aviv on March 20, 1949. Jacobson, who served with Truman in France during World War I, noted that he had seen "just about everything in France except Paris" during the war, and enjoyed the chance to see the sights of Paris during those two days.³²¹ Jacobson's status as something more than an ordinary tourist became notable during their

³¹⁵ See Borenstine Interview.

³¹⁶ See letter from McDonald.

³¹⁷ See "Pal of Truman Stops in Paris; Denies He's Envoy to Tel Aviv" in *New York Herald Tribune*, Paris Edition, March 19, 1949, found in Jacobson Articles File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³¹⁸ See "Truman Ex-Partner Flying to Israel as an Unofficial Envoy" in *World Telegraph*, March 18, 1949, in Jacobson Clippings File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ See Borenstine and Shusterman interviews.

³²¹ See "Pal of Truman..." in *New York Herald Tribune*.

brief stay in Paris, as the Jacobsons enjoyed a reception at the American embassy.³²²

Upon their arrival in Tel Aviv, the Jacobsons were met by an Israeli government driver and taken to the residence of the American ambassador in Tel Aviv.³²³ Jacobson had gotten to know Ambassador McDonald during the years leading to Israeli Statehood, and the two were on friendly terms. A year later, McDonald illustrated his feelings towards Jacobson in a letter to Frank Goldman, president of B'nai B'rith to be included in a tribute to Jacobson. McDonald, recalling the visit, wrote:

...During our stay in Israel, the McDonalds have had the privilege of entertaining most of the visiting VIPs. Of all these, none has left a deeper impression than Eddie [Jacobson]. His sincerity, his devotion to a great cause, and his singular modesty combine to make him an American of whom all of us can be very proud...In all that he has done, Eddie has shown a rare sense of discernment that has enabled him to make his influence felt despite his punctilious care not to take the least advantage of his high associations. In this he has shown an instinctive and exact sense of what he properly can do. Happily, he has nonetheless been able to be of high value not only to his fellow Jews and to Israel but also to the United States. Just because Eddie Jacobson is so thoroughly American—and so Jewish—he has played quietly but effectively his large constructive

role.³²⁴

The Jacobsons' Israel trip included a leisurely lunch meeting with Chaim Weizmann at his home in Rehovot, tours to see the Negev, a visit to the children's home in Ranana, visits to Jerusalem, the Lebanese border, Nazareth, Haifa, and Tel Aviv.³²⁵ The Jacobsons were present when McDonald presented his credentials to President Weizmann, and they enjoyed a dinner with Ambassador McDonald and Prime Minister

³²² See "Visitors to Israel See Bright Future" in *New York Times*, April 23, 1949, in Jacobson Clippings File at the Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³²³ See "Truman's Chaver" in *Newsweek*, April 11, 1949, in Jacobson Clippings File at the Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³²⁴ See letter from McDonald to Goldman, March 3, 1950, in Jacobson Correspondence File at the Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³²⁵ Ibid.

David Ben Gurion at the American ambassador's home.³²⁶ Like other tourists, the Jacobsons bought souvenirs and sent postcards to family and friends, including Harry Truman.³²⁷ To the president Jacobson wrote, "I sincerely hope the day will come when you can visit this great little State of Israel. It will take me a long time to tell you my experiences and what I saw with my own eyes."³²⁸ Jacobson seems to have grasped the enormity of the actions of his friend the president, as the words of the postcard indicate. More, Jacobson's words illustrate the closeness of the two men, as Jacobson, almost intimately, wrote of his desire to tell Truman in person about all he was seeing.

The Jacobsons' return trip to the United States included a stop in France, just as the trip to Israel had. But on their return trip, instead of staying in Paris, the Jacobsons traveled to the Vosges Mountains, where Jacobson and Truman had served together during World War I. Most assuredly the visit to the sight of earlier battles brought back memories for Eddie Jacobson, though he rarely spoke of his battlefield experiences.³²⁹ Instead, he talked about his military service by speaking of his times in America preparing or about the journeys rather than about the actual fighting.³³⁰ Upon their return, Eddie and Bluma Jacobson recounted the trip to friends and family, overflowing with stories of Israel while barely mentioning the visits to France.³³¹ Though Eddie Jacobson spoke with admiration and excitement about Israel, he was quick to note his pleasure

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ See "Truman's Chaver" for report on souvenirs, and interview with Borenstine for report on post cards.

³²⁸ The postcard can be found in the Jacobson Correspondence File at the Truman Library, Independence, Missouri. A copy of the post card can be found in Truman's Correspondence Files as well.

³²⁹ Jacobson's daughter Elinor Borenstine stated that her father rarely spoke of his experiences as a soldier in battle. See Borenstine Interview. He talked about military service, but spoke about his times in America preparing, or about the journeys, rather than about the actual fighting.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Ibid.

upon returning to his normal life in Kansas City.³³² The Truman-Jacobson friendship, which had produced this unlikely voyage, continued as the Truman presidency unfolded.

As he had since Truman's ascendancy to the presidency, Jacobson continued to send clothing from his haberdashery to the president. Jacobson's daughter Gloria recalls seeing a package of pajamas in the backseat of the car that Eddie was preparing to send to his friend in the White House.³³³ While Gloria was accustomed to such activity, a friend of hers sharing a ride was awestruck at seeing the president's pajamas.³³⁴ As had been his practice, Jacobson never sent a bill, a fact the president noticed. In a letter from July of 1949, Truman noted that the goods arrived and that "all he needed was a bill."³³⁵

Later that month, Truman sent Jacobson another note, responding to Jacobson's appointment as a director of a local bank in Kansas City. Truman wrote, "You and I seem to be getting up in the world—you a Bank Director and me the President of the United States." Truman's and Jacobson's friendship was filled with laughs and humor, and the bond shared by the two men included their shared history as two men from modest means with little formal education who fought together, failed together, and eventually found success. Late in 1949, Truman paid Jacobson a high compliment in a letter to clothier Charles Kaplan of the Shirtcraft Co. Kaplan had sold clothing to the Truman-Jacobson haberdashery, and was a supplier to Jacobson's Westport Menswear. In a note of thanks to Kaplan for some shirts, Truman wrote about Jacobson, saying, "I don't know of anyone I think more of than I do Eddie."³³⁶

³³² Ibid.

³³³ See Shusterman interview.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ See letter from Truman to Jacobson, July 8, 1949, in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³³⁶ See note from Truman to Kaplan, December 6, 1949 in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

In April 1950, on the fifth anniversary of Truman's becoming president of the United States, Jacobson wrote to his friend the sort of warm, understanding note that he had sent when Truman was first administered the oath of office. Writing in 1950, Jacobson offered his compliments and his prayers. He wrote:

...If you will recall in my letter to you, I told you how my wife and I prayed to God to grant you health and guidance—courage I knew you always had. Many great things have happened in these few years. One of them, the answer to the prayers (sic) of my people, who for over 2000 years (sic) prayed for a home of their own, and through you their prayers (sic) were answered. Mr. President, I know the Lord answered those prayers (sic) for your health, and for the happiness of you and your fine family. You have had a tremendous job, but you have done it well. Now you have the good wishes of my people scattered in all four corners of the world, asking the Lord to continue giving you many more years of the best of health and the guidance to carry you through the many hard years ahead. May God Bless you.³³⁷

Truman, replied immediately to Jacobson's note, penning an equally warm letter. The President wrote:

I can't tell you how very much I appreciated your good letter of the twelfth. Letters from my good friends are among the things which enable me to keep going under the stress and strain of this terrific office. I don't know when I received a letter I appreciated more than I did yours.³³⁸

Clearly Truman felt more than a modicum of closeness to Jacobson. This letter sheds light on the then 40-plus years of friendship between the two men. Truman's presidency, by 1950, had encountered difficult decisions and sharp criticism. Words of friendship and praise like those of Eddie Jacobson undoubtedly brought comfort to the embattled president.

³³⁷ See letter from Jacobson to Truman, April 12, 1950, in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³³⁸ See letter from Truman to Jacobson, April 14, 1950, in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

May 1950 saw another round of meetings for Jacobson concerning Israel. Jacobson added a three-day stop in Washington, D.C. to a buying trip in New York City, arriving in Washington, D.C. on Friday, May 5, 1950.³³⁹ He met with Eliahu Elath, the Israeli ambassador to the United States, and in the afternoon met with President Truman.³⁴⁰ Again issues of arms and finances were discussed, and again the president offered assurances that Israel would receive whatever help it needed.³⁴¹ Jacobson recounted that the meeting with Truman also included the usual ribbing between two old friends. Jacobson wrote, "He told me I was losing weight. I told him I thought our President was a little pregnant. He told me it was none of my damn business."³⁴² The friendship between Jacobson and Truman had reached the point that the two could easily move from serious matters of state to gentle jabs at each other without difficulty.

In June 1950, Jacobson became ill with heart problems. Truman wrote Jacobson a note in late July that addressed the health issues and once again illustrated the friendship between the two men. Truman wrote that he considered it a privilege to have friends like Jacobson. At the end of the note, in his own handwriting, Truman added a line about Jacobson's health, "Take care of yourself. I sure don't want to send flowers to Mrs. Jacobson for you!"³⁴³ Jacobson suffered from high blood pressure and endured periodic hospitalizations for heart ailments throughout the last five years of his life. Jacobson recovered relatively quickly and resumed his activities. In December 1950, Jacobson was again asked to help the new Jewish state.

³³⁹ According to Elinor Borenstine, this was a common practice for Eddie Jacobson.

³⁴⁰ See Jacobson notes on visit, May 5, 1950, in Jacobson Personal Papers File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ See letter from Truman to Jacobson, July 22, 1950, in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

During the first few years of Israeli statehood, two issues dominated all others: security and absorption of immigrants.³⁴⁴ Both issues put an enormous financial strain on the fledgling nation, and in December 1950, Jacobson was again asked to offer assistance. A new group, called the American Financial and Development Corporation for Israel was being formed with the primary goal of securing a loan for Israel in the United States. Abba Eban, then the ambassador to the United States from Israel, wrote Jacobson to invite him to serve on the board of directors of this new entity.³⁴⁵ Jacobson, however, declined the invitation. In a letter in January 1951 to Eban and Henry Mentor, the leader of the new organization, Jacobson wrote:

I think it best that I do not affiliate with any organization as a member of the board or an officer. I think I will be more welcome in certain places as just plain "Eddie Jacobson," with no official capacity. I did advise...that I would assist in any way possible to make the promotion of this bond issue a success. I will go anywhere that is necessary to make a speech, or do anything else to help this cause along. I realize how important this matter is to the future of Israel, and assure you of my utmost support.³⁴⁶

Jacobson's words demonstrate not only his willingness to help Israel, but also his understanding of the influence he carried and his own abilities to assist Israel. In a response, Mentor acknowledged Jacobson's contributions and acumen, writing, "...I do not know that there is anyone in America who could be of greater service—or who has already rendered greater service. Your all-out offer of helpfulness is enheartening (sic) to all of us, and we shall plan accordingly."³⁴⁷ Jacobson seems to have understood the uniqueness of his relationship with Truman, and also seems to have understood the value

³⁴⁴ See chapters 13 and 15 of Sachar's *A History of Israel* for a discussion of these two problems faced by Israel following independence.

³⁴⁵ See letter from Eban to Jacobson, December 27, 1950, in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³⁴⁶ See letter from Jacobson to Eban, January 2, 1951, in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³⁴⁷ See letter from Henry Mentor to Eddie Jacobson, January 8, 1951, in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

of remaining largely unaffiliated, so that his words to the President would remain solely his own.

The spring of 1951 saw major challenges for Harry Truman. As the situation deteriorated in Korea, war became a major focus of the Truman administration and the American people. Compounding Truman's problems, the general in charge of the American forces in Asia, Gen. Douglas MacArthur, a popular figure in America, defied Truman's orders. The issue simmered for some time before Truman decided that the only reasonable course of action he faced was to relieve MacArthur of his duties. Truman received mountains of criticism for the action, so letters of support from friends such as Eddie Jacobson must have encouraged the president. On April 19, 1951, Jacobson wrote to Truman about the MacArthur matter. He wrote:

...When I received the news about General MacArthur's removal, it brought back memories of a scene in the west balcony of the old convention hall in Kansas City, in August, 1917. It was at a class in the non-commissioned officers school of Battery F, Second Missouri Field Artillery, a first lieutenant whose name happened to be Harry S. Truman was teaching us the meaning of the word "discipline" and never will I forget the following words, "DISCIPLINE IS THE INSTANT OBEDIENCE OF A COMMAND—EMPHASIS ON THE WORD INSTANT." As far as I know, the meaning of the word 'discipline' has never been changed by the Commander-in-Chief, or the Chiefs of Staff of our army. Thirty-four years ago, as a first lieutenant you taught this, and now as commander in chief, you had the courage to practice what you preached. God bless you and more power to you.³⁴⁸

Truman responded in his usual fashion, writing to Jacobson that he "...was glad to be reminded of the disciplinary instructions which I gave Battery "F" in August 1917.

Things are in a turmoil now but I think when the ducks are all in a row we will be the

³⁴⁸ See letter from Jacobson to Truman, April 19, 1951, in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

ones who will bag them.”³⁴⁹ Truman’s words illustrate his willingness to act, even when unpopular. The support of old friends surely reassured the beleaguered president as he faced such challenges.

While facing the crisis in Asia, 1951 saw continued American involvement with Israeli affairs as well. Israel faced a significant need for American aid and assistance both monetary and real. The need for financial assistance grew from Israel’s continuing security and immigration concerns.³⁵⁰ In addition, Israel lacked adequate storage for grain, threatening to result in food shortages.³⁵¹ Jacobson was again enlisted to gain American assistance on both matters. Truman supported the assistance package Israel sought, but the aid would need to be passed by Congress.³⁵² Jacobson corresponded with Josef Cohen, Abba Eban, Teddy Kollek, and others and traveled to Washington to meet with Truman as he continued his involvement with Israel’s needs.³⁵³ Ultimately Israel received an aid package of nearly \$70 million from the United States that provided the new nation with the resources it needed to handle its growing needs.³⁵⁴

As Truman entered his eighth year in office in 1952, he faced the question of whether or not he should seek re-election. Truman’s popularity was low, and in March 1952, Truman announced that he would not seek another term as president. The announcement brought a warm letter from Jacobson to his old partner. Jacobson wrote:

³⁴⁹ Letter from Truman to Jacobson, April 24, 1951, in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri. See also chapter 15 in Sachar’s *A History of Israel*.

³⁵⁰ See letter from Jacobson to Weizmann, March 23, 1951, in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ See letters to Kollek, Eban, Cohn, Herlitz on loan guarantees, spring-summer 1951, in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³⁵⁴ See letter from Esther Herlitz to Eddie Jacobson, September 18, 1951, in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

Your decision not to be a candidate this year has brought lots of happiness to your family and your real friends. You have given most of your life to your country and have served it well—a magnificent job—it will be so recorded in history. We pray to God O mighty (sic) that you can live the rest of your days as you have always wished—a real country gentleman—amongst the hills of Jackson county.³⁵⁵

Truman received Jacobson's note warmly, and replied two days later. He wrote:

I thank you from my heart for the warm sentiments expressed in your message. It is good to have the honest reactions of friends concerning my decision not to be a candidate for re-election. Naturally, I feel deeply pleased by your general words of praise, but I'm especially grateful for your prayers and good wishes for my happiness and contentment in the years ahead.³⁵⁶

But just as Truman began to make plans to leave the presidency, Jacobson's name became mentioned in connection with another presidency. On November 9, 1952, Chaim Weizmann, Israel's first president died after a long illness. Not long after receiving word of Weizmann's death, Jacobson began to plan a memorial service for the late Israeli leader. Truman was notified of the service and wrote Jacobson to applaud both the service and Weizmann. Truman wrote:

...In my opinion, he [Weizmann] was one of the great men of this age. He was not only a scientist but was a leader of men. He understood people and he knew how to get the most out of them for their own good and for the peace of the world. I felt as if I had lost a close personal friend when he died. He and I have had some wonderful conversations on the world situation and the necessary remedies to meet conditions and maintain peace in the world. I wish he could have lived longer. It would have been a great benefit to his own country and to all of the rest of us who are working for world peace.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁵ See letter from Jacobson to Truman, March 29, 1952, in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³⁵⁶ See letter from Truman to Jacobson, April 1, 1952, in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³⁵⁷ See letter from Truman to Jacobson, November 28, 1952, in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

Just as Jacobson was preparing to honor the fallen Israeli president, an orthodox rabbi in Kansas City, Rabbi Tibor Stern released a statement calling for the election of Eddie Jacobson as the next president of Israel. The sudden suggestion caught Jacobson by surprise—and also received Jacobson's immediate rejection. Truman wrote Jacobson a note on the matter on December 2, 1952, concluding that "I'll say that he [Rabbi Stern] couldn't nominate a better man, but I sincerely hope you won't take it, for your own welfare and benefit."³⁵⁸ Although Jacobson clearly denied any interest in the job, Rabbi Stern's suggestion made headlines in Kansas City.³⁵⁹ Jacobson's response to Truman, dated December 7, 1952, was direct:

...It is simply ridiculous for a man like Rabbi Stern to do a thing like he has done without consulting me first. The thought of being president of Israel never entered my head. I have no political aspirations in either Israel or America. I have no qualifications and in no way could I handle the job like that. I am an American citizen, born and educated here, and do not want to live in any other country on the face of this earth—am too proud of my American citizenship to trade it for any office in the world.³⁶⁰

While the suggestion of one Orthodox rabbi might seem hyperbolic and even outlandish, the words of Weizmann's widow offer a clear statement on Jacobson's role in helping Israel gain statehood. Vera Weizmann, the wife of the late president, acknowledged Jacobson's work in a letter written on December 1, 1952. She wrote:

...Only most intimate friends know the extraordinary role that was played by you in swinging the scale in our favour when the future looked so precarious and ambiguous...One day the world will know the part you played in helping my husband to achieve his goal. I cannot thank you

³⁵⁸ See letter from Truman to Jacobson, December 2, 1952, in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³⁵⁹ See "Boom for Eddie Jacobson" in *The Kansas City Times*, December 3, 1952.

³⁶⁰ See letter from Jacobson to Truman, December 7, 1952, in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

enough for it, but my husband was fully aware of the role you played and was forever grateful to you.³⁶¹

With Weizmann's death and the close of Truman's presidency, Jacobson's most active involvements with the Zionist cause also came to an end. But the change of leadership in both countries did not completely stop Jacobson's activities, nor did it alter the lifelong friendship he shared with Truman.

Truman returned to his home in Missouri with one of the lowest levels of approval of any former president. Yet, for all of the national criticism, old friends like Jacobson welcomed Truman back to his home.³⁶² During 1953 and 1954, Truman resumed his friendships and worked to raise money for his presidential library. Truman lived a normal life like no other former president before or after him had. His army buddies from World War I again became his social circle, and he enjoyed the simple pleasures of bourbon and poker. And he continued to enjoy a good laugh, as illustrated by an invitation to a poker game sent by Jacobson to Truman on August 6, 1954. Jacobson wrote:

...On Thursday evening...a group of gentlemen (sometimes I wonder) are going to have a dinner at Oakwood Country Club—and as usual, it will be a real Oakwood dinner. Immediately following the dinner, there will be short discussion of plans for a fishing trip. It should not last very long. The balance of the evening will be taken up by a cultural study on the papers of your very dear friend the late Judge Vinson. There are fifty-three different phases of this work, and no doubt there will be agreements and disagreements as to the values of these various pieces of papers. You being so familiar with the various papers involved, we would very much like to have you there—hoping your health will permit it. I know you are not a very mercenary gentleman, but there is a possibility that you will be

³⁶¹ See letter from Vera Weizmann to Jacobson, December 1, 1952, in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³⁶² Recalled by Loeb Granoff, Elinor Borenstine, and Herb Jacobson in interviews with the author.

paid for your judgment and knowledge of these papers—just a possibility.³⁶³

The gathering was of the Elmers, Jacobson's longstanding group of fishing buddies who traveled to Canada for an annual outing. Truman had accompanied the group on a number of trips, serving as camp cook and whiling the days away reading as the others hunted and fished.³⁶⁴ Jacobson's note was met with a quick note from Truman, thanking him for the invitation and the laugh.³⁶⁵

Truman and Jacobson continued to enjoy their friendship until Jacobson's death in October 1955. One example of the depth of the Truman-Jacobson friendship appeared just months before Jacobson's passing. In a handwritten letter from Truman to Jacobson in June 1955, the former President proposed a grand trip to be taken by the two men and their wives in the fall of that year. Truman suggested that they leave New York City for Oxford, where Truman would be given an honorary degree, then travel to London to call on Winston Churchill, Clement Atlee, and Queen Elizabeth. They would then travel to Holland and France, meeting the leaders of each country. From France they would travel to Rome to meet the Pope, then by boat travel to Israel, followed by stops in Turkey and Greece before returning to the United States.³⁶⁶ The grand voyage proposed by Truman would be a wonderful tour for the lifelong friends and former partners who had traveled to Europe as young soldiers decades before. But the trip never occurred. First, Truman postponed the trip from the fall of 1955 to the spring of 1956 because Bess Truman

³⁶³ See letter from Jacobson to Truman, August 6, 1954, in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³⁶⁴ Recalled by Elinor Borenstine in interview with the author.

³⁶⁵ See letter from Truman to Jacobson, August 19, 1954, in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³⁶⁶ See letter from Truman to Jacobson, June 30, 1955, in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

needed dental work. Then, on October 25, 1955, Eddie Jacobson suffered a massive heart attack and died.

Though Jacobson had suffered from heart disease for some time, his death was unexpected and a shock to those who knew him.³⁶⁷ Though Jacobson's daughters have differing recollections concerning Truman's attendance at the funeral of Eddie Jacobson, both recall visiting with the former president at the Shiva home after the funeral.³⁶⁸ Both Gloria Shusterman and Elinor Borenstine recall seeing tears roll down Truman's cheek as he recalled his friend Eddie Jacobson.³⁶⁹ Truman told the two women that their father was the closest thing he [Truman] had to kinfolk.³⁷⁰ The influence of Jacobson, and the extent of the relationship between Jacobson and Truman can be seen in Truman's words about his old friend just after Jacobson's death. Truman said, "Eddie was one of the best friends I had in this world. He was absolutely trustworthy. I don't know how I'm going to get along without him."³⁷¹

The Truman-Jacobson friendship, begun in the early days of the 20th century and solidified by the rigors of World War I became more than the typical friendship. A shared business that both succeeded and failed created trust, and as each man progressed in life, the friendship endured. When Truman became the president of the United States and assumed one of the world's most powerful offices, his relationship with Eddie Jacobson remained comfortable and thoroughly ordinary, reflecting their shared Midwestern heritage. And though their friendship played a major role in the establishment of the first Jewish state in two millennia, their influence on each other and their camaraderie

³⁶⁷ See Shusterman and Borenstine interviews with the author.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ See "Eddie Jacobson, Truman Partner" in *The New York Times*, October 26, 1955.

continued unabated after Israeli independence just as it had before. The two men related to each other as they had for so many years—as trusted friends, filled with respect, quick with a joke, and eternally loyal.

Conclusion

In the aftermath of Eddie Jacobson's untimely death, tributes poured in from throughout the country. Jacobson's funeral, held at Temple B'nai Jehudah in Kansas City, was attended by more than 1,000 people.³⁷² Obituaries appeared not only in *The Kansas City Star* and *The Kansas City Times*, but also *The New York Times*.³⁷³ In all of the accounts, Jacobson was remembered for his partnership and friendship with Harry Truman as well as his work on behalf of the State of Israel.³⁷⁴ *The Kansas City Star* reported that Jacobson's death elicited tributes from Israeli leaders including then Prime Minister Moshe Sharet, Vera Weizmann, widow of Chaim Weizmann, David Ben Gurion, and Ambassador Eliahu Elath.³⁷⁵ *The Kansas City Times* noted that Jacobson was best known for his untiring efforts on behalf of the new State of Israel.³⁷⁶ *The New York Times* reported that Jacobson had been deeply involved with Israel, and had served as an interim unofficial liaison between Chaim Weizmann and Harry Truman.³⁷⁷ The accounts also noted that, in receiving B'nai B'rith's highest honor in 1950, Jacobson was credited

³⁷² See "Over One Thousand Persons Pay Tribute to Eddie Jacobson at Funeral Service," in the *Kansas City Jewish Chronicle*, Volume 59, number 43, October 28, 1955, in Jacobson Clippings File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³⁷³ See "Eddie Jacobson Rites," in *The Kansas City Star*, October 27, 1955, "Eddie Jacobson Dies," in *The Kansas City Times*, October 26, 1955, and "Eddie Jacobson, Truman Partner" in *The New York Times*, October 26, 1955, all in the Jacobson Clippings File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ See "Eddie Jacobson Rites," in *The Kansas City Star*, October 27, 1955, in the Jacobson Clippings File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³⁷⁶ See "Eddie Jacobson Dies" in *The Kansas City Times*, October 26, 1955, in the Jacobson Clippings File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³⁷⁷ See "Eddie Jacobson, Truman Partner" in *The New York Times*, October 26, 1955 in the Jacobson Clippings File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

with contributions to the Zionist cause that "were of such high order that history alone shall take the full measure."³⁷⁸

Nearly 50 years after the death of Eddie Jacobson, history can in fact provide some analysis of Eddie Jacobson's contributions and the significance of the Truman-Jacobson friendship. During the final years of his life, Eddie Jacobson received many awards and honors for his involvement with Israel. Tribute dinners were held, and Jacobson lived the life of a well-known figure.³⁷⁹ Jacobson's daughters note that he accepted the role he played in history, but never thought it was anything more than luck.³⁸⁰ Regularly, Jacobson described his situation by using the Yiddish term 'bashert,' loosely translated as fate.³⁸¹ Others, as evidenced by press reports following Jacobson's death, seemed to view Jacobson as a significant player in Truman's dealings with Israel. Time and new research provide new understandings of Jacobson's role.

In an extensive article on American recognition of Israel published in *The San Francisco Chronicle* in May of 1983, author Peter Grose offers the following analysis of Eddie Jacobson's role:

Jacobson's influence on Truman has become a mythology in modern Israel. It has also been debunked by professional lobbyists who tout their own efforts of persuasion. But on this one occasion, [Jacobson's meeting with Truman on March 13, 1947 in the Oval Office] there can be no doubt that the role of Jacobson was decisive. He persuaded Truman, who had closed his door to all other Zionist petitioners, to receive the elder statesman of Jewish nationalism, Chaim Weizmann.³⁸²

³⁷⁸ See the three aforementioned articles.

³⁷⁹ See Borenstine interview conducted by the author on November 8, 2004.

³⁸⁰ See Borenstine interview and Shusterman interview, both conducted by the author, November 8, 2004.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² See "The Truman Myth," in *The San Francisco Chronicle*, May 11, 1983, in the Jacobson Clippings File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

Grose's assertion concerning the development of a Jacobson mythology correctly identifies a commonly held position concerning Eddie Jacobson not only in Israel, but in the United States as well. The Eddie Jacobson mythology has become recognizable as a popularly-held belief that Eddie Jacobson deserves much, if not all of the credit for convincing Truman to recognize Israel just after statehood was declared. Others, including many involved in organized American Jewish life claim responsibility for moving Truman towards recognition, just as Grose correctly asserts.³⁸³ Realistically, Grose's assertions concerning Jacobson's role in linking Truman and Weizmann seem to be far closer to reality than the broader and popularly held myths concerning Eddie Jacobson. During the critical period of March, April, and May of 1948, Eddie Jacobson did play a key role as he convinced Truman to meet with Chaim Weizmann.

As discussed in chapter one, Zionist leaders in the United States alienated and angered Truman during the discussions concerning a Jewish state.³⁸⁴ Truman, whose temper was well-known, fumed at the blunt behavior of some Zionist leaders.³⁸⁵ He had decided to distance himself from the entire matter. Jacobson's actions on March 13, convincing an agitated Truman to meet with Weizmann, appear to have been a critical accomplishment. Not only did Jacobson help to create a basis for Truman's friendship with Weizmann, but that friendship helped to solidify Truman's support of Israel.³⁸⁶ But just as Peter Grose suggests, this one meeting may represent the highpoint of Jacobson's

³⁸³ See chapter one's discussion of Zionist leaders who attempted to influence Truman. Notable among those who claim credit but in fact had rocky relations with Truman is Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver.

³⁸⁴ See the second half of chapter one for a full description of these events.

³⁸⁵ See McCullough's *Truman*, p. 494-496 for a discussion of Truman's temper, and chapter one for a description of Truman's anger towards American Zionist leaders.

³⁸⁶ See chapter three's discussion of Truman's reaction to Weizmann's death for an understanding of the fondness Truman gained for Weizmann.

involvement. In this sense, Grose's view seems to represent the midpoint on the spectrum of how Eddie Jacobson and his actions are viewed.

Some, as mentioned in Chapter Two, suggest that Eddie Jacobson's role was minor at best, and represented nothing more than the continuation of a loose acquaintanceship.³⁸⁷ Others, including some Jewish leaders, see Eddie Jacobson as the keystone in the American recognition of Israel.³⁸⁸ Grose's view seems to be most consistent with the available documents and evidence. Jacobson certainly helped the Zionist cause at a significant moment, and though he continued to help Israel, his contributions never paralleled the importance of the March 13 meeting with Harry Truman. Make no mistake: Eddie Jacobson did much to help the Zionist cause. But the myth that has developed about Eddie Jacobson can easily overshadow the actual actions of the man.

Even with the clearer perspective on Eddie Jacobson gained by the research in this thesis, the significance of Jacobson the man and the Truman-Jacobson friendship deserves more attention. His is a story that deserves to be told and retold, so that Jews in America and around the world can learn both the importance of seemingly normal friendships and the value of realizing one's ability to help. Two of Jacobson's greatest traits remain his ability to see that he could provide assistance and his willingness to act to aid the cause of a Jewish state. Jacobson's role in the events on March 13 was clearly major, even if his role in the grand picture of American-Israeli interaction is minor.

In delving into the story of Eddie Jacobson and the friendship he shared with Harry Truman, a number of themes emerge. First and foremost, the research in this thesis

³⁸⁷ See chapter two for a discussion of Margaret Truman's view of Eddie Jacobson.

³⁸⁸ See Loeb Granoff interview by the author, July 27, 2004 and Frank Adler interview by the author, July 29, 2004.

illustrates the theme of friendship and the power to influence a friend so deftly used by Eddie Jacobson. In letter after letter, Truman and Jacobson write as close, trusting, and admiring friends. Nowhere is this shared expression of emotion more noticeable than in the exchange between the two men in the spring of 1952.³⁸⁹ After Truman's announcement that he would not run for another term as President, Jacobson sent a warm and supportive note.³⁹⁰ Truman answered quickly, expressing his own fondness for Jacobson and his appreciation for friends like Jacobson.³⁹¹ In his willingness to approach Truman on the matter of a Jewish state, Jacobson demonstrated his own trust in Truman's willingness to listen to a position and act accordingly. Perhaps Jacobson's longtime friendship allowed him the ability to understand that if presented the right way, Truman would likely follow Jacobson's suggestion. Loeb Granoff, son of AJ Granoff, noted this ability in a Kansas City Star article in April of 1998. Granoff said:

Eddie and my dad both knew something about Truman that the more jaundiced politicians didn't appreciate. And that was that if Truman knew the facts, whatever they were, they could always depend on this guy to do the right thing, even if it wasn't politically expedient. That's the thing that made him Harry Truman."³⁹²

The combination of Jacobson's religion and Truman's service as President makes their friendship all the more unique. The rare occurrence of a President maintaining a close and personal friendship with a Jew represents a second major theme of the Truman-Jacobson relationship. Seldom if ever has an American President enjoyed such a close and intimate friendship with a Jew. From their early days in Kansas City, through the rigors of war, the successes and failures in business, a bond was formed between these

³⁸⁹ See chapter three for a full discussion of this exchange.

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² See "Truman's Friendship Helped Shape a Moment in History" in the Kansas City Star, April 28, 1998, in Jacobson Clippings File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

two men. Even as they grew in different directions professionally, they maintained a close connection to each other. Truman's position as President did little to change the way the two men interacted; the friendship became more solid and secure long before either man knew great success. So when Truman became the President, Jacobson's role remained that of the trusted and true friend so common in everyday life, and far from the role of *shtadlan*, the court Jew of medieval Europe.

Perhaps the most telling view offered of Jacobson comes from Harry Truman's words offered at a memorial dinner honoring Jacobson in 1956. In the weeks following Jacobson's death, a number of Jacobson's friends decided to form an Eddie Jacobson Memorial Foundation to honor the memory of their friend. Truman was named the lifetime honorary chairman of the foundation, which held its first annual tribute dinner a year later, in November of 1956. The tribute included speeches by Abba Eban, then the Israeli Ambassador to the United States and by Harry Truman. Speaking of his friend, Truman said:

I don't think I have ever known a man that I thought more of outside my own family than I did of Eddie Jacobson. He was an honorable man, and, as I said in the memoirs that I published here not long ago, he was one of the finest men that ever walked on this earth, and that's covering a lot of territory in my knowledge of people that I have seen, and I think I have come in contact with about as many people as anyone man ever did. Eddie was one of those men that you read about in the Torah, and I have a Torah that the President of Israel gave me that's one of the greatest things that I own, and he issued an injunction as President of Israel, authorizing a Baptist to handle it, which is unusual. And I am of the opinion that if you read the articles in Genesis concerning two just men—one of them was Enoch and the other one was Noah—you'll find those descriptions will fit Eddie Jacobson to the dot.³⁹³

³⁹³ See Address of President Harry S. Truman at the Eddie Jacobson Memorial Dinner, November 26, 1956, in the Jacobson Tributes File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

Truman's words, illustrating a deep knowledge of the Bible, gave Jacobson as high a compliment as possible. Clearly, the two men shared a noteworthy bond.

The power of friendship is also visible in both Jacobson's and Truman's accounts of the March 13, 1948 meeting. Recalling the now well-known meeting between himself and Jacobson, Truman wrote of his realization that when the point arrived that his friend Eddie felt he had to act, the issue must have been vital.³⁹⁴ Jacobson's recollection of the meeting also illustrates the importance he placed on his friendship with Truman. Jacobson noted that Truman inquired about his clothing business with "a brother's interest."³⁹⁵ Then, in a state of disbelief, Jacobson recalled that in the heat of the discussion, with Truman rejecting any argument he raised, Jacobson thought to himself that, "...my dear friend, the President of the United States, was at that moment as close to being an anti-Semite as a man could possibly be..."³⁹⁶ The two men seem to have held deep respect for each other, and both seem to have been moved by the fateful March meeting in the Oval Office.

The Truman-Jacobson friendship was also noticed and appreciated by others. Hy Vile, a longtime friend of both Truman's and Jacobson's wrote of the special friendship in a tribute to Jacobson on the occasion of Jacobson's 23rd *Yahrzeit* in October of 1978. Writing in the *Kansas City Jewish Chronicle*, Vile noted that "the love and friendship between him [Jacobson] and Harry S. Truman has seldom been equaled between man and

³⁹⁴ See chapter one for a full account. Also, see "Truman Hails Jacobson Role," in *The Kansas City Star*, May 23, 1965, in Jacobson Clippings File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³⁹⁵ See Jacobson letter to Cohn, March 27, 1952, in Jacobson Correspondence File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 3.

man.”³⁹⁷ The historical record currently available supports Vile’s position that Truman and Jacobson shared a profound bond.

A third major theme corroborated by the research of this thesis involves the willingness of one man to act when by fate or by chance he lands in a position to help others. Both of Eddie Jacobson’s daughters steadfastly recalled their father’s belief that his involvement with Truman and Israel was *bashert*—fate.³⁹⁸ Jacobson’s ability to grasp the role thrust upon him by history stands out as a major attribute. Rather than withdraw from the burgeoning crisis in Palestine, Jacobson allowed himself to become deeply involved in Zionist affairs. Jacobson’s daughter Elinor spoke of her father’s willingness to become involved, even at great personal cost.³⁹⁹ Many times, Elinor Borenstine recalled, her father noted that he would not leave much of an inheritance because he was spending so much money traveling to Washington D.C. to meet with the President.⁴⁰⁰ Jacobson also reached out to friends who could help him better understand the details of the Zionist cause. His willingness to ask for guidance from his friend AJ Granoff illustrates Jacobson’s willingness to learn and grow so that he could better serve the cause of Jewish statehood.⁴⁰¹

A fourth theme of the Jacobson story centers on the notion that Eddie Jacobson played the central role in Truman’s decision to recognize Israel. The research of this thesis debunks this notion. Truman’s own words, coupled with documents relating to Truman’s early views on the Bible and on the Zionist cause indicate that he harbored a

³⁹⁷ See “A Friend Pays Tribute to Eddie Jacobson on the Occasion of His 23rd Yahrzeit” in the Kansas City Jewish Chronicle, October 20, 1978, in the Jacobson Clippings File, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

³⁹⁸ See Borenstine and Shusterman interviews.

³⁹⁹ See Borenstine interview.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ See Granoff interview.

significant level of sympathy for the Jewish desire for statehood.⁴⁰² While Jacobson may be responsible for a specific step in Truman's journey towards recognition, the historical record illustrates Truman's understanding of the destruction endured by European Jewry and his desire to help the Jewish people. Truman willingly lobbied Great Britain to loosen emigration rules to no avail.⁴⁰³ And though he had difficulty working with the state department, and feared alienating Gen. George Marshall, the Secretary of State, Truman's actions paint the picture of a man who believed that helping the Zionist cause was the morally correct path.⁴⁰⁴

The research for this thesis proves that a kernel of truth exists in the popular understanding of Eddie Jacobson's role. Jacobson may not have been the central figure, but he was able to convince the President of the United States to act when no one else was able to do so. More, this thesis shows that Eddie Jacobson's involvements with Israel involved more than the months leading to Israeli statehood and American recognition. Jacobson became involved in the matter not long after Truman became President, as illustrated in chapter one, and remained involved throughout Truman's second term in office, as described in chapter three.⁴⁰⁵ Interviews with Jacobson's daughters and nephew, and the significant amount of historical data available in archival holdings illustrate a man who understood his good fortune to be in a position to help. The interviews in particular create a picture of Jacobson as the everyman American of the middle twentieth century—focused on his family, running a successful business, enjoying involvement at his place of worship. The interviews illustrate Jacobson's and Truman's

⁴⁰² See chapter one.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁵ See chapters one and three respectively for a full account of Jacobson's activities on behalf of Jewish statehood.

extraordinary traits—foremost among them their ability to maintain a close friendship through the travails of a lifetime of highs and lows. The interviews also provide a picture of Jacobson's willingness to lobby his old friend in an attempt to help a cause for which he would receive no personal gain.

Jacobson's story has earned mention in many a history book. Now, for the first time, Jacobson's whole story can be viewed by scholars and historians. The existing literature concerning the birth of the modern State of Israel and the early days of the American-Israeli alliance have suffered from a lack of a full account of the Truman-Jacobson friendship or of Eddie Jacobson's life and accomplishments. With this thesis and its research, scholars can fill an important gap in American and world Jewish history.

Appendix A

Interview with FRANK ADLER

July 25, 2004

Kansas City, Missouri

Conducted by Daniel J. Fellman

DANIEL: So let's begin. It's Wednesday afternoon around ten after four. We're in Kansas City and I'm with Frank Adler who was the Executive Director at B'nai Jehudah for four decades, three decades?

FRANK: Well, thirty years and then eight years at _____.

DANIEL: So, roughly forty years?

FRANK: For about the last seven years _____

DANIEL: So, we'll begin the discussion of Eddie Jacobson, the person. Did you know Jacobson himself, personally?

FRANK: He was on the Board that hired me.

DANIEL: He was on the Board that hired you? Was he on the Synagogue Board?

FRANK: Yes. For a brief time. He was there when _____ In 1953.

DANIEL: Give me your impressions of the man?

FRANK: Modest, two-fold, with uh, shy with strangers, um, determined when he was demanded by fans, always willing to _____ Uh, not saying anything bad about others unless he had very good reason to. Such as throwing the

_____. Um, always in services on Friday nights when his health permitted. Unfortunately, the later years _____ Um, his health wasn't always the best _____ When he was well, he was there on Friday nights which was sort of remarkable because in those days not many...

DANIEL: The Saturday morning service was still the bigger one? Nobody came to either one?

FRANK: Right. This was in the period, of course, when the _____ And uh, Saturday morning, I recall as being uh as being that the congregation at the time of _____

DANIEL: Would you have considered him a devout man or a religious man?

FRANK: Not in the orthodox understand. His background was undeniably was orthodox, uh, he never practiced Judaism.

DANIEL: So, he wasn't an observant Jew?

FRANK: That's right. Not observant in the Orthodox sense. You've got to know that I'm a fourth generation Reformed Jew, and uh, I consider myself observant.

DANIEL: Well, there is such a thing as an observant Reformed Jew.

FRANK: Yes, I'm glad you accept that, sure.

DANIEL: I'm studying to be a Reformed Rabbi, I count myself in that same category.

FRANK: I don't know what your background is.

DANIEL: My observance and your observance might be very different but we're still observant Reformed Jews. Would you consider him to be an intellectual?

FRANK: No, he, I don't know that, he never went to high school. I don't think he read a great deal.

DANIEL: Quick mind?

FRANK: No, no. He _____ torn between different opinions.

DANIEL: But he could comprehend it and make sense of it?

FRANK: Exactly, but it took a while for him to weigh the merits _____

DANIEL: It was deliberate. Was he, did you get the impression that he was well read, did he read the newspaper everyday? Did he read books or magazines?

FRANK: I think so. From that stand point is I'm sure _____ his morning paper _____ Owned by the same people and uh, whether he got the weekly and magazines, I'm not certain.

DANIEL: But he seemed to be reasonable informed?

FRANK: Uh, people would call him and most of what he learned about Zionism, he _____ With what was going on at the time, that came from Washington sources.

DANIEL: Washington sources B'nai Brith or White House?

FRANK: No, I don't think Niles got the phone to phone him in that sense. Niles, I think, was just _____ Uh, but, no, he's informed generally by the Zionist, sometimes misinformed by the Zionist. Uh, and uh, B'nai Brith only get in the act of _____

DANIEL: Jacobson is a man, a hard working man?

FRANK: Oh, yeah.

DANIEL: Reputation as a good business man?

FRANK: Honest, _____ I don't know what his reputation of a business man was, I never encountered him in that way. Uh, his word was his own. When he said he was going to do something, he did it, he did it.

DANIEL: How was he as a Synagogue Board member?

FRANK: Uh, a tyrant. He really was _____ Um, I suspect he was put on because of his fame and so forth and so on. I, I know that he turned it down several times when he was approached, a number of times to be on the Board, and uh, he didn't stay on very long. He resigned in mid-term. Um, I guess, _____ to him. Uh, he loved the congregation, felt this is where he had his grounding for Judaism. Back in the congregation he was _____, his daughter off from heaven.

DANIEL: Let's talk about that part. Uh, would you describe him as a family man?

FRANK: Very much so, very much so. Doted on his daughters, doted on his grandchildren. And uh, they always lived together with his older daughter and her family. Uh, then throughout the marriage, and uh, they may have been apart for _____ reasons, um, _____ Uh, I don't know his _____ . After the Petition Resolution, he and A.J. Granoff _____ And there was a remark made by one of the two, uh, it was kind of tough, actually, for them to do that.

DANIEL: That brings an interesting question. By all accounts, at least so much as I've read, Jacobson and Granoff both claimed that they paid for their each of their trips to Washington individually.

FRANK: I have no comment on that, I don't know, I just don't know the facts.

DANIEL: Would it strike you that he would have had the money to be able to do that?

FRANK: I don't know how well he did. He represented, he had a number of lines in the haberdashery business and uh, I think he did fairly well and _____ The

store whatever he needs. And uh, I would say they live comfortably. Not more than
_____ And uh, I'll give Granoff _____ I don't know.
I knew Granoff and whenever you saw him _____, he would boast, about all sorts
of things, Zionism was one of _____ all cases. My impression of
Aldolf Granoff was _____
And uh, Granoff was _____. And so, _____
don't know how much contact there was with Pendergast, _____
_____ Um, he was a big shot at the Synagogue, so he
_____, uh, and uh, he always had something to say very nice things about him.

DANIEL: You were inside the synagogue so maybe you'll have some insight on this.
What kind of relationship did Eddie Jacobson have with Rabbi Mayerberg?

FRANK: Oh, personally very much they liked each other.

DANIEL: Were they personally friends or was it strictly a Rabbi congregante kind of
relationship?

FRANK: Yes, no, I think it was more than that because he was among the few faithful
that would show up on Friday nights. So, he had to go through the receiving line,
obviously, with his wife, _____. And uh, oh, yeah, they were friends.
There was no doubt that they ate in each other's homes and the wives would have had
nothing planned for dinner, Uh, so, oh sure they liked each other very much.

DANIEL: Do you think that Rabbi Mayerberg influenced Eddie Jacobson's thinking and
his actions?

FRANK: He says he did. If you read...

DANIEL: I did read that, there's a reason I'm asking the question.

FRANK: Uh, he doesn't know that Mayerberg vacillated on every _____ in
the Synagogue. _____. He did what he learned
to do early 1933, the _____ Uh, Mayerberg
_____ having thought in
vein _____ having had the secret support
of _____ and 140 ministers at this time and being told by his Board
members that _____.

_____ The title of that is really _____ and he said the
the Board wasn't with him all the way. _____, uh, but,
_____ to the Board finding he was forced to be in politics _____
And uh, how could _____ not trying to hide it or anything. And uh, he made

various promises and promises _____ Uh, he was
proudly, _____ around the Synagogue
_____ with absolutely no knowledge even the ritual _____
Didn't know a thing about Judaism and they took those rights away from him too.
Whatever you want we will do. You will come to me. I came to him, _____
opposed, it's a good thing _____ Uh, we don't need anybody like you, the Board's
lazy, they should come once a night, uh, once every month, pick time 4:00 schedule 5
take care of what needs to be taken care of _____
Then in later years, we could seldom approach the except on the Fourth Monday of the
month _____. Frank, anything on your personal agenda? Well,
_____ meaning that his opinion might be asked, and see
to it that that _____ And
_____ said ladies and gentleman, I am sorry to say that there is some
troubling news with one of our families _____ It's
absolutely essential that we _____

DANIEL: I get the impression from reading about him that he vacillated greatly on the
issue of Israel and Zionism?

FRANK: He vacillated on everything.

DANIEL: How did this come across to somebody like Eddie Jacobson sitting in the
pews?

FRANK: Well, Eddie Jacobson, I think _____ Zionism, _____ except that
he heard in two places. One from the pulpit that was Rabbi Mayerberg who spoke for
motherhood and against _____ Friday after Friday, uh, that's his contribution. Uh,
and then, A.J. Granoff, uh, after the _____ brother _____ Uh, and he
would give uh, _____ he would talk about that
_____ So that _____ Jacobson

DANIEL: So, Jacobson wouldn't have heard much from the pulpit about what was going
on?

FRANK: Well, he would have heard about the plight of the Jews _____
But, no _____ nothing _____

DANIEL: What's interesting is he speaks, he himself speaks of the plight of the Jews
and how that affected?

FRANK: Yeah, and when the....

DANIEL: Would that all of been driving by Mayerberg's...?

FRANK: It may have been driven exclusively by Mayerberg or by the _____ member _____, which I'm sure you have, and uh, his brother, uh, Eddie Jacobson, _____

DANIEL: That was his Doc Jacobson?

FRANK: Yeah. Uh, he was far more consumed with _____ Um, _____ Um...

DANIEL: If you were to look around, or look through the roles of the membership of that Synagogue, and somebody were to say to you, point to me five people who might be likely to have the kind of role that Jacobson had or five people who would be unlikely to have that kind of role. Would Eddie Jacobson have made either of those lists? Or would he have been in the best middle?

FRANK: Tell people _____ because he was totally unacquainted _____ and uh...

DANIEL: Would he strike you as the kind who would jump into that kind of role?

FRANK: No without somebody requesting him, because he never saw a book or Encyclopedia or his wife would be of his own relations influenced throughout; he was pulled into this initially by B'nai Brith.

DANIEL: Why do you think he allowed B'nai Brith to pull him in?

FRANK: The begged him and begged him _____.

DANIEL: There are stories of people coming to him on all sorts of other things, and he said no. Something clicked in his mind for him to say yes on this one.

FRANK: Yes, because he always wanted to do what he could to help his foregoing brother.

DANIEL: And where does that instinct come from?

FRANK: From within, as a Jew. After all,...

DANIEL: From his own soul?

FRANK: I think from his background. He father, uh, was a refugee from Russia, uh, he was a food maker, he had to leave school when he was fourteen years old.

DANIEL: Well, we left off talking about Eddie Jacobson being pulled in by the B'nai Brith and the influence of his own background. His parents and their plight as refugee's

coming over. Did Eddie Jacobson seem to you comfortable in the roll that he was placed in?

FRANK: He was not at first. I mean, he hesitated saying anything. _____ he'd talk about the truthful power; he wasn't all that sure at the beginning, at what he was asked to tell was truth. They didn't _____ that way. He was very cautious with it, didn't want to make waves.

DANIEL: By the time you came to Kansas City in middle of '53, was he at that point comfortable with dealing with these issues?

FRANK: That was also the year which B'nai Brith contacted him.

DANIEL: By '53 Israel had been established already?

FRANK: I know _____ Uh, he was not able to be a Zionist, he never was, he never joined a Zionist club..... And he always said he did what he did in order to find aide for the Jews who need it _____ And if you know what I mean by _____

DANIEL: It's the _____ Wise.

FRANK: No, the wise was about Jewish congeals _____ Uh, the American Jewish committee was _____ of religion.

DANIEL: Was Jacobson the kind who would talk about all of those activities or would you have to ask him to get it out of him?

FRANK: Oh, yeah, you'd have to pull it out of him _____ Uh, he wanted to say as little as possible. He was always fearful that somebody say hey your such a pal of the President can you do this for me, that, was always ever most on his mind that they would try to abuse his influence.

DANIEL: Did he have the sense of the magnitude of what he had done?

FRANK: He says so in that letter to his fellow Cohn, uh, that's it, the only place that I have seen it, in writing, um, the people praised him constantly and but _____ I don't, he was a very modest man, very modest man.

DANIEL: We've spoken earlier a little bit about A.J. Granoff, uh, depending on who you listen to or what you read, there are varying reports of Granoff's influence on Jacobson and to a lesser extent, Granoff's influence on Truman. Let's first talk about Granoff's influence on Jacobson.

FRANK: Uh, Granoff met the younger Jacobson daughter in Sunday school class, Gloria and they were careful _____ and uh, that's how he met them, through that _____ A.J. _____ Um, which itself is interesting, because, he must have needed a lawyer before hand with his business, down the road established a store in 1944 so, but I don't know who that lawyer was, I do know who the lawyer was in the Truman/Jacobson...

DANIEL: That was Rosenberg.

FRANK: Yes. Uh, _____ Uh, so he had experiences mostly bad lawyers and uh, so he met A.J. Granoff through his daughter and _____

DANIEL: Were they close friends?

FRANK: Uh, they played poker together _____ but they were happy together when Jacobson, Truman get together, I don't know. _____. Uh, _____. Um, _____

DANIEL: It's a different time, thing. I think they could have dispensation because they lived in a different time period. Do you think Granoff spent time, in a sense, tutoring Jacobson?

FRANK: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

DANIEL: In a positive way or in a negative way?

FRANK: In a positive way. Through his Temple of Brotherhood.

DANIEL: Do you have a sense of who initiated those contacts?

FRANK: I think Granoff.

DANIEL: And said, Eddie, let's sit down and...?

FRANK: Yeah, you would be _____

DANIEL: Do you think Granoff saw himself as a mortifiy pulling the thing together?

FRANK: Oh, sure, I think so.

DANIEL: And Jacobson saw that too?

FRANK: Yes, I believe he did.

DANIEL: Do you think it bothered him?

FRANK: _____

DANIEL: Do you think he feared he was being used?

FRANK: Yes, um, at first he did. And uh, he was being used for all kinds of _____. Um, he had not been close to Truman but he had never bothered to talk to Jacobson, he was a nothing.

DANIEL: Could Jacobson had accomplished what he did without Granoff?

FRANK: He had the encouragement from Granoff, he received the early education from Granoff, it's difficult to say, probably not, probably not from Granoff _____ about _____. He also wrote, and if it matters _____ you've seen some of the letters that Jacobson wrote to Weizmann, Truman, Habbis, on such _____. So when Granoff says he wrote all the letters, which it sounds like he did, I don't quite understand.

DANIEL: Do you have the sense that there were trips that Jacobson took alone to Washington and there were trips that Granoff took with him, who do you think made the decision of which one would be which?

FRANK: I don't know. I would assume that Jacobson whenever he could would put himself in, Granoff _____. There were other people though uh, Matt Connelly, prompted him to go forward.

DANIEL: Prompted Jacobson?

FRANK: Oh, yeah, without any reference to Granoff.

DANIEL: So, do you think Conley then deserves credit?

FRANK: Well, Granoff, he helped keep the door open, after all he was doing all the scheduling.

DANIEL: So, Conley internally, was helping...?

FRANK: Helping Jacobson, I think so. Uh, and uh, _____ Lowenthau I think _____ Lowenthau and, and uh, what's his name _____ No I don't think they always got along so well.

DANIEL: You mentioned Niles earlier, this seems as good as a time as any. Uh, Niles and Jacobson, as much as they worked on the same issue, didn't interact so much.

FRANK: No. Niles would come in and Truman would get some ideas, maybe some suggestions, he'd take notes from Niles, and then Niles would write a memo on it. Un, President's don't just take advice from one person _____.

DANIEL: Hope.

FRANK: Well, do you think that, right now he's got a tri _____. Two in the Department of Defense and a Vice President. And uh, before they, all three get together before deciding how to make a unanimous recommendation on; so it's all three. That's who that was.

DANIEL: You mentioned that you thought that Niles was little jealous of Jacobson?

FRANK: They all were, Clark Clifford was too.

DANIEL: Why? tell me about this.

FRANK: Jacobson's got a one track mind. He cannot see the overall picture, that's what Clifford said, that's on the record. And the earlier days, I'm talking about pre-1949 uh, and uh, and Truman who was conventional pressed, uh, faced a dilemma. He had become contradictory, policies of course, uh, left him, and uh, this _____ across the table, so I'm sure he _____ to accept _____.

DANIEL: So we have Jacobson pursuing one leg of it, Niles the end of the second part, Clifford coming in with advice and a third direction. Why do you suppose of the three Jacobson is the one who gets the credit for convincing the President?

FRANK: Because, trusting, there is nothing underhanded about Jacobson. Uh, Jacobson would _____ the others _____.

DANIEL: Well, then that brings up an interesting issue. I'm sure you've read the reports of whether or not the President was an anti-Semitic. If the President trusted Jacobson as he appears to have...?

FRANK: He was his advisor.

DANIEL: Was he?

FRANK: Back then, well, let's, no that's not true, uh, because it still was two different era's at the White House _____. Um, his inclination was to help people.

DANIEL: This is Truman?

FRANK: Um, it was more important than guaranteeing total _____

_____ which was the Defense Department even then _____. And, uh, trust, he knew Jacobson was reliable and had all these dealings of all these years, never _____, he couldn't be that sure about the other's in the White House. I think that was very important.

DANIEL: Do you think that, one argument is that Truman was no more anti-Semitic than anybody else, that what he was exhibiting was within the cultural norms of the times.

FRANK: I think that's quite true. You've got to recognize his background. You've got to recognize his lifestyle, of course. There is no question in my mind that the Wallace's represented the kind of strongly overt anti-Semitism _____ and uh, whether you heard that _____ and she insists to go, she is complaining and the other reception for his Jewish friends, Mrs. Truman would go straight home.

DANIEL: That's interesting because I've noticed that these interactions are Poker games and hunting trips, all of which exclude women all together.

FRANK: Right.

DANIEL: There's no Blooma there is no Bess anyway you slice it. The Jacobson's never, there is no record of them spending the night at the White House or the Blair House.

FRANK: He did, she didn't. Oh, Blair House no.

DANIEL: At Key West they did, he did.

FRANK: But she was not.

DANIEL: Was it one of these things that this is one of Harry's old business partners and we can put up with it but they're not...?

FRANK: That really wasn't known as poker playing has it and um, he was at the Jacobson house many times playing, he was out at Oakland Country Club which was the Jewish Country Club. He played poker there. Uh, but whatever club he belonged to

_____, uh, I imagine Jacobson _____
_____. Years later when I came _____
Uh, Jews and non-Jews associated _____ in my time

DANIEL: You certainly lived in Kansas City during enough time when Truman was here. Do you have the sense that he had a certain appreciation for Judaism, a certain understanding of Judaism?

FRANK: The religion of Judaism?

DANIEL: The religion of Judaism. What about...?

FRANK: He was at a couple of services, but only for brief moments and uh, classical reform services were all English and uh, my standpoint, whatever impression of Judaism he may have had _____

DANIEL: So, other than the notion of certainly wanting to help people in need, do you think Truman's actions were at all rooted in his own understanding of the Bible or history?

FRANK: To some extent, the Bible may have had an influence on him, parallel, I was thinking about _____ how does the outside _____

But still, he had the dream and he deserves to have some recognition. _____
_____ what a shame.

DANIEL: It is a shame.

FRANK: Anyway, Israeli _____, I don't know should tell

DANIEL: But his grave is a place of honor.

FRANK: I understand, and it doesn't affect the masses after all that's _____.
Uh, you wouldn't know. Being on King David's _____ you wouldn't know what was going on. Uh, that's _____

DANIEL: I've been there.

FRANK: No, but at that moment you wondered where on the outside _____

DANIEL: Not that I ever climbed.

FRANK: That's what I mean, and uh, so, which way was I going?

DANIEL: You were discussing, we were discussing the question of Truman's understanding of Judaism versus the Bible versus history.

FRANK: He said he knew the Bible. The Bible, most questions, by the Bible mean nothing more than the New Testament and the Book of Psalms.

DANIEL: And you think that was the same case with Truman?

FRANK: Probably, probably. What is it? So, on Sunday morning you go with the wife and go to church and whatever happens there is up to the minister and you know

_____ Ministers _____
sense and neither was _____ Uh, I mean how, asking in person what kind of influence
could _____ if any. Uh, _____ do you know.
So, his was a different case entirely, he was a dreamer, a very bright, very debonair, very
assimilated.

DANIEL: Let's get back to Eddie Jacobson for a second. He became a very prominent
figure once Truman became the President. And in relatively short order B'nai Brith got
to him and he became a prominent figure. Did he become prominent in Kansas City or
did he also become a mover and a shaker here? Why not?

FRANK: He retired at his ranch. He wanted to be with his family and run his store.

DANIEL: Do you think that friendship aided his store? People go to that store hoping
to...?

FRANK: I don't know how many shirts Truman bought, and uh,...

DANIEL: There are records of Truman ordering shirts but, never paying for them.
Jacobson refused to charge him.

FRANK: _____ uh, but never since. So, I don't know, I don't know.

DANIEL: Did the Jewish community embrace Jacobson and recognize what he was
doing?

FRANK: Inside Jewish community you have to remember that unlike today, uh,
Federation formed as a result of _____ and as a result of repeated demands, uh,
people begin to wondering about the approach _____
causes _____. Uh, I'm sure he did started
_____.

DANIEL: I have they're contact information.

FRANK: I'm very close to the them, both of them.

DANIEL: To Elinor? They both live in Florida?

FRANK: Elinor lives in Sarasota and Gloria lives here.

DANIEL: Actually, I have Gloria's contact information, I don't have Elinor's. Um, she won't get mad at me if I call her and say that Frank Adler said it was alright.

FRANK: Oh, no. They are very different. She's sharper, more of an edge, uh, and uh, Gloria's _____. Um, he was respected, but, when you say community, I don't know that he was ever active in B'nai Brith. B'nai Brith had a big deal one day, and the number hit 48 to prove that its Bicentennials, uh, it's these things _____ Israel
_____ he mentioned to me gleefully that he had said something harsh.

strictly _____ So, what it was like a joke and uh, he was mad at the President and _____

Really struck him, and uh, _____, no, Jacobson was the last one to do this _____.

DANIEL: But the Jewish community, the people in the congregation, in the Temple didn't embrace him in any way?

FRANK: No, no, because in my day people counted if you were in church. In my early days, he wasn't, he simply wasn't there.

DANIEL: And so to the fact that he had this activity...?

FRANK: Not only that, but, there were very few _____ uh, um, he was not a social butterfly.

DANIEL: And he didn't become a hero?

FRANK: Mayerberg wanted to make him a hero and uh, _____ and they did _____ and uh, Jacobson didn't want _____ Uh, his letter to Dr. Cohn was about as infusive as _____

_____ so very, very much, then the address of _____

DANIEL: Let me ask you just a couple of last questions, I know time is running short. Eddie Jacobson has become somewhat a hero if not a well known hero in the intervening 50 years since his death. How do you think History should look at Eddie Jacobson and look at what he's done?

FRANK: I think he ought to be remembered as a patriotic man, who was properly influenced, used his ability to _____ credit from the United States to further the cause of Israel and that of the United States _____

_____ because the United States was the answer. That's, that's what _____ uh, Jewish _____ and do what he thought he could for others, were adamant to uh, whatever short sided and look beyond the other Jewish principals _____ and _____. And also, he for one, unlike others _____ never betrayed the trust of a friend. Uh, never gave in _____ socially, uh, _____. He never kind of got along with her I don't think, um,

DANIEL: Do you think that the Queen Esther comparison holds or is that going too far?

FRANK: No, I think it does.

DANIEL: Do you think that in the annals of Jewish history, Jacobson deserves that lofty perch?

FRANK: _____, uh...

DANIEL: Does he deserve the status of hero?

FRANK: I don't know _____ the Jews, I don't know the answer _____ Well, no, _____

DANIEL: The friendship is solidified in battle?

FRANK: Sure, sure. Well they were in different Company's over there in the same Company when they started up to France they were in the same hotel _____ and uh, _____ Until his Battery infantry is...

DANIEL: Truman was in D and Jacobson was in C?

FRANK: Uh, Truman was D, he was Captain of D, that I know.

DANIEL: You mentioned just a second ago Jacobson's funeral. I trust you were there? Recall it for me. Was it a big funeral, was it a long funeral?

FRANK: It has a huge funeral, not long, uh, they _____ um...

DANIEL: What are you guys half and hour, forty five minutes?

FRANK: Yeah, I mean, from the Chapel to the grave um, and uh, _____

_____ And uh, _____

DANIEL: It was a big funeral?

FRANK: I don't know _____

DANIEL: That would seem to be a large size funeral?

FRANK: _____

DANIEL: Did Truman speak at the funeral?

FRANK: He spoke briefly, first, _____

DANIEL: Right. Do you recall seeing Truman at the Shavuot House? Do you recall Truman at the...?

FRANK: I don't know that there was Truman, uh,...?

DANIEL: Did they shovel earth, dig shovels full of earth into the grave?

FRANK: No.

DANIEL: Was the casket lowered as part of the ceremony?

FRANK: Yes, Yes, everyone was shoveling dirt.

DANIEL: And, you recall seeing Truman at the gravesite?

FRANK: Yes.

DANIEL: And being close enough to hear what he was saying?

FRANK: Yes.

DANIEL: Was he speaking to anyone in particular or just?

FRANK: _____
_____ quietly, quietly _____
about that.

DANIEL: Do you recall if Bess was with him?

FRANK: No, I didn't see her.

DANIEL: Ever?

FRANK: Never. _____

DANIEL: Sure, sure, he's the one that funded the Foundation?

FRANK: The Foundation, uh, and showed that he had, through the years, every Wednesday, he cooked a pot of chicken soup at home and had his chauffeur take it out Mrs. Truman. This went on about _____ Mrs. Truman never ate a spoonful of it.

DANIEL: The *Uhlmann* family gave the money for the Eddie Jacobson Garden at the Temple on 69th. What was the connection between the *Uhlmann* family and Jacobson.

FRANK: It was uh, it was very good. Um, _____
Of Jacobson, _____

DANIEL: So the *Uhlmann*'s and the Weizmann's?

FRANK: *Uhlmann* _____ was introduced to Weizmann early in the war in New York. Heard all about the _____. That afternoon _____ the Zionism wasn't interested, but was interested in two things. One, _____ two, he came convinced that his grandchildren had to flee _____ they would have to have a chance to go to and so he contributed to sometimes when Weizmann died he _____

So, on to the Zionist his older son _____. He did many things for Weizmann, _____. They had a farm in Johnson County _____. And uh, and out here and uh, _____ Weizmann, Weizmann _____ if he ever reached _____ and uh, _____

_____ *Uhlmann* uh,

DANIEL: Jacobson never had any of that?

FRANK: No, no, _____ he was too smart _____
Although today, _____

DANIEL: Was there any fight in the synagogue over putting that Memorial Garden or erecting that Memorial Garden for Jacobson?

FRANK: No. *Uhlmann* wanted it _____ city and the congregation approved only a portion _____

DANIEL: What became of that Garden when that was gone?

FRANK: Now we have a new one.

DANIEL: There's a new Garden for Jacobson at the new...?

FRANK: Yes, at the new building, have you been over?

DANIEL: I have not been to the building. I was at the old one when it was still standing and I remember being in that synagogue when it was still standing.

FRANK: Oh, really? When were you there?

DANIEL: Oh, it's been four or five years ago.

FRANK: What was the occasion?

DANIEL: I was traveling through, one of my student pulpits was in Joplin, Missouri and so my family's in Nebraska and I traveled back and forth. I stopped in.

FRANK: I knew several of the Rabbis there.

DANIEL: In Joplin?

FRANK: Oh, yes, oh, yes, uh, long before your time it's all finished got me into this work _____ and then uh, B'nai Jehudah bought me my first bar mitzva, B'nai Ahova first bar mitzva, uh, spent most of his time in uh, there

DANIEL: So, the Jacobson Garden was replanted and rebuilt at the new building?

FRANK: Yes, _____ had nothing to do with it, they gave some money and uh, they were asked to, after the dedicated _____ time _____.

DANIEL: Is Jacobson a subject in the Temple Hebrew School? Do they teach about him and about what he accomplished?

FRANK: I actually think that they _____.

DANIEL: Is Jacobson's accomplishments, what he did, are those things that are well known to Jews in Kansas City in 2004?

FRANK: Uh, I doubt it. _____

DANIEL: We'll close with this last question. Do you think Kansas City either is a city or within that, the Jews in Kansas City were aware of their role in world affairs either then, during the years of the Truman Administration or since then?

FRANK: No, no, no. I don't think so. Uh, Jacobson didn't talk about it, Granoff talked about it but, _____ uh, the Rabbis _____

_____ 1723 Cast Street

DANIEL: That's right, that's right. When I first sat down with him, I said, I'm thinking of becoming a Rabbi, and he looked at me and said why on earth would you want to do a thing like that? With a grin, I'm sure you can picture the grin on his face?

FRANK: Sure, sure. I saw his daughter last year.

DANIEL: I've met her, I don't know her.

FRANK: _____ I used to _____

DANIEL: I know Jane way better than I know either of the kids. Jane I know.

FRANK: Yeah, _____

DANIEL: Jane's in Omaha and still very involved.

FRANK: Speaking of Omaha, what's the name of the woman who's still _____

DANIEL: Mary Fellman.

FRANK: _____

DANIEL: Well, there were two women who were to history of the Temple, Sivey Roffman.

FRANK: No, this is not the Temple, she belonged to the one I'm thinking of _____

DANIEL: Boy, I don't know.

FRANK: This goes back to 19 _____

DANIEL: I could make the phone call and find out.

Appendix B

Interview with ELINOR BORENSTINE

November 8, 2004

Sarasota, Florida

Conducted by Daniel J. Fellman

DANIEL: Well it's now Monday evening around eight o'clock and I'm in the home of Elinor Borenstine, my name is Daniel Fellman. Elinor is the oldest daughter, older daughter of Eddie Jacobson. So we'll begin. I'll put the tape recorded closer to you, because your voice, at this point, is more important than mine. There are a number of questions I want to ask you about your dad. Feel free though, if a reminiscence comes to mind, just open with it. Your dad ended up playing a pretty significant role in history?

ELINOR: Yes.

DANIEL: How aware of his actions do you think he was? Do you think he was aware that he was playing as big a role as he ended up playing?

ELINOR: Yes, not at first, but um, after, after he was able to get Dr. Weizmann into the White House, I think then, it became, well, maybe it was the day um, that he convinced Truman to see Weizmann, I think. He always told us about how he left the White House that day shaking and went to the hotel and had a double bourbon and my father was not a drinking man.

DANIEL: Your dad and Truman met as young men in Kansas City in 1905. Did you dad ever talk much about those early days in Kansas City and what it was like?

ELINOR: No.

DANIEL: Was he, was he happy to go to work at such a young age or was he upset that he had to drop out of school?

ELINOR: Oh, I think in those days that was the thing to do.

DANIEL: And then they met up again in World War I?

ELINOR: No, they met up again, oh, while they were working.

DANIEL: While they were working?

ELINOR: Yes.

DANIEL: And they met initially in 1905 working as young men and then reconnected later in the Army.

ELINOR: Right, yes, in the Army.

DANIEL: And at that point your mom and dad were already dating. Did your mom ever talk about your dad and his friend Harry as young people and what they were like together as young men?

ELINOR: No, no.

DANIEL: No? They got married right after the war and opened the store shortly thereafter and shortly after that you were born.

ELINOR: Yes, yes, right.

DANIEL: Uh, what kinds of things did you hear about that store?

ELINOR: Well, all of the, all of Battery D used to hang out there, you know, daddy wasn't in Battery D he was in Battery F, but he was adopted by Battery D. They uh, that was the one day of the, you know the Rabbi's have Purim, the one day of the year they can get drunk? Well, the one day of the year that my daddy could get drunk, he felt, was uh, St. Patrick's Day when the Irish of Battery D used to parade in Kansas City after which they would all get roaring drunk, um, in fact uh, at least once that I remember, we sent my husband out to find him.

DANIEL: The business got hit by the recession. Did your dad talk about the financial difficulties that resulted with it?

ELINOR: No, no.

DANIEL: Never mentioned it?

ELINOR: No.

DANIEL: Did you ever hear about the bankruptcy that resulted?

ELINOR: No.

DANIEL: Not a word?

ELINOR: Not a word.

DANIEL: Do you remember, by this point, you're already a young child?

ELINOR: Um, hmm.

DANIEL: How far back do your memories of Harry Truman go?

ELINOR: My mother wasn't well, uh, she had uh, hay fever and asthma badly, and um, a couple of summers they rented a cabin out at uh, lake, oh, some lake between Kansas City and Independence. I can't remember the name of it even, Fairmont or something like that and I remember then, that Truman used to drop by then.

DANIEL: He was at that point a young politician and up in coming in politics. Do you remember when Truman ran for the Senate?

ELINOR: Oh, yeah.

DANIEL: Was your dad involved in that campaign?

ELINOR: No.

DANIEL: Not at all?

ELINOR: Well, I don't think so, I mean he might have been, but I, it wasn't anything I knew about.

DANIEL: Was your dad proud of his old business partner who was going off to the Senate?

ELINOR: Oh, you bet!

DANIEL: How would he talk about him?

ELINOR: Oh, just brimming with pride.

DANIEL: What would he say?

ELINOR: I don't know, I can't, listen, I'm an old lady, I can't remember all that.

DANIEL: Would he refer to his friend as Senator Truman or President Truman or as Harry?

ELINOR: Uh, it was, when, when, uh, he was in Washington, it was always President Truman; When he was at home it was always Harry.

DANIEL: How did you address him?

ELINOR: Mr. President.

DANIEL: And he called you Elinor?

ELINOR: Yes.

DANIEL: Did you have much contact with Mrs. Truman?

ELINOR: None.

DANIEL: What about with Margaret?

ELINOR: None.

DANIEL: Why?

ELINOR: Mrs. Truman was top society, my god, of Independence, Missouri. Have you been to Independence, Missouri? She was really something, she thought and certainly she and her family did not like Jews. And I feel that uh, Margaret was raised at her mother's wing. Margaret never, ever, up to this moment, that I know of, spoke kindly of my father.

DANIEL: Did she speak ill of him or did she just not say?

ELINOR: Yes, she had. Well, I don't know that , had Always said that, oh, he had nothing to do with, with it, that this was all some kind of a story he made up.

DANIEL: You lived with your mother's parents?

ELINOR: Yes.

DANIEL: Through your whole childhood?

ELINOR: Oh, yes.

DANIEL: What was that experience like; for you and for your father?

ELINOR: Well, I told you, my father was an angel to have lived with his mother-in-law. Everyone acknowledged that, uh, and for me, I told you also, that I was a child in the midst of all adults with no playmates around and it was, it was a difficult uh, childhood.

DANIEL: You were a child of the depression?

ELINOR: Oh, yes. I never had a new dress in my life until I was sixteen years old.

DANIEL: Was your father tight with the dollar?

ELINOR: He didn't have any dollars.

DANIEL: Later in life when he became more successful?

ELINOR: No, he was not tight ever.

DANIEL: Ever?

ELINOR: No. He was very generous, I mean, with what he had.

DANIEL: Was he a doting father?

ELINOR: Absolutely.

DANIEL: Did he have nicknames for you?

ELINOR: And I'll take note, they had nicknames, my children had nicknames for him, they called him "Gee," because he used to, if they were playing upstairs in the playroom, he used to come and stand at the bottom of the steps and say EEEE!!! And they translated that to "Gee". And that's, they have never referred to him as anything but "Gee".

DANIEL: He was involved in your children's lives?

ELINOR: Oh, yes. In fact, uh, my husband and I, my husband, the pediatrician, and I, decided when this evil thing, the television, came out that we would not have one in our house. And one day, there was a knock on the door and the man came with the Television set and said where do you want me to put this? I said, back in the truck, I didn't order it, and he said, uh, oh, yes, Mr. Jacobson sent it. And I went to the phone and I said, Daddy why did you send a television over here? He said, when I come to your house I don't want to have to go all over the neighborhood to find your children looking at somebody else's television. They can watch television at home. In the same manner, I, uh, in those days, I don't know why, please don't ask me because it was idiotic, it made me feel womanly to hang the laundry outside in the sun. Oh, that was, that was wonderful to me, and one day there was a knock on the door and the man said where do you want me to put the dryer? And, again, I said, back on the truck I didn't order it. Oh, yes, Mr. Jacobson sent it. And that's how I got my first clothes dryer and then I decided it really wasn't womanly at all; it was too nice to use that clothes dryer.

DANIEL: How often was he over at your house?

ELINOR: Oh, very often while the children were growing up. Very often. And it always grieved my mother, I know, that I didn't bring them more often to their house, which wasn't far, just a few blocks away. Well, I'll tell you what, when you, when you're raising a family and um, on your own, because my husband was busy raising everybody else's family and I did my three myself, I just didn't have a lot of time to go running over there.

DANIEL: Your dad would come over by himself?

ELINOR: Or with mother either one. I want to tell you a story about when I was a little girl.

DANIEL: Please.

ELINOR: While we were living with my grandmother and grandfather, one year, this is so typical of my father, one year, he and I decided I should have a garden and he took me out late on afternoon in the back yard and we dug a garden and we planted nosherai, as he'd say it. The next morning at sunrise, he was in my bedroom, get up, get up! Dragged me to the window and he had been out there and had put artificial flowers all over that garden; look your garden has bloomed!

DANIEL: Your dad was a joker?

ELINOR: Oh, yeah.

DANIEL: Was he the kind that would pull a practical joke or just try to make somebody smile?

ELINOR: Just try to make somebody smile.

DANIEL: And he was pretty successful at it?

ELINOR: Oh, yeah.

DANIEL: How would he make you smile, what was his trick to get you to smile?

ELINOR: Well, that was one of them. You know, I remember most acutely, when I was growing up and he was traveling, um, as you know, he traveled Eastern, uh, Western Missouri and all of Kansas but, he was home every Friday night.

DANIEL: And you always had Shabbat dinner?

ELINOR: Always, and went to Temple.

DANIEL: Candles and...?

ELINOR: No, no, no, this was Sam Mayerberg's congregation.

DANIEL: Did you have a Challah?

ELINOR: No, but many times we went to his mother and father and I watched her bench light and it's one of the sweetest memories of my childhood. And uh, if he had a nickel in his pocket, he was the happiest man on earth to go down to the delicatessen on Saturday, late Saturday afternoon and buy white fish because my grandmother, my mother's family, gathered at our house after Shabbas and if he had white fish for the

family he was, absolutely, a happy man. And, I remember when every Friday afternoon, I would perch myself on the front steps because, I knew when that little Chevy came around; he had a new Chevrolet every year that he traveled, and when that came around the corner I knew daddy was home.

DANIEL: And you went to Temple on Friday night?

ELINOR: Oh, yes, Oh, yes. And many times he was exhausted.

DANIEL: Would he fall asleep in the sermon?

ELINOR: Oh, absolutely.

DANIEL: Who insisted on going to Temple your mother or your father?

ELINOR: My father.

DANIEL: He thought it was important for him or for you or both?

ELINOR: Everybody, for all of us.

DANIEL: Was he a religious man?

ELINOR: Um, I don't know how to answer you.

DANIEL: Well, let's break it apart, was he, one part of it is was he ritually observant?

ELINOR: Well, in Sam Mayerberg's congregation how observant can you be except going to....

DANIEL: Fair enough.

ELINOR: Alright.

DANIEL: Did he have a deep centered belief in God?

ELINOR: Yes.

DANIEL: Did he talk about it?

ELINOR: No.

DANIEL: Did he celebrate the Jewish holidays?

ELINOR: Oh, absolutely.

DANIEL: What was his favorite?

ELINOR: Yom Kippur.

DANIEL: Really? Why?

ELINOR: Uh, huh. Because, I think he enjoyed fasting and he enjoyed breaking the fast.

DANIEL: Who led the seder at your house.

ELINOR: Oh, seder was never at our house. It was at Grandmother and Grandfather Jacobson's, always. And the entire Jacobson family was always there. Including the cousin who went to Military Academy and who was 6' 8" and who came through the door instead of Elijah one-year.

DANIEL: Tell me about your Grandparents' Jacobson. What kind of people were they?

ELINOR: Sweet.

DANIEL: They both spoke Yiddish?

ELINOR: Yes.

DANIEL: Did either of them speak English?

ELINOR: No.

DANIEL: Was your dad a dutiful son and involved their lives?

ELINOR: Oh, yes.

DANIEL: All the way through?

ELINOR: Oh, yes.

DANIEL: How often would you see them?

ELINOR: When he was home, every weekend.

DANIEL: And through your childhood you would go over there every weekend?

ELINOR: Almost, for Shabbat.

DANIEL: And have Shabbat dinner over there?

ELINOR: Yes.

DANIEL: Did your dad support them financially?

ELINOR: When he had any money, he didn't have any money ever.

DANIEL: Was your dad close with his brother's and sister's?

ELINOR: Uh, some of them. Um...

DANIEL: Who was he closer to?

ELINOR: A.D.

DANIEL: Did he call him A.D. or did he call him Abe?

ELINOR: Abe or doc, either one.

DANIEL: Was he close with his sisters?

ELINOR: Rose, yes. Rose had a very unhappy marriage, extremely unhappy. I think, it was done in those days, uh, her mother and father sold her into marriage to a butcher who was a, you'll have to forgive my language, a black bastard if one ever walked this earth. Bob Blonglas. My aunt could have laughed her way through life, and he wouldn't let her. He was a mean so and so. And his sister was Rose Katz of the Katz Drug Store, she married one of the wealthiest men in town. You possibly passed their mansion many times on Ward Parkway. Um, and my Aunt Rose wanted a divorce so bad but Rosy Katz used to come crying to Abe and Eddie oh, don't let them get a divorce, think of the disgrace, think of the disgrace Eddie I couldn't live through it if my brother got a divorce. Um, and so, they made her stay with that animal.

DANIEL: I take it that the happy go lucky characteristic was common, was all around the Jacobson family?

ELINOR: With all but one, Benny was never happy go lucky. Benny had his problems.

DANIEL: But the rest all had this very jovial, sunny outlook? Quick with a joke?

ELINOR: Uh, huh. Oh, my Uncle Harry was, he nickname was Lappy, I don't know why, but Lappy was always with a, some kind of practical joke.

DANIEL: They never had a nickname for your dad? All these people had nicknames and he was just plain Eddie?

ELINOR: He was Eddie and Benny was Benny. Um, I remember at Seder, in the last years of his life, Lappy used to turn the Haggadah upside-down and the old man read right through it.

DANIEL: The old man is your grandfather?

ELINOR: Oh, yes, that's all we ever called him was the old man.

DANIEL: Your dad went through a pretty major transformation from a fairly average, normal Jewish clothing salesman to being at the center of Geopolitics?

ELINOR: Absolutely.

DANIEL: I want to talk about that transformation a little bit. You talked about your dad being a regular Temple goer.

ELINOR: Yes.

DANIEL: Was he involved in other Jewish activities?

ELINOR: Uh, no.

DANIEL: And had no real interest in Zionism?

ELINOR: He was definitely not a Zionist, until, well, he never became an active Zionist as such, but, he was educated in the Parlors of Kansas City Jews.

DANIEL: Surely he must have acknowledged being a Zionist by 1948-49?

ELINOR: I'm telling you that before that time, when, for instance, Frank Goldman, who's picture you saw over here, um, became aware of the relationship between Eddie and Harry; He and Maurice Bisguyer used to come out to Kansas City to court my father in the Parlors of many of the rich Jews in Kansas City. I remember them all very well. And uh, Frank and Morris used to come out several times a year to teach my daddy about Zionism.

DANIEL: How did your dad feel about being the center of focus?

ELINOR: You know, I think he was pleased. I think he was pleased that all of these very influential men and women, there were a few women, uh, were courting him.

DANIEL: Do you think, there is some question as to what brought your father into this in the first place. Do you think it was his own realization or do you think he was pushed in by others?

ELINOR: No, I think he was pushed in by others and then he began to realize. When he began to learn.

DANIEL: Do you know who did the initial pushing?

ELINOR: Frank Goldman.

DANIEL: Goldman did? Do you think *Mayerberg* had an influence on him?

ELINOR: Oh, yes. But *Mayerberg* would have no influence on anything to do with Israel believe me.

DANIEL: What about Gershoin Haddas?

ELINOR: Yeah, I know about Gershon Haddas. He had little to do with Gershon Haddas. In fact, Gershon Haddas was always insulted because he was not asked to officiate at my father's funeral. But, I made the arrangements for that funeral and I told Sam Mayerberg that he had to do it and he was going to be the only one that did it. And Sam Mayerberg lay uh, a bed in my bedroom and cried. Absolutely, I can't do this, I did it for my twin brother, I cannot do it for Eddie Jacobson. And I said, oh, yeah, you can.

DANIEL: So your dad was educated in the Parlors of Kansas City? Would he read on his own too?

ELINOR: No. My father was not a reader.

DANIEL: Would he read the daily paper?

ELINOR: Yes.

DANIEL: But he wasn't a reader of books or anything?

ELINOR: No, no, no.

DANIEL: Would he talk to other people?

ELINOR: Oh, yeah.

DANIEL: How much of a role did A.J. Granoff play?

ELINOR: Some role, not as much as they would like to have you believe. He was not my father's guiding light, believe me. Eddie Jacobson acted on his own and he didn't need A.J. Granoff to tell him what to do.

DANIEL: Did A.J. help him understand the situation and help him learn some of the nuances?

ELINOR: I don't know. Maybe, might have, yeah.

DANIEL: Did your dad consider A.J. a good friend?

ELINOR: Oh, yes. And he was his lawyer.

DANIEL: Trusted, confidant?

ELINOR: Yes, oh, yes.

DANIEL: Your dad traveled a lot to Washington? How did he pay for all those trips?

ELINOR: Yes, out of his bank account.

DANIEL: Out of his own pocket?

ELINOR: Out of his own pocket. And once he said to me, you know, I'm not going to leave you anything because I'm spending it all, he was in the hospital, he was ill, he had had one of his heart problems and I was standing by his bed and he said I'm not going to leave you anything, I'm spending it all running to Washington and back. And I said, yeah, you're leaving me something, you're leaving me a good, good, name.

DANIEL: Was your dad proud of what he was doing?

ELINOR: Uh, huh.

DANIEL: Would he talk about it?

ELINOR: Uh, huh.

DANIEL: What sorts of things would he say?

ELINOR: Well, he told us all about the famous trip to the White House, of course, and, and, and he told us for instance, um, after the recognition and when he went to Washington, I mean when he went New York to call on Dr. Weizmann, he took a cab to the Waldorf Astoria, and as he got out of the cab, he looked around and he saw crowds of people standing like that and couldn't imagine what was going on up there and then he looked and he saw the flag of Israel. And he said, I stood on the sidewalk like a fool and cried and cried and cried.

DANIEL: How did your dad describe his friendship with the President?

ELINOR: They were buddies. You know, they used; Harry used to go, go along on the fishing trips, he never fished and certainly never hunted, but, he used to go on all the trips but, he was the camp cook.

DANIEL: Was he a good cook?

ELINOR: Oh, yeah. And, and, he used to take his books and read while the boys were out hunting and fishing.

DANIEL: Did your dad ever talk about Harry Truman's smarts or that Truman was a bright guy and what he thought of Truman?

ELINOR: No, not to my knowledge.

DANIEL: When your dad was planning these trips to Washington, would he talk about that he was going to Washington next week?

ELINOR: Well, yes, in fact he went once on my birthday, I was not a very happy, happy daughter. Um, yeah, but occasionally, he was called in the middle of the night and he would get up and go to the airport and wait for the first plane he could get to Washington.

DANIEL: Those would have been expensive trips?

ELINOR: Yes.

DANIEL: And he just paid out of his own pocket?

ELINOR: Yes.

DANIEL: Nobody ever offered to help him out?

ELINOR: No, no. Did Glo (Gloria Shusterman, Borenstine's sister and Jacobson's younger daughter) tell you about the uh, about the uh, Truman Train, the one that got stuck in, it was either Ohio or Michigan, I think it was Ohio, when he was um, when he was running for President in '44, I mean '48. Oh, I'll tell you about '44 too. Um, in '48 he had that Whistle Stop Tour; the train got stuck in Ohio, it ran out of money. And the train simply stopped, there was no money to pay it to come West. So, Harry called daddy and daddy rounded up some rich Jews in Kansas City, I can name them still, *Earl Traven* was one, *Heiman Brahn* was another, *Herman Rosenberg* was another and got together a purse and took it out to Ohio, so, the train could come home. Um, my husband and I met that train and as you know, Truman did not get off in Kansas City, but all of the rest of them did, I never saw a bunch of grayer old men in my life. They knew they were beat. They got off that train, all of them somber, with their heads down, daddy was on the train, that's why we were at the station to meet him and pick him up and take him home. My mother, at that time was in Washington, visiting good friends, uh, so we kind of took care of him when she was gone.

DANIEL: You were going to say something about the 1944 election?

ELINOR: Oh, I had an election party. Um, two of my young men friends were home from the Army on leave and several couples were there and after the party, my husband to be stayed and asked me to marry him. Everybody else left. And in, in the morning

then he left, and in the morning he called about 9:00 and said, well, have you spoken to your parents and I said no, I had to make sure it was so in daylight and he said I'll be out in a minute to talk to your father and I said you will if you can find him. So, he came out and picked me up and we went down to daddy's office and they, everybody around there said oh, he's, he's down at the barber. He's getting all spiffed up because he's going to see the Vice President. So, we found daddy at the barber shop.

DANIEL: Was his barber Spina (the barber from Battery D in WWI) ?

ELINOR: Uh, huh. And uh, he, um, oh, Joe, Joe talked to him about the fact that we wanted to get married and uh, he said, oh well, you'll just have to wait 'till, what was his name, Frank I think, finishes with me and we're going over to the hotel to see the Vice President. So, he walked us from 10th and Walnut to the Muehlbach Hotel. We went through all the Secret Service and there was Truman in the Penthouse at the Muehlbach and daddy walked us up and said, Harry, this man wants to marry my daughter. And Truman looked him up and down and said well major, I think that's a good idea.

DANIEL: Your dad wasn't a major?

ELINOR: No, but my husband was.

DANIEL: Your dad was a Sergeant?

ELINOR: My daddy was so, he was, he was for a while a Sergeant, but he was very proud to say, that he was bucked down to Private in the last ranks. He did something he shouldn't have, but I don't know what it was.

DANIEL: You really don't know?

ELINOR: Uh, uh, never found out what it was. Uh, there was something I wanted to tell you about the kind of guy he was, but, 'cause we talked a little bit about the depression. When my daughters were like um, five and seven, my husband and I took them to the Ozarks to a resort, um, a square dance resort. And Elliot (Jacobson, son of AD, and cousin to Elinor Borenstine) and his family went along. We, we enjoyed most of our vacations together in those years and um, I couldn't understand what was going on at that resort. Number one, we got the choice cabins, number two we had the choice table at meal time, number three, the manager kept coming over to see if we were satisfied with everything and finally I said to him why are you taking such an interest in us? And he said, um, I'm going to tell you a story, I know you're Eddie Jacobson's daughter because, we research our clientele before we book them into our resort. And, in the depression days, when I didn't have nickel, I was trying to sell ties in stores, I had a line of ties, and I couldn't even get anybody to look at them, everybody was so poor. And he said, one year I went into Kansas and the first Merchant that I tried to see said, well, I don't want to look but I have to. Eddie Jacobson was here last week and said I didn't have to buy, but I had to look, so open up. And he said every place I went in Kansas, that season, I got the same story. And this is what started my good fortune and resulted in this resort.

And my cup will run over if your father will come here next summer. And indeed he did go the next summer and you never saw such royalty, but that's the kind of guy he was. This was, this was a fellow, a young man that he didn't even know, but daddy knew he was having a hard time.

DANIEL: He tried to help him. Did your dad talk much about the first, the failed store through the years?

ELINOR: No, that was, that was, no.

DANIEL: Never much mention about that?

ELINOR: No, um, hmm. And of course, I was just born, I, I didn't know anything about it.

DANIEL: When Truman was a Senator, did your dad and he have much contact with each other?

ELINOR: Oh, sure.

DANIEL: Mainly through poker games or through other things too?

ELINOR: Other things too. Um, we're very proud to tell you that we never asked a personal favor of Harry Truman while he was in any public office, except twice.

DANIEL: And the two?

ELINOR: Well, once when my husband couldn't get out of the Army after the war. They just simply would not discharge him, they wanted to promote him to god knows what, and all he wanted was out and he couldn't get out, so we wrote to Truman and he made the arrangements. I still have the letter in there of dismissal. That was one and the other one I remember acutely, uh, I remember sitting at the dinner table and hearing mother and daddy talk. She had a cousin who was trying to get out of Germany and had appealed to her for help. Well, in those days, you know, you had to guarantee their livelihood and mother kept saying to him, uh, listen, we can't afford to do that, you know, this is going to be a very expensive undertaking, I know we can't afford this and my daddy said to her, listen, I will make arrangements. I know there's Jews in this city who will help me if I need it. I'll try to do it myself and I will write to Harry and see if he can expedite this and he did. The only two times in all of the years that Truman was in public office that we asked for any personal favors.

DANIEL: And Truman was quick to oblige at those?

ELINOR: Oh, yes.

DANIEL: Your dad and mother had, what seems to be, a very close relationship?

ELINOR: Yes.

DANIEL: Who ruled the roost?

ELINOR: I don't think anybody did.

DANIEL: Did he confide in her and walk through all of his issues with her?

ELINOR: Oh, yes, oh, yes, oh, yes.

DANIEL: What did she think about his involvement with all of the Zionism?

ELINOR: She was quietly proud.

DANIEL: Did she encourage him to keep going with it?

ELINOR: I think so.

DANIEL: And the financial part didn't bother her?

ELINOR: No.

DANIEL: She agreed to it?

ELINOR: Well, number one I don't think he asked her and number two, whatever he did she was satisfied with.

DANIEL: In 1944 your dad decided to open a new store on his own. Opened in February of '45?

ELINOR: Yes, I know.

DANIEL: What did you think when your father told you he was going to open a store?

ELINOR: My husband and I were in Fort Bragg, the hell hole of the world, um, the letter came and I read it to him and he said, oh, my god he's opening on the wrong side of the street!

DANIEL: Once he got going, the store did pretty well.

ELINOR: Oh, yeah, it did very well, certainly, certainly after Truman was elected it did very well.

DANIEL: Do you think it did well because people knew that he was friends?

ELINOR: Oh, and listen he came every, every morning he would come down and have to battle through the press to get to, to unlock the store and get into it. They were waiting for him every morning.

DANIEL: And people asking for him to intercede with the President?

ELINOR: Absolutely. And they all had plans that they would all get rich including daddy. And he used to send them all packing right away, he said, he always told them I don't want to get rich that way, I'm going to sell shirts.

DANIEL: Your dad was called in the middle of the night to go see the President to intercede on behalf of Dr. Weizmann; do you remember hearing about him, all of a sudden going on trips to Washington like that?

ELINOR: Yes.

DANIEL: Do you remember from that particular trip, when he came back, do you remember hearing him describe those events?

ELINOR: Yes, yes.

DANIEL: Tell me about them.

ELINOR: You know about it.

DANIEL: Well, I know the story, but how did he tell you about it?

ELINOR: Well, he told us how, he, he first went into um, Matt Connelly's office and uh, Matt said to him, now when you go in there, daddy never had an appointment when he went to the White House, he always went in the East Gate and uh, would stop to see Matt and Matt would say, I'll get you in as soon as the President is free. And on this particular day Matt said to him, now listen, you're going to go in there shortly but don't talk about Palestine, the President is really upset about Palestine and daddy looked him straight in the eye and said, that's what I came here for Matt, and that's what I intend to do. And he went in and they chatted, first they chatted about their families, and then daddy told him why he was there. And Truman said, well, you know I haven't been treated very well by a lot of these Eastern Jews, he said do you know this Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver and uh, he said, oh yes, and Truman said do you know that man came in and pounded on my desk and said you have to do this, you have to do this, and I just said I'm the President the United States I don't have to do anything you tell me. That, that was, one of the stories he told us and this offended Harry, he, he really, this was the main reason, he had been pressured by a lot of the Zionist and he was tired of it.

DANIEL: Your dad wrote about the famous phrase that the President uttered, describing your dad's hair or lack there of, how did your dad describe that comment?

ELINOR: Oh, he, he said, Harry looked at me and said you bald headed son of a bitch.

DANIEL: Did your dad say it with a smile on his face?

ELINOR: Oh, yes.

DANIEL: So, he was proud?

ELINOR: Oh, yes.

DANIEL: How did your dad react to, you just mentioned the Jewish Establishment and the Eastern Jews, how did your dad react to the pressure he received from them?

ELINOR: Uh, daddy liked, um, Frank Goldman a lot.

DANIEL: Frank Goldman was with the B'nai Brith?

ELINOR: He was the International President of B'nai Brith. And Maurice Bisguyer was the uh, Executive Secretary and daddy liked both of them a lot. And apparently they knew just how to handle this man. I mean, daddy was a humble little shirt salesman until then.

DANIEL: Until then, do you think he ever really changed from being a humble shirt salesman?

ELINOR: He didn't change, but everybody around him changed.

DANIEL: Was your dad a different man after those events? When you picture what your dad was like in '49 or '50 or '51?

ELINOR: Do you remember, do you remember um, when, uh, at the UN they did not do what Truman wanted?

DANIEL: Right, it's the story with the Ambassador, Warren Austin, made an announcement.

ELINOR: Right, right, and Truman had already promised...

DANIEL: It was just after the meeting with Weizmann.

ELINOR: And Truman, at that meeting, had promised Weizmann, this is what we felt, it happened on a Friday, and our family knew it as Black Friday, because, Jews from all over, from Kansas City, from New York from all over called and said, you see what your friend has done now?

DANIEL: Called your father?

ELINOR: Um, hmm.

DANIEL: How did your father react to them?

ELINOR: He was bitter.

DANIEL: At Harry or at the people?

ELINOR: Oh, no, no, no at everybody who criticized and he kept saying, no, you're going to find out your wrong. And, in fact, Dr. Weizmann even contacted him and said, I know, that Mr. Truman would not have sanctioned this kind of thing. Don't worry about it Eddie, I trust him. In fact, I think I have the letter that was written.

DANIEL: Your dad and mom went to Israel shortly after about '49 or '50?

ELINOR: Um, hmm. Yeah, at the, as guest of the State, and they stayed with James McDonald.

DANIEL: The Ambassador?

ELINOR: Um, hmm.

DANIEL: Tell me about that trip, how did they describe it?

ELINOR: Oh, they were in their glory. Uh, um, in fact, there were movies made of um, daddy and Chaim Weizmann on top of the YWCA building and Weizmann was pointing out where the shooting had started. Uh, it was just a glorious trip, there was only one thing that was wrong with it, and that was that Harry and Bess were supposed to go too and they couldn't.

DANIEL: Your dad's, once Israel was established, your dad switched over and suddenly became very involved in helping Israel get started? Tell me about that.

ELINOR: Oh, yes, oh, yes, in fact, well, uh, now see, this is the part that I know little about, because, it's the time when I was busiest with my family. Um, but, this is when they used to tease him at the White House about uh, being uh, the Ambassador without portfolio, because, there was the subject of *de jure* recognition and, and loans, and loan guarantees, and arms; all of that, that he shepparded through as best he could.

DANIEL: Did he feel out of his realm doing those things?

ELINOR: No, he just felt like if he was honest and, and talked to the right people.

DANIEL: Was he aware what he was doing that he was involved in these huge affairs of State?

ELINOR: By then he was.

DANIEL: What did he think about it, how did he describe it, what did he say?

ELINOR: Well, it was thrilling. I have to tell you also, that it was during that period that uh, his life was threatened. Now, I don't know how many people know that.

DANIEL: Tell me about it.

ELINOR: Um, he had a call one day at the store from um, a male voice uh, with an Arabic accent threatening his life. He didn't tell anybody but the manager of the store called me and my husband and I did not allow him to go home alone. My mother was in Washington at the time with her friend. She stayed there for a long time, sometimes a month at a time. And uh, we didn't allow him to go home alone. He didn't know it always, but we followed him. Because we were alarmed.

DANIEL: Was he ever alarmed about it?

ELINOR: No, hmm, mm.

DANIEL: He had lots of correspondence and contacts with different people involved in Israel. Who were his favorites? Who are the ones that he had the highest respect for that he liked most?

ELINOR: Chaim Weizmann.

DANIEL: How did he describe Weizmann? What did he say about him?

ELINOR: In awe, he was in awe of Weizmann. And he couldn't understand, I mean this was a really, uh, it was like he worshipped him and we couldn't understand it. He hadn't known him that long and uh, we talked about that trip to Israel and the films that were made at the time, we were showing them one night in our living room at their home on 72nd Street uh, and some of his friends were there and one of his closest friends took me by the arm and said look at that picture, that looks just like his father. He has the same stature, the same look and he did, he looked just like the old man.

DANIEL: Do you think that was part of?

ELINOR: I'm sure that was part of it.

DANIEL: Who else? What other leaders?

ELINOR: Um, oh, I can't remember names, I'm so old I forget my own name some day, but I'll tell you who they were, um, Meir Wiesgal, you know this name, he was Weizmann's right hand. I'll tell you a funny story, uh, when Meir came and this was in

the days that they were working on the arms and, and all that we have discussed already, um, Meier came one year and he was telling us that um, the National Sport of Israel in those days was listening to the short wave radio. And this is how, uh, Weizmann communicated with Wiesgal while he was traveling. And one time, a horrible thing happened, because, Weizmann said and Meir, don't forget before you come to buy me a couple of pounds of bacon and all of Israel knew immediately that the President was eating bacon and daddy thought a lot of Meir Wiesgal also and of course, I told you already that he, he was so impressed with Teddy Kollek.

DANIEL: What do you think of Abba Eban?

ELINOR: He thought Abba Eban was the great white hope of Israel, it didn't turn out that way, but, in those days, he really thought he was. Eban had a monumental ego. Everything was twisted his direction. I mean, if you listened to Eban speak, Eddie Jacobson had nothing to do with it, he handled the whole thing.

DANIEL: Your father and Truman remained close and played Poker together.

ELINOR: Always, um, hmm.

DANIEL: Was your husband ever invited to those Poker games?

ELINOR: No, my husband didn't have time for Poker. He was raising children. And besides these were all contemporaries.

DANIEL: Did you ever sit in on any of those Poker games?

ELINOR: Women weren't allowed. If we served them food we had to take it to the door.

DANIEL: What about as a little girl on your dad's lap?

ELINOR: No, you mean at the Poker games?

DANIEL: Uh, huh.

ELINOR: No, never.

DANIEL: Were you ever on any of the hunting or fishing trips?

ELINOR: No. Those were all men. My mother wasn't either.

DANIEL: And were you friendly with the daughters of the children of any of the other men who were part of that Poker group or were they all distant the same way Margaret Truman was distant?

ELINOR: Well, actually the only one I really knew was uh, A.J. [Granoff] And, and I, in fact, I used to drive Loeb [Granoff] to Religious school and Loeb's sister. Um, they lived not far from us and I was teaching at the Religious School at the time.

DANIEL: According to Loeb that's how A.J. and your dad met?

ELINOR: That's possible.

DANIEL: Through the Religious School carpool.

ELINOR: That's possible.

DANIEL: But the rest of the Poker player's kids' you didn't know?

ELINOR: No, they were all pretty rich and not in our, I mean, they were Country Club members and they weren't all, Al Rich used to play, he was a famous Judge in Jackson County.

DANIEL: Were the games held at your house often?

ELINOR: Uh, huh. In our basement there was a Poker table and I nearly fainted one night, I went to the door and I thought standing there was Tom Pendergast and I knew Tom Pendergast was in, in the pokey, turned out it was Jim Pendergast who came to the Poker game.

DANIEL: Who was also part of the World War I group?

ELINOR: Yes, yes.

DANIEL: How often did these Poker games take place?

ELINOR: Oh, not too often, just when Harry was in town.

DANIEL: Once every few months?

ELINOR: Yeah, something like that.

DANIEL: Was there a lot of money on the tables?

ELINOR: No, and, of course, they always had Bourbon and Branch for Truman.

DANIEL: There are conflicting stories about whether or not Truman was at your dad's funeral?

ELINOR: Yes, of course, he was.

DANIEL: You recall him being at your dad's funeral?

ELINOR: Oh, yes.

DANIEL: Was he at the Shiva house?

ELINOR: Of course.

DANIEL: Do you remember speaking with him?

ELINOR: Of course.

DANIEL: Tell me about it.

ELINOR: Well, in fact I told you I had all these books of his that had just been published and he said Elinor, next week when things calm down come to my office and bring them and uh, I'll autograph them to each of your daughters. And I went, and you know Kansas City, you have to be a mountain goat to, I still remember how sore my arms got carrying all of those books up and down the hills of Kansas City to the Federal Building where he had his office and I went in and handed him the books and he turned to me, I can't always talk about it, the most powerful man in the world put his head in his hands and started to sob. He said I've lost my brother, I didn't feel this way when I lost my brother, and he sobbed so much that it rattled me entirely, I got up and went to the door and called Grace, his secretary, and said Grace I'm leaving the books, I'll send for them in a few days. And it was the last time I ever saw Truman.

DANIEL: Really? You never saw him again afterwards?

ELINOR: No.

DANIEL: Why?

ELINOR: I didn't think I could trust myself.

DANIEL: Really?

ELINOR: Um, hmm. My husband saw him many times after that, I did not.

DANIEL: You thought you'd break down?

ELINOR: Um, hmm.

DANIEL: I want to talk about your dad's, for lack of a better word, legacy. Do you think your dad was a hero?

ELINOR: No.

DANIEL: Why not?

ELINOR: Well, he wouldn't have like to have been called a hero.

DANIEL: Why?

ELINOR: I told you he was a humble man. No, I think he was in the right place at the right time, uh, with the right kind of um, emotions.

DANIEL: He also recognized that he was

ELINOR: ...And recognized.

DANIEL: Do you think his is the kind of story that should be told to young American Jews?

ELINOR: I certainly do. My sister does it quite often, she speaks to uh, lots...

DANIEL: Do you speak to groups?

ELINOR: I have, I have. I don't anymore. The last group I spoke to was uh, oh, what do they call themselves, it's a group of um, people who live here in Sarasota and have children living in Israel. There's some kind of Acronym that they use.

DANIEL: You went to Israel for the dedication of the Square for your dad?

ELINOR: Yeah, well, of the Truman Library.

DANIEL: Tell me about that trip. What did it feel like to go there?

ELINOR: That trip was the most exciting thing of my life.

DANIEL: Why?

ELINOR: Well, first of all, my husband and I didn't travel. I mean, if we went to the Ozarks and square danced that was a big trip for us because that man was a dedicated pediatrician and uh, one night, oh, I'll never forget him, a little man knocked on our door, I was afraid to let him in at first, but. he introduced himself as somebody from Israel, I can't remember his name, uh, and could he talk to me and he came in and described what was going to happen. Described the dedication of the Truman uh, part of the Library, the dedication of the Square, of the Truman Boulevard and Eddie Jacobson's square and all of the State Department festivities that were going to go on at the time, described it all and said, we want you and your sister to come as our guests. I said you know my husband will never come, he was already upstairs in bed, he was tired. I said, you know my husband will never sit for something like that. Now, those were the days when my

sister and her husband went to Israel three or four times a year, uh, but I had never been and uh, I said wait just a minute. And I went upstairs and woke him up and told him and he said, oh, sure, we'll go. And I was thrilled to death and that's when we started making plans for it.

DANIEL: Tell me about the trip. You got to Israel?

ELINOR: And we checked into the hotel, my sister was...

DANIEL: You were met at the airport by the State Department?

ELINOR: No, not that trip, another trip. That trip we went through customs because my sister and brother-in-law had been there for a few days already, and so we checked into the hotel and uh, I called her room and she said, oh, I'll be right down to help you unpack. And she had told me before she left, you are to bring one dress and all the rest pants and sturdy shoes because we'll do a lot of walking and you get one dress for the dedication. Oh, I'll never forget this, I cheated, I took two, which was a lucky thing because when she came to help me unpack, as I unpacked the dress that I had planned to wear, she said, same dress I bought in Tulsa. Can you imagine? We hadn't seen each other for maybe a year of two and we both bought the same dress. So, I was very glad to have the other dress. And then there were all the festivities. Uh, this was a four day affair. We toured all over Israel. Uh, we had uh, we went to the Jewish Agency and they had a guide and a car for us and uh, and I told you already about painting the Children's Zoo; I had been to Israel three times since that trip. The last time I went with a Mission from Sarasota, took my, took my significant other with me, he was an Ardent Presbyterian and extremely tight with his pocket book, but after Yad VaShem, they nearly had to take me out on a stretcher because, I heard him pledge a thousand dollars. Um, you know how when you go on a mission to Israel, they um, they honor someone in the group by asking them to say the Shehecheyanu, they asked me if I could? I said you want me to get right in the middle of it and cry because I always do when I go up to Jerusalem.

DANIEL: Was your dad a big giver to Zionists?

ELINOR: He didn't have any money.

DANIEL: It's now about five after nine and we've taped the first hour and we're going to continue on at least for a little while. We were talking just before about your dad and giving Tzeddakah?

ELINOR: When he had it, he gave it. But he didn't have much.

DANIEL: What about encouraging you to give?

ELINOR: I don't think he ever uh, really taught us anything about that.

DANIEL: Did he encourage you to learn Judaism, and to get a good Jewish background and to read books on your own and that sort of thing?

ELINOR: No.

DANIEL: It was just a part of your being?

ELINOR: It was what we did and how we lived. We, we were, you know I, I should tell you, maybe Loeb told you, on this famous trip to Israel that he took as a guest of the State he and mother went, he went to see the Chief Rabbi of Israel. Did Loeb tell you about that trip.

DANIEL: No.

ELINOR: And uh, the first thing that happened was my mother walked in and shook hands with him and he had to excuse himself and go out and wash. Uh, he, when he came back, he sat down with daddy and he said Eddie, I've read your history, I know you come from devout orthodox parents, I know you were raised in orthodoxy, but you left it and you went to Reform, Eddie how could you? And daddy said Rabbi, I want to tell you something, I went to reform. My brothers stayed in Orthodoxy and they're good Jews, they, they go to services on Rosh HaShannah and Yom Kippur and Rabbi, I go every Friday night and on Rosh HaShannah and Yom Kippur and I consider myself as much of a Jew as they are. I was always so proud of my daddy for saying that.

DANIEL: Your dad considered himself a Reform Jew?

ELINOR: Uh, huh.

DANIEL: And was proud of it?

ELINOR: Uh, huh.

DANIEL: Did he think that orthodoxy was backwards?

ELINOR: No, no. But, I think at the time that he became a Reform Jew, it was because my mother was and because my, uh, her parents were, well, they were poor people too and, and they weren't active, because, they couldn't be in the Temple, but, they belonged and they went to services and so did we.

DANIEL: Your dad was an usher on Holidays?

ELINOR: Oh, yes, he was proud of that.

DANIEL: Was he? How did he describe it, what did he say?

ELINOR: Just that he was, just that he had to go early because he was an usher, you know.

DANIEL: Would he stand and shake hands and schmooze with people and talk to everybody as they came in?

ELINOR: Sure, well, of course. I only knew one man in my whole life who didn't like my father. Everybody loved him.

DANIEL: Who didn't like him?

ELINOR: It was a competitor. And if daddy got a, you know, shirts were rationed, you're too young to know, shirts were rationed and if daddy got a few more shirts than he did.

DANIEL: What was it like for you in the Jewish community in particular, but also in the larger sense being the child of this man?

ELINOR: Let me tell you something. All my life, I was known as Eddie Jacobson's daughter and then I married and I was Joe Bornstine's wife. And I would strive and strive to be Elinor Bornstine and I was president of every rotten organization in Kansas City the B'nai B'rith, the Temple, the Girl Scouts, the PTA, you name it, because I wanted to be Elinor Bornstine, I didn't want to be Eddie Jacobson's daughter or Joe Bornstine's wife.

DANIEL: How did your mother handle...?

ELINOR: My mother uh, was very quiet. She was prideful, but quiet, um...?

DANIEL: She never thought your dad was off on a foolish thing?

ELINOR: No, no. My mother could be a spit fire, uh, but never to my father.

DANIEL: So, is that where yours comes from?

ELINOR: Yep.

DANIEL: Tell me about the necklace?

ELINOR: When my mother carried me, my father bet her that I would be a boy. He could not imagine that God wouldn't give him a son to hunt and fish with. And when I came along, inelegantly I said that, in one of the lady's meetings, without that little piece of cartilage, and my sister didn't like it much, she was mad at me; it was the uh, the big givers of the uh, oh, the Alliance of Judah, and I said that, and Gloria didn't like it a bit, by anyway, uh, and that's when they were broke, when I was born and he couldn't pay her, he didn't have enough money to pay the bet he had lost.

DANIEL: How much did he bet?

ELINOR: Five dollars. And after daddy died, we found in his safe deposit box, two ,two and a half dollar gold pieces in payment of his debt. My mother had them mounted and wore them on her wrist on a gold bracelet and when she died, the morning after her funeral, my sister and I sat in her little suite, in our home, and divided up what there was, and I said, before we start, I want you to know something, those gold pieces are not part of the estate, they're mine. Then my sister and I proceeded to divvy up and this is the way it went: Oh, you take that sister, no, no, you take that sister, and that's how we argued, not give me but oh, you take.

DANIEL: What kind of father was your dad?

ELINOR: Sweet, gentle.

DANIEL: Did he push you?

ELINOR: I saw him loose his temper with me once in my entire life.

DANIEL: What did you do?

ELINOR: Oh, I was bad. I was four years old, now I told you I lived in, I lived in a family of adults and early on they wanted to give me piano lessons and after about oh, six or eight lessons, Ms. Lilly said to my mother, I think she'd be a beautiful dancer. Give her dancing lessons and so, I had dancing lessons and I had elocution lessons and I wanted to perform. And so, I would go around after dinner to all of the neighbors, the old folks sitting on the swings on the front porch and I would dance for them and uh, elocute for them and uh, my mother uh, had a still born child between me and my sister.

DANIEL: How long after you were born?

ELINOR: You know, I think it might have been uh, four or five years, four years, something like that.

DANIEL: Do you know if it was a boy or a girl?

ELINOR: They never knew or if they did they never told me. And, of that, I had an audience that night. I had a real audience, the sleigh makers were sitting on their porch and I was dancing for them and my daddy called me, it was when he needed me to be at home so he could take my mother to the hospital. And I couldn't go, I had an audience. So, when he finally got me, it's the only time he ever slapped me. But, he slapped me that night, he was not happy. Other than that, he was sweet and he was gentle.

DANIEL: Your dad encouraged education?

ELINOR: Oh, yes. It was very difficult for him and for my mother to see me have to stay home my first year of college because they couldn't afford to send me.

DANIEL: Did you go to college?

ELINOR: I went to one year of Junior College in Kansas City.

DANIEL: Where?

ELINOR: Junior College, Kansas City Junior College. It was a disaster! I had a boyfriend who uh, worked two blocks from College and he had a yellow convertible and I cut every class and sailed around in that convertible and my grades were horrible. But the next year they thought they better get me out of his clutches and away from the yellow convertible and they amassed enough money to send me to Missouri, in Columbia. Well, there it was even worse. And so, after a year of cutting classes and going out every night I uh, quit college.

DANIEL: Were they upset with you for quitting college?

ELINOR: No. My mother uh, was very good about helping me when I, when I went home, uh, I knew I had to do something, I was going to have to earn a living. And, she helped me learn short hand and...

DANIEL: You talked about Gloria being sick as a child. How did that effect your dad? Was he consumed by it?

ELINOR: Oh, it was a terrible thing for him. I don't think he was consumed, but we were all terribly worried. At the same time that Glow was so sick, my grandmother was dying, we thought, ...

DANIEL: Your mother's mother or your father's mother?

ELINOR: My mother's mother in the same house, at least, she was very ill and mother simply could not take care of both of them. So, I quit my job and I took care of Glow. And so, our relationship for many years was not as sisters, it was more of a mother-daughter.

DANIEL: When you think back now on your father's role in history, how do you think history ought to record him?

ELINOR: I haven't thought about that, I don't know, I haven't thought about history recording. I know what Truman always said about him, he was honest, he was trustworthy and he could believe anything Eddie told him. I think, I think, I think we had a good heritage. I think my children had a good heritage.

DANIEL: I want to talk about one last subject and then we'll conclude. We mentioned this in passing earlier. Truman has been accused from time to time of being anti-Semitic. You know, the diary entry here and there. Tell me your reaction to those criticisms.

ELINOR: Well, he was not an anti-Semite. He was a man of his time. And when the KKK met in Grandview, Truman and all the other farmers went and listened. In fact, there was that old joke, daddy said, um, what he used to say about, oh, I can't remember what it was, but maybe you've read it somewhere because he repeated it many times, that um, Truman sold them something and daddy sold them their sheets.

DANIEL: So, you don't think Truman was an anti-Semite?

ELINOR: No, I think he was, I think he was very distressed with a lot of, of the Zionist Jews who about worried him to death when he was in the White House.

DANIEL: From what you say, your dad was equally distressed by them?

ELINOR: Oh, yes.

DANIEL: How do you think your dad would have reacted to these claims that Truman was anti-Semitic?

ELINOR: Oh, I think he would have straightened them out. Truman was not anti-Semitic.

DANIEL: How do you think your dad would have reacted to reading the diary entries or you know, words of Truman's that seemed to indicate a little bit of anti-Semitism?

ELINOR: You know what, I think he wouldn't even talk about it. I think he might just read it and shake his head and walk away.

DANIEL: Do you think when all is said and done, do you think that it was b'shert the way your dad says or do you think it was something more extraordinary about who your dad was to recognize that he had found that place in history and to go after it?

ELINOR: I think it was all of the above. Don't you think that's possible?

DANIEL: Sure.

ELINOR: I think at first it was b'shert and later on when he began to realize what had happened, and how it had happened, he began to realize how important he had been.

DANIEL: When you look at Israel today or you go to visit Israel today, are you aware of the fact that your father had such a central role?

ELINOR: I told you, I can't even say the Shehecheyanu because I cry. Uh, one year, one year we went and, you know, how they have uh, they have a little ceremony at Yad VaShem; uh, I had been busy and just before we went on that mission, I had been busy in Sarasota doing oral histories of some of the um, some of our people, our residents here who had been in the Holocaust. And uh, one of them was so, so horrible, one of the, one of the interviews was so horrible, I had to quit interviewing and uh, it was a story of Theresienstadt, and when we went in, they asked me, they wanted to honor me on account of my father, and they asked me to be one of the people who stood at the, the markers. And then they put me at the Theresienstadt, it was a horrible day for me, I almost didn't live through it.

DANIEL: Tell me again and with this we'll conclude. You told me a joke that your father told earlier at dinner we were talking.

ELINOR: What did I tell you?

DANIEL: There was a joke that your father told?

ELINOR: I don't know which one.

DANIEL: We'll have to wait for the tape.

ELINOR: He was always, he was always glad to tell a joke if he had one.

DANIEL: I guess we're both blanking on it, we'll wait for another day.

ELINOR: Okay, call me.

DANIEL: I will.

ELINOR: Call me anytime if you think of what it was.

DANIEL: I will, I will. Just a quick follow-up question. Your dad and Harry Truman were good friends, did your dad ever spend any time at Truman's house?

ELINOR: No.

DANIEL: Why not?

ELINOR: Well, he wouldn't have been welcome. Bess wouldn't have like it.

DANIEL: Was your dad upset that he never spent time there?

ELINOR: No. It didn't bother him, he saw Truman when he wanted to, they went to lunch together and, and uh, they were together as much as...

DANIEL: Did it bother your dad that he was never invited to spend an evening at the White House?

ELINOR: No, oh, he was invited, they went to the uh, inauguration.

DANIEL: Right, and they probably had a dinner or two at the White House?

ELINOR: Oh, yeah.

DANIEL: But they never spent the night in the Lincoln bedroom?

ELINOR: No. I didn't go to the inauguration. My sister went.

DANIEL: Why didn't you go?

ELINOR: He said to me you stay home with your children, I had little children then, you stay home with your children. And I said daddy, I have live in help, and grandpa, my father-in-law, will be here in the house and daddy said, you're staying home with your children. Gloria is going to the inauguration.

DANIEL: That's uh, fifty-six years ago. I hear still a little bitterness in your voice.

ELINOR: Oh, absolutely! And you know what, I didn't feel bad about it at the time, but all my friends used to say, isn't that awful he took your sister and he wouldn't take you! They had to remind me.

DANIEL: But the President knew you and Gloria both?

ELINOR: Oh, of course.

DANIEL: And would have been equally warm with either one of you?

ELINOR: Oh, yes, in fact, that picture up there, I have the feeling is, when I, when I uh, taught Sunday School at B'nai Jehudah, um, I think that was the day he came out to talk to the Sunday School.

DANIEL: You had him come speak to the Sunday School?

ELINOR: Uh, huh. I could be wrong, it might have been some other function, but, he did come. It rained that day terribly, but uh,....

DANIEL: But, he came back to Kansas City or to Independence after he left the White House; he was not the most popular former President.

ELINOR: No. He has become.

DANIEL: Was he greeted warmly? Do you remember how your dad reacted to all of that?

ELINOR: You know, uh, in those days there was an editor of the Kansas City Star, who liked Truman less than anybody in the world, but, he was a big man in Kansas City and daddy and, and he used to take Truman to the uh, Kansas City Club. Now, as you know, Jews were not allowed at the Kansas City Club until uh, the *golfer* [Tom Watson] came along and um, but, but, uh, Roy, what was his last name, Black or something like that used to take Truman to lunch at, at the Kansas City Club, and daddy used to tease him. He used to say Harry, watch when you go to lunch with him, because while he's being nice to your face, watch your back, there could be knife in it. In fact, the, the Kansas City Star always used to call that terrible flood we had, the Truman Flood, you know all the business with the Core of Engineers, well, that was the Truman Flood.

DANIEL: Did your dad react to the criticism that Truman got around the country or was it still his friend Harry and that was just?

ELINOR: Oh, it was his friend Harry. I mean, daddy always said, oh, listen, when you're in that business you have to know how to take the knocks.

DANIEL: Was your dad ever criticized?

ELINOR: Oh, sure.

DANIEL: Did it bother him?

ELINOR: No.

DANIEL: He just went on?

ELINOR: Yeah, but, like I say, there wasn't a soul in Kansas City that didn't love my daddy except that one man.

DANIEL: Okay, thanks.

Appendix C

Interview with Loeb Granoff

July 27, 2004

Kansas City, Missouri

Conducted by Daniel J. Fellman

DANIEL: You just showed me the picture of the poker game in your parent's basement. It had the picture of Abe Jacobson, Eddie's brother. Were Eddie's siblings friendly with the president or was it just Eddie?

LOEB: They all had been involved in the poker games over the years.

DANIEL: I look at the picture of President Truman in that room (the basement of AJ Granoff) and he looks to be at home and comfortable. There are all of these reports out and blurbs here and there about Truman's anti-Semitism. Do you think that Truman was at all an anti-Semite?

LOEB: Absolutely not. He may have had some of the cultural anti-Semitism of the time, and remember, this was a time when Jews were not allowed into many organizations and faced quotas. But no, Truman did not have any animas towards Jews. I have received many calls concerning my family's relationship with the President. Obviously, the remarks reported in the media were very upsetting. But, I think you need to look at/pay attention to the fact that a lot of the pictures of the private parties show men wearing ties. Nobody would ever think of wearing a suit and tie to a poker party today. Just as the times have changed with clothing, so too have the times changed for the better with regards to discrimination. I regret to say this but Jews faced discrimination in America. I graduated law school with very high grades and clerked for a federal judge. Yet, I was not eligible to work at any of the major law firms in Kansas City. They just didn't hire Jews. You know he came from a Southern Baptist background. I would suggest that the reports that Truman was some vicious anti-Semite... He wasn't. He just wasn't. I am sure that in moments of frustration, each and every one of us has uttered something, whether it was a racial epithet or language or one thing or another that we wished we hadn't said. The President never expected these diaries to see the light of day. But, I think the thing that makes Truman so remarkable and makes his contribution so great is that here was a man who, notwithstanding his bible-belt, provincial, Southern oriented background overcame all of that. He saw value in all people. He never de-legitimized any contribution that my father or Eddie Jacobson made. Rather, he acknowledged them, and publicly. On the contrary, the fact is that Truman was one of these people who always did what he ultimately thought was the right thing. I was once asked, when I was president of the Phi Beta Kappa association, by the fellow who is on the Capital Gang, Hunt I believe is his name, was one of our speakers. He knew that I had had a personal relationship with the President. This was early in the Clinton administration, and he asked me to compare the two because both of these men were self-made men and they both came from nothing. How would I compare them? How would I compare Harry Truman with Bill Clinton? I said, well that is interesting. Clinton had already gone

through Zoe Baird and several other people, and it had become politically embarrassing. Well, I said, I hope I am wrong about this, but I think Clinton goes for what is politically expedient and if it is right, so be it. While Truman went for what was right and if it happened to be politically expedient, then so be it. It was simply a reversal of priorities. And this sometimes hurt Truman. By the time he left office in 1953, he was vastly unpopular. Hell, he couldn't have been elected dog-catcher in Independence!! I will make one other comment about this and this does illustrate the kind of social thing we are talking about. One of the things that I know bothered Eddie Jacobson, that my father used to talk about, was that during the 8 years that the President was in the White House, never once was Eddie or Bluma ever invited to spend the night. They were never overnight guests of the Truman's.

DANIEL: It bothered Eddie?

LOEB: Well, only because he was aware of the fact that there were so many of his other friends and cronies from the old days who were. Including, some of the folks from Independence who were more extended friends and so on. The Trumans did have such guests, but not Eddie and Bluma.

DANIEL: In some of the research I have done, I have read that from time to time Truman would host the poker party, but when he did though, it was held in the back porch because Mrs. Wallace, Bess's mother, wouldn't allow any Jews in the house.

LOEB: I do not know anything about that and quite frankly, I do not recall any poker games that were held at the Truman home. Keep this in mind, first of all, the house there on Delaware street was owned by the Wallaces. Mrs. Wallace always felt that Bess married beneath her station in life. And even after the President became President, I don't think she changed her opinion!! The fact of the matter is, as you probably know, up until the day that the poor lady died, she was always the one who sat at the head of the table, and never the President.

DANIEL: And the President didn't own a house until after she died.

LOEB: Well, that's right. And so, if you go there to the house sometime, and incidentally, my wife Debbie and I went there many times to pick up the President and we always came in the front door and sometimes we would sit in the sitting room at the front of the house. But, when they opened the house to the public, after the President and Mrs. Truman's deaths and it became a national monument, we were really quite amazed at how plain it was. These were real down-to-earth people who never put on airs.

DANIEL: Let me come back to your father and Eddie Jacobson's relationship. Let's head back to Eddie Jacobson first. To your father and Eddie Jacobson's dealings with the President around the establishment of Israel. So, you knew Eddie Jacobson from these carpools to Sunday school on Sunday morning. Do you recall him as being anything other than an average Jew of his time?

LOEB: Eddie was not very much involved in the Jewish community. He belonged to Bnai Brith. My father was very active in the Jewish community. He was one of the charter members of the Jewish community relations bureau. He was not only President of the local chapter of Bnai Brith, but he was President of District #2. He was a national Hillel commissioner. He was active in all aspects of Jewish community life both on a local and national level. He and Abe Sachar were good friends when Abe Sachar was executive director of the Hillel foundation.

DANIEL: Did Eddie strike you as the kind of guy who would take a deep involvement in something like the Jewish state?

LOEB: Well, that was what I was going to say. The answer is no. I don't really think that Eddie gave much thought to those kinds of things. Eddie was not really, he was born in St. Joe, he was a secular Jew in every sense of the word. And, I think he was more interested in other things than he was in Jewish activities. His involvement with the President on Israel really originated with my father. Dad had been his close friend and attorney for many years.

DANIEL: Did your dad do his bankruptcy in the 20's?

LOEB: No, he did not.

DANIEL: The impression is your dad gave Eddie tutorials.

LOEB: He did. And, I can remember seeing them as a kid. When I say I was a kid, I was not such a kid. It was 1947 and I was already a junior at the University of Missouri. I can remember the days when Eddie used to come to the house and they would go over maps together.

DANIEL: Who would set those appointments? Would Eddie call your dad and say, "explain this to me?"

LOEB: Well, I don't think they were appointments. I can't answer that. I don't know. I simply don't know. Because they were together so frequently. They didn't make appointments.

DANIEL: Would Eddie have said to your dad, "I need to look at these maps and get a better handle on it" or would your dad have said, "Eddie, lets sit down and go through this".

LOEB: I would say the latter would have been a more likely situation. Because Eddie was not ineffectual or especially knowledgeable about these matters. It was simply a fate of, an accident of history, that put him in the position, where one day, my father received a call from Frank Goldman in Washington asking, "AJ, have you ever heard of so and so? This fellow Eddie Jacobson or, Eddie," they didn't even have the name right. Dad

laughed and said, "sure, that is my best non-paying client." Dad never charged Eddie for legal services and Eddie never charged dad for shirts and coats.

DANIEL: Do you remember shopping at the store?

LOEB: I worked at the store.

DANIEL: Did you?

LOEB: Oh yeah. Over the so-called, forgive the expression, Christmas holiday I would frequently work at the store. And we would go fishing together. We went up to Canada one year together. That is when my father would always caution Eddie, "you gotta be mindful of my son Loeb's tender ears."

DANIEL: Who else would go on those trips?

LOEB: Eddie Jacobson, Abe (Doc) Jacobson, Hy Vile, and I think on one or two occasions, Frank Rhode, who was a lawyer here in Kansas City. They had a group of people called the Elmers, it was a fishing club. They were a hard-drinking, poker-playing group of people. And my father was not really all that comfortable with them. He did go on one or two trips with them. And I also went to Northern Minnesota.

DANIEL: Tell me about Eddie Jacobson as a person. Was he a quiet guy? Was he loud? Was he gregarious? Was he a jokester? Was he slippery?

LOEB: He was a quiet man. No, he was not slippery. He was a very quiet, mild-mannered man, as I remember him. You may get a different take from other people, but if you ask me for my direct personal recollection, I remember Eddie as a quiet, soft-spoken man. I never heard him raise his voice about anything. He used to joke sometimes how it wasn't until Truman became President that so many people in Kansas City ever knew he existed. And he had a steady parade of people who wanted one thing or another who always found their way to his way to his door and he made short shrift of them.

DANIEL: Even if someone would come in and ask for something, he would dismiss them?

LOEB: Well, I mean people... He never used his friendship with Truman to either ask for a personal favor for himself or anybody else that I know of. He had a great sense of propriety. I would say that Eddie was a very dignified man. He was not knowledgeable of Jewish subjects and didn't pretend to be. He was a card-carrying member of Bnai Brith. I can't tell you how active he was but I sense that he was not all that active. He might attend a meeting, but to the best of my knowledge he never held an office or anything. I do know that he was an usher at Temple Bnai Jehudah during the high holiday season, but to the best of my knowledge, I don't think he ever served on the

board. If he did, it would be in Frank Adler's book. I will tell you, neither my father nor Eddie were card-carrying members of any Zionist organization.

DANIEL: Did either of them believe that Zionism... did either of them have strong opinions one way or another?

LOEB: Yes, my father, especially after the disclosures following the Holocaust became absolutely convinced of the importance of the establishment of the State of Israel and that is where he enlisted Eddie and he knew in my opinion of the importance of him intervening with the President on behalf of the establishment of an independent Jewish state, meaning that Eddie and dad stepped into the picture as the President himself acknowledged even before the partition resolution because the UN refugee issue. That is where they originally became involved. But, in October of 1947, already the state department was absolutely determined to see to it that the United States did not support the partition of Palestine. Dad and Eddie did have off the record meetings with the President and they both made a very important contribution. I don't know how much convincing it took with the President. I will say this about Truman, I don't think it can be stressed enough. He was a deeply religious man and he believed in the establishment of a democracy and a Jewish state in Palestine was almost the fulfillment of biblical prophecy, from his viewpoint as a Southern Baptist. I think he had deep religious feelings influencing him and providing him a sense of moral urgency.

DANIEL: You spoke earlier about Eddie Jacobson's and your father's unwillingness to intercede on somebody or some cause's behalf with the president. Something changed for both of them, for both Eddie and your father, to get them to be willing to go to Truman and say, "Harry, you've got to do this." What happened?

LOEB: Well, I think that what happened was that the difficult state of European Jewry at the end of the war, with the horrifying disclosure of the concentration camps and the effort of the poor pitiful remnants of European Jewry to get through the British blockade to Palestine. All of these things collectively, at least in my father's case, influenced him that this was something that required the intervention of the United States.

DANIEL: And it wasn't pressure from a rabbi or someone else?

LOEB: Well, not at all. Dad was quite a scholar. And he was a student of history, so it didn't take anyone to influence my father. He arrived independently at these conclusions. I might tell you, and I don't profess much objectivity, that my father was a very strong-willed, charismatic, highly educated, intellectual kind of a person, both as a lawyer and as a Jew with an Orthodox upbringing.

DANIEL: Do you think that it took much convincing on your father's part to get Eddie to act?

LOEB: I don't think it did. I don't think that there was any sales resistance on the part of Eddie. Eddie was open-minded; I don't think Eddie had any strong views one way or the

other. I think when he and dad first began to sit down and talk about these things, or tutorial as you put it, I think that they shared a common desire to bring all of these things to the President's attention and urge him to act. Jacobson had a strong personal battlefield relationship with Truman, not my father.

DANIEL: The records that I've seen list anywhere from a dozen to two dozen trips that your father and Eddie Jacobson took to Washington during Truman's Presidency. The records all indicate that they paid for them all themselves. From what I can gather, certainly Eddie and your father also, were not men of extraordinary means. How did they pay for it?

LOEB: Darned if I really know.

DANIEL: Did Eddie really pay for the trips himself or did your dad pay for them?

LOEB: Absolutely, I think Eddie paid for his own. I know that my father didn't pay for Eddie. I don't think that my father had much more money than Eddie did. Between the two of them there wasn't much money. For both Eddie and dad I don't mean to suggest that it was some tremendous financial sacrifice in those days to go to Washington. For example, the letter that you referred to, after they had worked with the President to support the idea of partition. The partition resolution, I remember it indelibly on my mind, was November 29, 1947. That was the date that the partition was passed in the United Nations.

Break in the interview

DANIEL: When Eddie would return from Washington, would he go meet with your father?

LOEB: Yes, always. When Eddie returned after the famous meeting in March of 1948, dad told him strongly that he should not accompany Chaim Weizmann to meet with Truman, because if things did not go well, so that they would at least have another bite at the cherry (another chance to get to Truman.)

DANIEL: Did your father or Eddie have a sense of the magnitude of what they were doing?

LOEB: Absolutely. Most certainly both Eddie and my father at this time knew that this was a monumental moment.

DANIEL: How did they digest that? Was it just a matter of dumb luck that it happened to fall into their lap?

LOEB: Absolutely it is. It is a matter of accident that they both happened to be friends of the President and both happened to be in a place where they could be of service to the

Jewish people. And at this time, both Eddie and my father were equally dedicated in their determination to see this through to fruition.

DANIEL: In the famous meeting between Truman and Jacobson in March of 1948, Jacobson launched into a whole soliloquy about Truman's hero Andrew Jackson and Jacobson's hero Chaim Weizmann. How did Eddie get away with saying that without Truman looking at him and saying, "Oh, bullshit, you don't even know him?"

LOEB: Listen, they were like brothers, really. It was just a thought that came to Eddie at the moment.

DANIEL: Harry Truman's daughter Margaret, in her book, intimates that Eddie Jacobson wasn't such a close friend and didn't really have such a great accomplishment.

LOEB: I know. Frank Adler took after her for that and I think she deserved what he did because it is untrue. I talked some time ago about the lack of a social relationship between the Jacobsons and the Trumans. Some of the social prejudices at the time were more on the part of Bess Truman and the Wallaces than they were of the President. Had the President been given his druthers, I don't think that would have happened.

DANIEL: So you think Margaret reflects her mother in that sense?

LOEB: I do indeed. That is my belief.

DANIEL: There is discussion still today about the significance of Eddie Jacobson's role. Was it a major role? Was it a minor role? Was he an anecdote of history or was he really sort of the keystone element in building this whole story?

LOEB: Well, I can only answer that by quoting the President's own words. Let me quote you a letter that the President wrote to my own father in October of 1968. He said in this letter, "as I stated in a letter three years ago to your grand lodge, when an auditorium was dedicated in Eddie's memory in Tel Aviv. Eddie's contribution was of decisive importance in leading to the recognition of the provisional government of Israel by the United States of America. Eddie's historic importance is thoroughly known by his friend and mine of many years, AJ Granoff. His accurate reflections are recounted in the newspaper articles by Sidney Willens appearing in May of 1965. In recalling the history surrounding the creation of the Jewish state, the instructive counsel of AJ Granoff should not be overlooked. He accompanied Eddie to the White House and actively participated in our discussions during the formative period before and after United Nations partition of Palestine."

DANIEL: You handled Eddie's estate as the lawyer after he died?

LOEB: Yes.

DANIEL: He died not an overly wealthy man?

LOEB: No. My recollection is that his entire probate estate was less than \$100,000.

DANIEL: When he died, he had been sick with a heart condition for some years.

LOEB: Yes, but it was not disabling. He died quite suddenly. He died of a heart attack, although, he did have a heart condition.

DANIEL: Did you do other legal work for him besides the estate?

LOEB: My father did. He was his lawyer. At the time, I happened to be employed by my father, I was his associate. Dad was his lawyer.

DANIEL: Jacobson, though he didn't have much means, financed the trips himself. Did he live extravagantly? Did he have a fancy home or fancy cars?

LOEB: Oh my gosh, nothing could be further from the truth. He lived in a very small house.

DANIEL: Did he drive a big car?

LOEB: Oh my gosh, no. Are you kidding!! I'll tell you, neither did Truman. Truman always drove a Dodge. Sometimes a Plymouth. Maybe even a Chrysler. When he would get a new car, he would sell the old car to Judge Ridge and Judge Ridge would drive the old Dodge. Oh no, Truman never drove a fancy car and he always drove himself. He never had a driver.

DANIEL: Did Eddie drive a fancy car?

LOEB: No, neither one of them.

DANIEL: They both dressed to the nines.

LOEB: Well, it was nice clothing. Hart Shafner and Marcks, but not a Hickey Freeman. Nice, but nothing fancy. Eddie was a very unassuming man. Never ostentatious in any way, shape, or form.

DANIEL: Did the fact that he went through bankruptcy early on affect him as a businessman later?

LOEB: I have no idea.

DANIEL: Was his reputation as a good businessman?

LOEB: As a moderately successful businessman. He had a small, quiet, little haberdashery store. He was no Wolf Brothers or Rothschild's or some other big fancy clothing establishment. No, he was a haberdashery to the middle class.

DANIEL: It seems to me that B'nai B'rith got wind that there was this guy named Eddie Jacobson who was close to the President. And in a sense, they went through your father to get to Jacobson.

LOEB: That's right.

DANIEL: I also have the sense that the President, to put it mildly, was frustrated with organized Jewry. Is your sense that organized Jewry was a help or a hindrance?

LOEB: It is a bit of a loaded question. In terms of underscoring the importance of the creation of a Jewish state, organized Jewry was very important. Organized Jewry collectively had a role to play in visioning a mindset that compelled the establishment of a Jewish state. Having said that, organized Jewry was found to be by the President, pushy, demanding, arrogant and disrespectful. That especially applied to Abba Hillel Silver, who in his exuberance pounded on the President's desk and Truman left strict orders to "never let that son-of-a-bitch into the White House again. It was in sheer desperation, after those overly exuberant efforts to twist the President's arm that it became imperative to find another way to reach the President. That is where Eddie and dad came in. Eddie was never involved in much Jewish activity. He was never a Macher. You can be sure unless they were absolutely downright desperate, they wouldn't have gotten involved. So, the upshot is that they were a hindrance in that respect, but, I would not demean or minimize the importance of organized Jewry in the post war era.

DANIEL: After the state was established, it seems that Israel leaned heavily upon both your father and Eddie Jacobson to help with loan guarantees.

LOEB: I think there were. But I don't have any real recollections of the specifics.

DANIEL: It seems to me that Eddie Jacobson and your father never let any of this get to their heads. That they came back to Kansas City and wanted their normal lives.

LOEB: Oh, absolutely. My father had a son in law school. And neither one of them were people of means.

Appendix D

Interview with HERB JACOBSON

July 26, 2004

Kansas City, Missouri

Conducted by Daniel J. Fellman

DANIEL: I am sitting with Herb Jacobson at lunch and Herb is filling in some of the details.

HERB: Well Truman came back to Kansas City, and as you know he was long to his home town. Many times we would be at the Union Station here and here comes Harry Truman walking across the massive lobby and you've seen at Union Station here a massive lobby and usually without a police escort. He had a lieutenant I think, an Independence police department that went with him sometimes, but that would not happen today, that secret service and so forth today. And if you noticed at the convention last night, Kerry had much secret service people around. So, umm, when my father was 70 years old you see, he died at 75, there was a big party for my father at the Muelbach Hotel. He had a suite upstairs. I don't know if they paid anything for the suite or whatever, but there was a suite up there and Truman would come down and go into the suite. Maybe Loeb told you the story about and there would be a bunch of cronies would be friends with. That would be a better word for cronies. A bunch of friends would get up there and they'd have a drink or two and then they would go to lunch or whatever. But in this case, Truman came to my father's birthday party which was at noon and he was carried home sick. And it made the national headlines. But he was really not sick. But the national headlines, you know, this wasn't like the day when they say all sorts of things in the paper. Truman liked to play poker and he liked to drink and as I have said many times, there can't be too much wrong with a guy who wants to do those things. So, I remember the time that I worked with my father in a business together. I saw him all day long. So, the doorbell rings at 7:30 at night. This is a silly story, but I will tell it anyway. And, I look out the door and here is my father. So, I open the door of course and he comes in. When I look, I say "where's your car" and he says "well, we are playing down the street", which was AJ Granhoff's house, Loeb's fathers house. "We are playing down the street, but I came up to see the children." We had 3 children. So, he leaves and unbeknown to me, my little dauschund (dog) follows him. Goes into the Granhoff house, and jumps into the presidents lap. My father tells me the story the next day and we had a housekeeper that lived on the premises, a black lady. And I was telling the story at dinner and she heard the story. And I swear after that day, she treated that dog with complete reverence. Truman was a lovely man.

DANIEL: Did you call him Mr. President to his face? Harry?

HERB: Well, I don't know what they said in complete private, but he was always Mr. President. You were out at the library, and you saw the Eddie Jacobson papers. You saw the handwritten notes after that famous meeting in the White House where he was called a bald-headed SOB.

DANIEL: Right.

HERB: Ahh, Harry wrote a letter, I assume Loeb (Granoff) had a copy of it. Harry wrote a letter, that letter might be at the archives. Harry wrote a letter to Eddie after he was out of office and was proposing a tour of Europe and Israel. And you've seen that. And he didn't refer to my father as Doc, which was his nickname. Eddie gave him that nickname. My father was a plumber and Eddie called him a Dr. of crapology. The name Doc followed forthwith. I am trying to remember how it was. Maybe it was Abram or Abe because Harry was suggesting that the 3 of them and their wives would take this trip. And of course Truman had done the Marshall Plan. And saved Greece, and he would have welcomed him a hero, but of course that never happened. As I said, I would have loved to have gone along and carried the luggage. It would have been a marvelous trip.

DANIEL: So, let me ask you a few questions? At some point when we're done here, you don't need to do this while we are recording. I would like to go through the family tree and make sure I have it correct. Tell me about your uncle the man, you knew your uncle. Was he a quiet man, was he gregarious, was he the life of the party?

HERB: I remember him as a quiet man. Not that we saw him that much. After the fiasco with the store when they went bankrupt. Technically, they didn't go bankrupt. Harry Truman paid off all of those debts. But after that, he (Eddie) became a salesman for the Manhattan Shirt Company.

DANIEL: Did Eddie pay off the debts too?

HERB: Not to the best of my knowledge. It could have been. I was a young man in my twenties. What year did Eddie die?

DANIEL: 55

HERB: Well, so that was fifty years ago, round figures.

DANIEL: Surely, you had family dinners with Eddie, Rosh Hashanah or a Passover Seder?

HERB: Not a lot. He was a traveling salesman for the Manhattan Shirt Company. One of the most distinct memories I have of Eddie Jacobson was the starched collars. They were supporting the head and neck!! And as I am sure Frank and Loeb probably told you, he wasn't a Zionist, he probably wasn't that much of a dedicated Jew either.

DANIEL: Do you remember being with him for Jewish holidays?

HERB: Now, we were Conservative, and he was Reform. So, I really don't remember that.

DANIEL: Would you ever have considered your uncle a religious man?

HERB: Well, I once said to Rabbi Marguilles, he is the rabbi emeritus now at Beth Shalom, Gershon Haddas was the rabbi then. I once said about my father that he was not a religious man. Marguilles said, I wouldn't agree with you. I wouldn't say he wasn't a religious man, he just wasn't ritually observant. That is good rabbi talk.

DANIEL: That is good rabbi talk and it is probably accurate.

HERB: You could use that.

DANIEL: One could absolutely be religious without being ritually observant.

HERB: Sure. Well, I think my father was that way. He was a good man. And the girls could answer that question better than anybody else. But, I assume you could do a telephone interview with them.

DANIEL: I could. I could also go down to Florida to meet with them.

HERB: One is East coast and one is on the West coast of Florida.

DANIEL: By all accounts, and I don't know if you can answer this question or not, by all accounts, Eddie paid for all these trips to Washington himself.

HERB: To the best of my knowledge, yes.

DANIEL: Does that seem a reasonable possibility? Because, at the same time, by all accounts, Eddie was not a wealthy man.

HERB: Absolutely not.

DANIEL: How did he find the money to do it, or did someone else give him the money and it wasn't talked about?

HERB: I don't know the answer to that. I remember that... Harry wasn't a wealthy man either. In fact, when he was in the White House, my father once said we need to raise some money to help Harry. And he wasn't campaigning at the time.

DANIEL: He needed money to live on.

HERB: He needed money to live on and it was expensive to live at the White House. Now, can you imagine today, now I can't document that. But, can you imagine today if we said that President Bush is in the White House and that there wasn't a bank roll there to sustain him? MY GOD!!!! It would be minced meat for the politicians.

DANIEL: Did they let Harry win the poker games? (so that he would have extra money)

HERB: No, they played poker. It was not customer poker.

DANIEL: Was there deference paid to him because of his job?

HERB: No, I don't think so.

DANIEL: Was there one who was consistently winning or one who was consistently losing?

HERB: No, I don't have the answer for that.

DANIEL: Did you ever go to any of the games?

HERB: No. I was around some of my father's poker games, but not that particular game. All of those people are now deceased. But, my father died in 1968 and he was 75. That is 36 years ago.

DANIEL: Did Eddie seem to change any to you, through those last years? Those last 10 years of his life were pretty eventful.

HERB: Ah, no, I am not much help to you in some of these questions. I don't know how much help Loeb or Frank would be to you with some of these questions. Loeb of course has, in a manner of speaking, an invested interest in the memory of his father, who was a lawyer and so forth. We had another person named Paul Rosenberg, and his father, H. Paul Rosenberg, but both of them are deceased now. And H. Paul Rosenberg, the father, I guess was in Battery D. Or was a contemporary of those times. I remember when I went out to the (Truman) library, and asked, and I called them up, and they said, "why do you want to come?" And I told them, and they said, "so come!" And, while I was there, the archivist came by to see what they could get out of me, and they probably did to you likewise. Very pleasant, I said to them, well, there is one file I haven't asked for. Do you have a file on H. Paul Rosenberg? And they brought that file out to me. So, I don't remember a hell of a lot that went on in those times. But I do remember, it is a funny thing, but I was young and impressionable. And those starched collars, and so forth. As far as did he change, well, obviously, his daughters, if you ask that question, I don't know what kind of answer you will get. I would tread a tad lightly on that, so that you don't antagonize them. There was a lot of pressure. He had free access to the White House. He could walk in anytime. And a lot of the Jewish people don't understand the role of Clark Clifford played as you have read in your books. And he was told, I guess, on that major trip, "Don't Discuss Israel!" But, he went ahead and did it. When I took the family to the Lincoln, I guess it is the Ford Theatre, in Washington DC. James Whitmore did one-man show, and there was another actor that did a one-man show. And when he came to that, "bald-headed SOB" that was fantastic.

DANIEL: Do you remember how your father reacted to the role Eddie was in? Did your father have pride in what his brother was doing?

HERB: Well, he supported him obviously. My father was successful and he had funds available. I don't know how much money changed hands there.

DANIEL: Do you think your father gave money to Eddie to do all of this?

HERB: Maybe. Maybe not. I couldn't attest to that. Eddie opened, my father never confided in me in those. My father was reasonably closed-mouthed about that. Eddie of course wanted to open up the haberdashery shop down there at 39th and Main, in the Westport area. And, it was on the Northwest corner of 39th and Main. He wanted the name "The President's Shop," but that was already taken by somebody else and he wouldn't sell the name. So, it became Eddie Jacobson's.

DANIEL: Was your dad an investor in the store?

HERB: No. Not that I know of. It's amazing as I say, I never sat my father down and pretended he was you and asked him all of these questions. And I have regretted that ever since.

DANIEL: Do you remember your grandparents at all, your dad's parents?

HERB: Vaguely. They were much older of course.

DANIEL: We will get to the family tree in a moment, but, how many of your dad's siblings lived in and around Kansas City?

HERB: All of them.

DANIEL: All of them did? Were they a close-knit family?

HERB: Well, I don't know your definition of close-knit. But, in those times, I don't know that they were that close-knit.

DANIEL: Were there family get-togethers?

HERB: Occasionally.

DANIEL: But not regularly?

HERB: I would say not regularly. But Gloria and Eleanore could refute that probably.

DANIEL: I get the impression that your dad and Eddie were particularly close.

HERB: Yeah, I think they were close.

DANIEL: Were any of the other siblings close in that regard?

HERB: Well, you had Harry.

DANIEL: Harry was the oldest?

HERB: Yes, Harry was the oldest. Harry was not a terribly successful man. Depends on how you look at it. Harry stayed home with his mother and Harry had a lady friend and he wouldn't marry her until his mother died. She (the lady friend) was not Jewish. And then you had Rose, she was in there somewhere. Sister Rose. And you had another sister Florence, who died early. And Eddie, and my father, and you had the younger brother named Ben. Ben was in the haberdashery business too in a store in North Kansas City. There weren't a lot of children in the Jacobson family. Eddie had 2 girls, Rose had 3 children.

DANIEL: What was Rose's married name?

HERB: Blond.

DANIEL: Is that family still in town?

HERB: No, all of the children are deceased.

DANIEL: Florence died early? Was she married?

HERB: She died early before (she could get married).

DANIEL: Did Ben have kids?

HERB: Ben had one kid, Earl, who was operated on for flat feet when he was a teenager. And he had a blood clot and died. Then he adopted a boy, David. That in a sense was a tough adoption, because Earl was quite a boy and they were comparing the two. They were older when they adopted David. And, so you had A. D. Jacobson, who had 2 boys, Me (Herb) and Elliot. Elliot has been gone almost 12 years. So, that's not a lot of children among all of those.

DANIEL: A. D. stood for?

HERB: Avram David.

DANIEL: Did anybody call him that?

HERB: He was always either A. D., Abe, or Doc.

DANIEL: How did your dad react to going to the inauguration? Did you ever ask him about it?

HERB: I was in college. The inauguration was in January of 1949. I was at the University of Illinois. I didn't quiz them a lot about that. They went to that. You know, besides getting old and your memory fails, we didn't have a lot of inter-communication about some of these things. Which, I think was my fault, not my father's.

DANIEL: Do you think Eddie would be comfortable with the role of being this decisive character? Do you think he deserves that role?

HERB: Well, he was the right man at the right time. He was in the right place at the right time to play history. And, when Truman, ah, you know, everybody gives Eddie credit for putting together the meeting with Weizmann. But the rest of it was Truman and Weizmann. Would he be comfortable? Well, that is a good question. I don't know how his daughters would react to that question. But, Eleanor can be a bit feisty on that. She will tell you how she feels. She should be an interviewer's delight. If you are looking for a bit of controversy or a straight-shooting. Truman was known for straight talking.

DANIEL: Do you think Eddie's story is one that should be told, or does it rise to the level of hero?

HERB: Well, that's a good question. I think everybody's life is important and should be counted. And, you never know when destiny can cross your path. Wouldn't that be true of some of your famous American rabbis.

DANIEL: Absolutely. You described earlier that your uncle was a relatively quiet man. Do you recall hearing about any of the trips to Washington?

HERB: Not really.

DANIEL: Did your father make a big deal of his brother who had connections?

HERB: Oh, no no no no.

DANIEL: He never tried to use it for personal gain?

HERB: Never, never.

DANIEL: Was there pride when your father talked about that?

HERB: He didn't talk about it very much. Whenever he went to Washington, I never asked him much about what he did. I don't think he would have told me if he knew.

DANIEL: And the fact that he was going to Washington was just a fact, like, the fact that this is a brown paper on the table?

HERB: Yes. And you know the Bnai Brith story that they were looking for somebody and they contacted A. J. (Granoff) and the rest is history.

DANIEL: Was your dad involved with Bnai Brith?

HERB: No. As I say, my dad was a religious man, but not ritually observant. So, I knew when you called me, that I couldn't be a great resource for you.

DANIEL: I am not sure that is true. You have filled in some interesting gaps that help. I am trying to get a handle on a person who has been dead for 50 years, and that means you have to cast a pretty wide net to get the pieces in order. And the thing that seems seemingly irrelevant to one person all of a sudden fills in a huge gap somewhere else.

HERB: I can remember my Uncle Harry was fishing down in the Ozarks someplace and I had to go down and pick him up for a funeral and bring him back to town. I don't know how he got down there.

DANIEL: For Eddie's funeral?

HERB: Yes. I picked him up and brought him back. I don't even remember much conversation. Harry was the guy with 2 green thumbs. He always had a nice garden, vegetable garden. But, I can remember that, and of course Harry Truman was at the funeral and he cried.

DANIEL: Do you remember seeing him crying at the funeral?

HERB: No, I don't remember it, but it is written up in all of the books.

DANIEL: You were a pall-bearer at the funeral?

HERB: I was??

DANIEL: You were listed as one.

HERB: Ok.

DANIEL: Was Eddie's death a shock?

HERB: Oh yes, it was a shock. Sure. Whether he had heart trouble or was being treated, I don't know.

DANIEL: It wasn't talked about enough that you would have known it?

HERB: No

DANIEL: Was Eddie a private man? Was he the kind who held things close to the vest?

HERB: Well, I think as far as the President goes, he was a private man. I don't know what he said to my father in private, I don't know. But, I am sure my father would have honored that confidence. But, Harry Truman and Eddie Jacobson had a special relationship that went back a long time.

DANIEL: Do you get the impression that Eddie leaned on your father for advice or support or just to talk through what was going on?

HERB: I have no knowledge on that and can't answer that question.

DANIEL: Did they see each other a lot?

HERB: Reasonable. You know, in those years they both had their heads down trying to earn a living. I guess the poker games were one refuge for recreation.

DANIEL: And they never brought you into those poker games? Your dad never said come along with me?

HERB: You know, I would have (loved to have gone) looking back on it. But Truman was a friendly man.

Appendix E

Interview with GLORIA SHUSTERMAN

November 8, 2004

Palm Beach Gardens, Florida

Conducted by Daniel J. Fellman

DANIEL: Good morning. Today is Monday, November 8th, 2004. My name is Daniel J. Fellman. I am in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, about to interview Gloria, the younger daughter of Eddie Jacobson. So we're in the home of Gloria in Palm Beach, Florida, and we had just spoken of Eddie Jacobson's humility.

GLORIA: My dad always said that he was besheret, he was the right place at the right, the right time. And he, he was very humble; he didn't like taking credit for a lot of things. But as far as being recognized, you said that maybe he wasn't recognized, at the time he really was. There were many, as you'll see when you look at these scrapbooks there were many, many articles written about him and dinners given in his honor, plaques that we will see at my sister's house, a lot of recognition. But don't forget that was a couple, fifty years ago, about fifty years ago and people forget, so he's probably not as well known now as he was then.

DANIEL: With a little luck, we might change that. We'll have to just see.

GLORIA: I was, there's an interesting story I wanted to tell you that when you mentioned The Book of Ruth a lot of students did their theses on things like that. I was taking Hebrew lessons some years ago...in Palm Beach at our center. And after class I walked to the car with two of the students in my class, students, and we talk only Hebrew in class, so we were struggling with each other. And one of them said, "Where are you from? Do you live here long, or do you live here all the time?" And I said, 'No, I'm from Tulsa, Oklahoma where I've lived many years, but I was born in Kansas City.' And he said, "Oh, Kansas City? That's the home of Harry Truman." And the other one said, "Harry Truman?" He said, "That's the home of Eddie Jacobson!" I said, 'How did you know that?' And he said, "Everybody knows that." Well everybody doesn't know it. But I said *Hu ha Avi!* He looked at me, he said, *Naah?* And I repeated it and he said, "No," he said. And I said, 'That's true.' And he said, "wasn't he in the haberdashery business?" He knew everything. And he was from New York. And I said, 'Yes, he was, has a Jewish, Jewish haberdashery.' And so anyway I told him the story; I spent some time telling him...in English.

And after that we went out of town for a couple of weeks. When we came back, I thought, 'Oh, the whole...class would know about this,' and they did. But when, like it said it was *Purim* came around. We were talking in class and all of these things, and this is the one who knew my dad, knew of my dad, spoke up and said, "Why are we wasting all these time on old heroes?" He so he'd said, "Well," he pointed to me. He said, "Gila's papa was," and he told the story. So then of course I had to do a little, little work, look up some words and then tell the story of his life in Hebrew. But you reminded me of that when....said that...

DANIEL: What was your father's Hebrew name?

GLORIA: I don't know.

GLORIA: I don't know. I don't know if he even had one. He was from a, an Orthodox family.

DANIEL: Let's start with his background and then we'll work up from there. Your dad was born in Kansas or in New York?

GLORIA: New York.

DANIEL: In New York, and moved to Kansas as a young child.

GLORIA: Yes, Kansas City, Missouri, or Kansas.

DANIEL: He moved to Kansas City, Missouri as young child or he moved to Leavenworth, Kansas?

GLORIA: No, he moved first to Leavenworth, Kansas.

DANIEL: Yes, that's what I was thinking.

GLORIA: Right.

DANIEL: He moved to Leavenworth and then from Leavenworth came to Kansas City.

GLORIA: Right.

DANIEL: When he came to Kansas City, he dropped out of high school, is that correct?

GLORIA: That could be.

DANIEL: Did you talk about the fact that he dropped, that he was a high school dropout?

GLORIA: No.

DANIEL: Never mentioned it. Did he push you to go further in your education?

GLORIA: Yes, it was accepted I think that I go to college and my sister went to college. My sister had two years of college and then I was quite ill at that time, I was thirteen years old. I think she had to drop out of college in order to pay my doctor bills. I always felt bad about that, so she never finished. And then as it turned out, at seventeen, I went to University of Oklahoma, met my husband Dan in the first week and that was it.

DANIEL: Wow.

GLORIA: And we, I never really dated you know my...or anything. Married him at nineteen and *grew up*.

DANIEL: Your dad was one of five children?

GLORIA: Six.

DANIEL: Six. What was the birth order, do you know?

GLORIA: I'm not positive. I had probably had them in notes. I think the oldest one was Rose and then Harry and then Florence, I'm not sure...Uhm my dad, then...Abe, and Ben was the next was. Was that six?

DANIEL: Your dad and AD, Abe, from what I gather were fairly close.

GLORIA: Uhm-hmm.

DANIEL: Was your dad equally close with any other his other siblings?

GLORIA: Well, they never had any differences that I know of. Ben was a businessman for a time. Harry really didn't work; he was very arthritic, and I know he used to go through.....farm, grow things, and he always had an enormous garden. I think that's where I got my love of gardening because he was...

DANIEL: ...He was the green thumb of the family.

GLORIA: ...Yes. We used to go over there on Sundays and he'd take me out in the garden...

DANIEL: Do you remember much of your grandparents or did they?

GLORIA: ...No, I, I was eleven when grandmother died.

DANIEL: ...Right.

GLORIA: My grandfather died some years before that because he.....

DANIEL: So those are things that Elinor might remember?

GLORIA: Oh, yes, she, you're gonna get a lot more information from her because not only did I move away at nineteen, she lived in Kansas City all those years, just a few blocks from...

DANIEL: Your dad, let me come back. From what I've read, your dad came to Kansas City and began to work in a clothing store, it appears as a stock boy initially and sort of worked his way up and met Truman as young men, about 1904, 1905, 1906, somewhere...

GLORIA: ...That's right.

DANIEL: ...in there and then they met up again years later in the war.

GLORIA: But they became good friends while they worked.

DANIEL: As young men.

GLORIA: As young men, yes. And they used to hang out together on weekends because even though Truman was a Baptist.....

DANIEL: Those are two separate questions I wanted to get into.

GLORIA: Okay, okay.

DANIEL: Did your dad ever talk about those early days with Truman?

GLORIA: Not too much to me.

DANIEL: It was just sort of a normal sort of friendship?

GLORIA: Right, but it continued so I knew Harry and I've been in his house and...

DANIEL: The second question is the age difference. Did that ever register with your father? Was it ever an issue?

GLORIA: I don't think so.

DANIEL: By the time your dad enlisted in the war, in World War One, he was already dating your mother. How did they meet?

GLORIA: Well, first he dated with her older sister.

DANIEL: Really?

GLORIA: Yes, so I don't know if that's how they met.

DANIEL: What was her older sister's name?

GLORIA: Bernice.

DANIEL: And your mother was Bluma.

GLORIA: Israel, yes.

DANIEL: Israel was their maiden name?

GLORIA: No.

DANIEL: Or Bernice is her, Israel is her married name.

GLORIA: Yes. I guess maybe it was Rosenbaum.

DANIEL: And she had grown up in Kansas City as a member of the Temple.

GLORIA: Yes.

DANIEL: And you don't know how they met...

GLORIA: ...Not...

DANIEL: ...other than her sister.

GLORIA: ...My sister might know.

DANIEL: They dated for some years.

GLORIA: I think so

DANIEL: Did you ever hear about the dates or the kinds of things they did?

GLORIA: No. I have some pictures when we get through so... You know there wasn't much money around in those days...

DANIEL: ...Right.

GLORIA: ...entertainment was so...

DANIEL: When your dad was working in those years in Kansas City, would he send money back to his parents? Was he able to support the family or was he only...

GLORIA: ...Oh, he was helpin', he was helpin' to support the family. The family was there.

DANIEL: ...So they had moved to Kansas City, too.

GLORIA: ...Yes.

DANIEL: So then the war comes and your dad goes off to fight or to run the canteen and then fight. Did he talk about his experiences in the war? Do you remember hearing about it?

GLORIA: I knew certain things but I didn't, he didn't dwell on it a lot.

DANIEL: What sorts of things did he tell you?

GLORIA: Well, I know that he was in the hospital when the Armistice was... He had part of his heel blown off I believe, and so he was on crutches.

DANIEL: Did he get a Purple Heart for it?

GLORIA: I don't know. He was someplace in France ... He went to the big celebration. I don't know whether he escaped from the hospital or whether they had given him permission, but he... that was, that was a lot of...

DANIEL: The stories of your dad and Truman then are two Army buddies who liked to play poker together and the poker games go on all the way through. Truman appears to have been a pretty good drinker. Was your dad much of a drinker? Would he have a sip or was he...

GLORIA: ...He had a sip.

DANIEL: ...So he wasn't a teetotaler?

GLORIA: No.

DANIEL: But he would have a drink.

GLORIA: ...Not very often.

DANIEL: Did your dad have the colorful language that...

GLORIA: No...

DANIEL: ...Truman had?

GLORIA: Not at all.

DANIEL: Really.

GLORIA: I never heard a cuss word escape from my dad's face.

DANIEL: Never.

GLORIA: Once.

DANIEL: What happened?

GLORIA: Someone called him, and I happened to be there at home during the Second World War, knowing that his friendship with Truman...asked if he could intercede with Truman to get his, his brother out, out of prison. My dad said, "Of course. What is your brother in prison for?" He said, he finally admitted that it was for walking off the job producing war materials. I forget the language. But I heard that a, a...of words that I had never heard before.

DANIEL: Do you recall what the words were?

GLORIA: No.

DANIEL: Just that it was enough that it caught you off guard?

GLORIA: Yes, and my dad had high blood pressure and he'd get excited, he would turn red as a beet. He was red as a beet then screaming.

DANIEL: So your dad came back from the war and shortly thereafter he and your mom were married. And he and Truman decided to open a store. I would assume you probably heard a few stories about the store, about that first store. What sorts of things did your dad talk about?

GLORIA: Uhm, you know better than me, I have heard so much its a little bit tough for me sometimes to distinguish between what I remember and what I've read.

DANIEL: Sure, sure.

GLORIA: I know that he talked about the old gang, the Army gang...

DANIEL: ...Right.

GLORIA: ...that would come into the store. Whether I actually heard him tell that story I don't know.

DANIEL: Did he talk about the financial problems that resulted to the store? Have you heard of them?

GLORIA: I knew I was poor. Well let me, let me say that a little differently. I realized it I guess as I was growing up, but he lived with my mother's family, as you probably know.

DANIEL: Were your parents the kind who were very close and talked and were confidants with each other?

GLORIA: Yes.

DANIEL: All through? Your dad was on the road for many years...

GLORIA: ...Yes.

DANIEL: He worked as a salesman. Do you remember him having contact or talking about Truman during those years?

GLORIA: Oh, yes.

DANIEL: When Truman was a senator or?

GLORIA: Oh, yes.

DANIEL: And they would get together and?

GLORIA: Yes. As a matter of fact, when Truman was elected to the Senate and he went to Washington for the first time, it was in January and then my dad wanted to take me to the airport to see him off, which he eventually did. But he and my mother fought about that because I was five years old, my birthday's in February. I was what is, what was known at that time as a midyear... 'cause you started school when you're five. So I just had just started the second semester of school and I was in kindergarten. And it was morning kindergarten, so my mother said that I couldn't go to the airport because it was, he left like at six o'clock in the morning. It was... He had to get me up at four thirty or five and she said I'd be too sleepy to go to school. And I remember my dad's, because I was there, this argument ... I remember my dad saying to her, "So she'll be smart a day later, but this is something she'll remember all her life." And he turned to me and he said, "We'll go." So yes, and I do. I do remember that.

DANIEL: Was he a strict father?

GLORIA: Well, I wouldn't say that.

DANIEL: Who did the discipline in the house?

GLORIA: I really don't remember being disciplined very much. I had two cousins, first cousins, who lived across the street.

DANIEL: On your mother's side or your father's side?

GLORIA: Mother's side.

DANIEL: On your mother's side.

GLORIA: And they were always in trouble and I was always the angel.

DANIEL: Is this the Klebans?

GLORIA: Yes.

DANIEL: I spoke with Bob.

GLORIA: Oh, did you?

DANIEL: He seemed like a perfectly nice gentleman.

GLORIA: He is and so is his sibling... But I don't remember, I do remember once I had this....

DANIEL: Do you remember your dad deciding to open the store, his new store?

GLORIA: Yes, there were discussions in the house about it.

DANIEL: What kinds of discussions went on in the house?

GLORIA: Well first of all, he had to go into debt to open the store so, and I was quite ill at that time. So I remember, and we were also looking for a new home and because I remember that the discussions with my grandmother and everything, I was.....

DANIEL: Did your mother support him opening his own store?

GLORIA: Yes.

DANIEL: She was in favor of it?

GLORIA: Uhm-hmm. She was very excited for him.

DANIEL: Did you see him more when he was in town and on his own, operating his own store or when he was on the road?

GLORIA: Yes, I saw him much more when he had the store in town.

DANIEL: And so that was a big advantage.

GLORIA: Oh, yes.

DANIEL: Truman was nominated that same year to be vice president. Do you remember your father's reaction to that?

GLORIA: What year was that?

DANIEL: Truman was nominated in '44 and was elected in '44, and if I remember correctly your dad's store opened in like February of '45.

GLORIA: yes, yes.

DANIEL: And Truman became the president in April of '45, he was the vice president for only six weeks or so.

GLORIA: Right... Well, I do well remember when my dad's store was opened, and when Truman came as the president to visit him...

DANIEL: ...Sure. Your dad, didn't have the white shirt in the right size or something?

GLORIA: I don't know about that but that was very exciting. We knew nothing about it at all. They had, the Secret Service had told my dad not to mention it to any *soul*, and my dad was very careful, and in fact when he came home that night he walked in the front door and he said, "Well, all you peons, bow down." And my mother said, "What are you talking about?" you know and when he told, her she was furious. "Why didn't you tell me?" she said, because it was very exciting. They drove down I guess it was *Linn* Street blocked off traffic from all four directions of the intersection and there's photographers were there and Secret Service had been there all morning long waiting on, surveying the store.

DANIEL: Was that store facing Main Street or was it right on the corner of...

GLORIA: ...It's right on the corner

DANIEL: Main and 39th, there on 39th. I drove by there this summer and I took pictures and I wasn't sure which building it was.

GLORIA: I think it's now an adult bookstore or something like that.

DANIEL: Something, it, the area is a little dilapidated...

GLORIA: ...Yes.

DANIEL: Do you remember being aware of your dad's friendship with Truman then?

GLORIA: Oh, yes.

DANIEL: Did he talk about it, his friend Harry or?

GLORIA: Oh, yes.

DANIEL: How would it come up? What kinds of things would he say?

GLORIA: Well, for one thing they were friendly all through the years, so it wasn't a matter of you know just talking about him all of a sudden. It was just, he was a friend and they would go on hunting trips together, fishing trips, poker.

DANIEL: ... Would he refer to him as Senator Truman or Harry?

GLORIA: Harry.

DANIEL: It was always Harry.

GLORIA: Yes. We all referred to him as Harry.

DANIEL: When he became the president your dad, the record showed that your dad was asked all sort of things to intercede the President and he refused it. Did he talk about the fact that he wasn't willing to market on that friendship?

GLORIA: Not to me but I knew that.

DANIEL: You were aware of it?

GLORIA: Yes.

DANIEL: We'll jump ahead a little bit and come, come back. The '48 campaign from all appearances, your dad was fairly involved and helped raise money and ran advertisements and even campaigned for Truman.

GLORIA: Right, he was on the train.

DANIEL: On the train? Did your dad enjoy that?

GLORIA: It was exciting. I don't know. I don't know how to use the word "enjoy" it was very exciting. And of course he was helping his friend and I was in college. My dad never normally wrote letters. We talked but, on the phone about business but he didn't sit down and write letters.... But when he'd get nervous he'd write me a letter and... wrote me and... I have one in the scrapbook that will answer your question. He was on the train and he didn't write, write any... whatever so that he was, it was typewritten a little bit, but it was, he was a little nervous when he was putting things in writing.

DANIEL: Truman became president almost immediately. His aides in Washington started presenting him with the issues in Palestine. And in relatively short order your dad became involved. Do you know, did he ever talk about how he became to be involved with those things?

GLORIA: Yes.

DANIEL: How did he describe it? What kind of...

GLORIA: ...When Truman was, I don't remember that it was vice president or when he was already president, it's... People in Kansas City began to *court* my dad. My dad was not a Zionist and he...

DANIEL: Was he anti-Zionist or just not involved?

GLORIA: Yes, he just was not involved, but he started going to some of the meetings, sitting in the parlors and listening to, you know when he began to understand the cause. And so through the years he, he just became more interested and more knowledgeable.

DANIEL: Was your dad a reader?

GLORIA: Not particularly.

DANIEL: Would he read the daily paper?

GLORIA: Oh, yes.

DANIEL: The newspaper?

GLORIA: Oh, yes.

DANIEL: So he kept up with what was...

GLORIA: ...Oh, yes. My dad I feel was a very bright man. He just never had the education.

DANIEL: He became involved and the records show the Rabbi Mayerberg began to push him a little bit and Rabbi Gershon Hadas also at one point tried, and your dad began making trips to Washington. Do you know how those trips were paid for?

GLORIA: By him.

DANIEL: All out of his own pocket? How did he afford all those trips?

GLORIA: Well, it wasn't easy but he had the store by now; the store was doing *well*. You know he didn't go for any organizations and he...

DANIEL: ...He always paid out of his own pocket.

GLORIA: Yes. Often it was combined with a buying trip to New York. You know he was a ShirtCraft salesman....he would, still bought from them. He opened his store and

so quite often it was a buying trip in New York and he'd stop in Washington on the way. But he'd take a flight to...as far as I know.

DANIEL: Would he talk about having been with the President?

GLORIA: Sure.

DANIEL: ...when he'd get home would he...

GLORIA: ...Oh, sure.

DANIEL: How would he describe it? What sorts of things would he say?

GLORIA: Well, he was well known at the White House. All of the guards called him Eddie, "Hello, Eddie, how are you? The President's expecting you," and that sort of thing. So he'd come home and tell us that he got a very warm reception, you know, they met him the gate and then he went in, the President asked about the family and what, you know they talked.

DANIEL: Did the families ever get together? Did you ever spend time with Mrs. Truman or with Margaret Truman? Did you ever meet them?

GLORIA: No. We met and knew the President, but not his family.

DANIEL: You never had a, the two families never got together for dinner? Were you ever inside the Truman's home?

GLORIA: In Independence? Not much, not until I, after... The only time I remember going to Harry's home in Lemar, was on his mother's birthday. They had a big party and I went with my dad.

DANIEL: And you went there?

GLORIA: Pardon?

DANIEL: And you went there?

GLORIA: Yes, we drove over and I remember going in. Again, I was just a kid, but I remember goin' in and I remember that she was sitting in a chair and they had sort of a receiving line. And Vivian was sitting next to her and probably Mary Jane, and anyway as I went by, Harry was standing there also, and he leaned over and he said, "Mama, this is Eddie's daughter. Do you remember?" And she said, "Yes, yes." And I remember that very well. But no, we didn't, we weren't social with them.

DANIEL: Your dad played poker with him for years.

GLORIA: Uhm-hmm.

DANIEL: Were the poker games held ever at your house?

GLORIA: Yes.

DANIEL: And Truman would be just one of the guys...

GLORIA: ...Right.

DANIEL: Were you ever at the table?

GLORIA: Well, the one that I remember most, I was about fifteen and I had a date that night, and the Secret Service were swarming all over the house outside. But I remember Truman came a little earlier, a little early and we walked into the, sort of a den and he *settled* down. Truman, he said, "Do you play?" And I said, 'Yes.' So he said, "Well play me somethin'." I said, 'Oh, I couldn't do that,' you know. And he finally persuaded me to sit down at the piano with me and we played like a duet. He, I opened some music and he played the right hand and I played the left, and then that was fun, and about that time the doorbell rang and my date came and he was very, very impressed.

DANIEL: I would imagine. You walked in and saw your date play a duet with the President of the United States, that would...

GLORIA: ...I don't know that he was president then. He may have been vice president.

DANIEL: Even if he was a vice president.

GLORIA: Yes.

DANIEL: Or a senator, I could still imagine that that would be.

GLORIA: ...Yes, and I have a friend also who lived about a half a block away from me who still talks about how she touched President Truman's pajamas because she was sitting in the back seat of our car once and my dad was driving. And he said, "I have to stop in the post office and mail those pajamas off to the President." And she said, "These are the President's pajamas?" And my dad said, "Yes, they will be." So she still talks about that; she was so excited.

DANIEL: Did your dad, was your dad upset ever? Were they bothered that they weren't more socially friendly with the Trumans?

GLORIA: I don't think so because you know it was, it was generally believed or talked about that they were anti-Semitic and a lot of people asked, so my dad I think always said, "No they are not. We were very close and I understand his problems as he understands mine." And I think that's the way they left it. I will say this. I tell my dad's

story when I'm asked to, but there was...authors and...so forth, federation, Hadassah, and so forth. And, after I speak and they ask me questions, that was always the first question.

DANIEL: I wanna address the issue of anti-Semitism at some point a little further along. Your dad visited Truman in Washington often but was never an official guest overnight at the White House. Did he ever talk about that, that he was never invited to?

GLORIA: No.

DANIEL: Let's come back to this question on anti-Semitism.

GLORIA: I'll tell you we had some very, very dear friends who lived in Washington, and my dad always stayed with them, so...

DANIEL: ...That was one of the next questions. Did your dad stay with friends or did he stay in a hotel or?

GLORIA: He stayed with friends. Well I didn't know....

DANIEL: Right. The President has been accused of being an anti-Semite, and there have been reports of the diary of...this, that, and the other. What's your gut instinct? What did your father say about that issue?

GLORIA: Well, he never said anything to me. I think, I don't think Harry was anti-Semitic at all. He was referring, had a very good, ethical background. They really...morals and ethics, and I don't believe he was an anti-Semite. I think he had to take into consideration the times and it was very fashionable to be anti-Semitic. And I think that maybe he was upset by some of the things that were going on at the time, and maybe that's why he wrote that in his diary...

DANIEL: Do you think the Wallaces were anti-Semitic?

GLORIA: Yes, I do.

DANIEL: So your dad becomes involved and starts going to Washington. Did he talk about this much at home or did he talk about the fact that here he was, this regular haberdashery man from Kansas City who all of the sudden is dealing in world affairs?

GLORIA: No, he didn't talk about it in that way. He only talked about, he always saw his friend, Harry at the White House.

DANIEL: Do you think it ever registered in his mind what was, the bigger picture of it all?

GLORIA: Not until after it happened.

DANIEL: Was your mother aware of it? How did she react?

GLORIA: Well, she knew, yeah, she knew what was going on. People say that they shared confidences. She knew that, how he felt when he went to Washington while he was...

DANIEL: Did she think that her husband was becoming this big, influential man, or did she think, did she have the same sense that you talk with your father of just being besheret?

GLORIA: I think so. They were you know not, they were influential people; they were well thought of in my home. But as far as being you know wealthy or traveling for a special purpose, I don't think it entered their mind. He was just a friend that happened to be in the White House.

DANIEL: Their communal involvements, they were very active in the Temple. Were they involved in other Jewish activities?

GLORIA: Yes. Well...this question, sisterhood and friends like that, that's also...but my dad was always...and...some interesting stories about how he took..... And incidentally, it's twelve o'clock? No.

DANIEL: Yeah.

GLORIA: Can't be. Would you like to go to lunch?

DANIEL: Okay. It's...

(Break taken)

DANIEL: ...more questions. We're back on with Gloria. It's now about one thirty or so in the afternoon. Loeb Granoff says that his father, AJ, and your father became close, that they met initially in a carpool to Sunday school because of you and Loeb. Do you recall your father talking with AJ and their interactions?

GLORIA: Yes, they were good friends and my dad took a lot of advice from AJ. You wanna turn it off and...

(Off-tape discussion was had.)

DANIEL: It's clear in the reading, and one of the central pieces, one chapter in the project I'm doing is focusing on your dad's growth, his evolution as he learned more, I mean the whole series of events didn't occur overnight. And so what I want to do is try and delve into, for lack of a better word, that evolution that your dad underwent. Do you

recall your dad reading and discussing matters concerning Israel and Palestine at home and talking about it more as time went on? Does that?

GLORIA: I remember him, yes, talking about these meetings that he would have with the Zionists. He made friends with a lady named Nell Peiser, and she taught him a lot and I remember that period, but that's all; the specifics I don't remember.

DANIEL: You talked earlier about your dad not being a Zionist.

GLORIA: Uhm-hmm.

DANIEL: Do you think he would have called himself a Zionist later on? Did he become one?

GLORIA: I think so maybe. I don't know for sure.

DANIEL: Tell me about your dad's religious, his level of religiosity. Was your dad an observant man? Did he talk of belief much?

GLORIA: He was observant in the temple where my mother grew up and was confirmed and it was very, very reformed temple at that time. And when he was in town on Friday night they went to temple. We lit candles and said prayers before dinner on Shabot. And you know I don't know whether you'd call that observant or not, but for him it was and he was devout in his, his beliefs.

DANIEL: Did his belief or his practice change much as his involvement with Palestine and then Israel increase?

GLORIA: I don't think so.

DANIEL: Do you think that his involvement grew out of his religious practice? Would he have heard things from the rabbi, or would the two have been connected or separate elements?

GLORIA: Oh, that probably influenced him. He and Mayerberg were very good friends and, but you know my dad was raised as I said in an Orthodox home and my grandparents came from Russia and they lived through Pogroms and Lord knows what all. And I think it's just somehow in the way you're raised, and he was a very compassionate man and he was...

DANIEL: It was just a part of his upbringing...

GLORIA: But and you know that's the kind of environment that I was raised in, also. And even though we were, it was a very reformed temple, I am not terribly religious or observant, but I was just raised with these models and ethics and.

DANIEL: Do you recall your dad talking about the atrocities of the Holocaust as they came to light? Do you remember hearing those discussions at home?

GLORIA: Somewhat, yes. There were relatives that my dad helped through Truman come to this country in '39. That's all in these... And I knew at that time what was going on. But what was I, nine years old. How much could I know?

DANIEL: Your parents encouraged you to give Tzedakah at Sunday school?

GLORIA: Uhm-hmm.

DANIEL: ...So you would always have...

GLORIA: ...of course.

DANIEL: ...change to put in the pushke?

GLORIA: ...a nickel, right.

DANIEL: And being Jewish was a central part of your identity growing up.

GLORIA: Absolutely. I would have not dreamed of marrying someone who wasn't *Jewish*. I will tell you a story that will put me in perspective probably. I dated Dan for a year before we began kind of be real really serious you know about getting married and everything when he graduated. And he said to me one evening, "There's something about me that I think I should tell you that you don't know." Like, 'Hmm, what's this?' And he said, "I'm a Zionist." And I thought, 'Zionist, that's really a very Jewish word, I've heard it before. It must be very *frum* although but at that time I didn't know what *frum* meant. And so I said to him, 'Well, that's all right. Will I have to keep kosher?' So that shows you where I was.

DANIEL: Did you dad speak Yiddish?

GLORIA: No. Well, he had to understand a little bit of it because that's what was spoken at home, his home.

DANIEL: So his parents...

GLORIA: ...Uhm-hmm, yes.

DANIEL: In his everyday language would he...

GLORIA: ...Oh, no.

DANIEL: ...it wouldn't have come up?

GLORIA: And I'm not sure how fluent he was.

DANIEL: You dad didn't keep kosher...

GLORIA: ...No.

DANIEL: ...anything like that. Did he, did his attendance at Synagogue continue at the temple, continue through the years?

GLORIA: Uhm-hmm.

DANIEL: Up until he died?

GLORIA: Yes, I'm sure, although Rabbi Mayerberg was gone then and they had moved south and had a new rabbi. But yes, as far as I know they remained affiliated with the temple. He's buried right next to where the temple was.

DANIEL: Your dad died rather suddenly.

GLORIA: Uhm-hmm.

DANIEL: Had a heart attack...

GLORIA: ...Uhm-hmm.

DANIEL: ...overnight.

GLORIA: Right.

DANIEL: Were you home or you were in Oklahoma?

GLORIA: *At home.*

DANIEL: Do you remember the President coming over to the house?

GLORIA: Yes.

DANIEL: Can you describe that visit?

GLORIA: Yes, I tell that in my speeches, speeches. He did not come to the funeral because he thought it would be really too much you know recognition and he didn't wanna exploit anything, but he came to the Kaddish service that night.

DANIEL: He was, he came to the Shiva minyan.

GLORIA: Shiva minyan *at home.*

DANIEL: Did, you said Shiva for the whole week?

GLORIA: Uhm-hmm...but that night I, I think I was lying down somewhere resting; I couldn't face all those people. And...that my sister who came and got me and said that the President was there. I wanted to see him and so I got up and went...there. And then I went up to him and I shook hands with him and I said, 'Oh, Mr. President, my dad loved you so,' and he didn't answer me. And I looked at that, and there was a big tear roll, rolling down his cheek under his...and I could tell he was choked up. So that's what I remember.

DANIEL: And that he came on his own without Bess and without...

GLORIA: ...Well, now that's questionable. My sister says that Bess didn't come. I have a very good friend in Kansas City who said that Bess sat next to her at that service. So you know that's how things get garbled through the years and it's hard to say. I don't remember seeing her, but my friend Patsy says that she was there definitely.

DANIEL: Did Harry have much contact with your mother in the years after your father's death?

GLORIA: I don't, I don't know; I don't think so. I know that my mother was invited to his funeral and was picked up by a younger looking serviceman and...

DANIEL: ...drove...

GLORIA: ...drove her to the funeral and I don't know now. She donated a lot of this, a lot of these papers and things to the library. I guess she...my sister and I...these things.

DANIEL: How did your dad, this is a question, I don't know if you can answer this or not. I mean on paper, your dad wouldn't appear any different from any of his siblings, children of immigrants who were making their way in the New World...

GLORIA: ...That's right.

DANIEL: ...with varying levels of success in dealing with the normal kind of issues that come at anybody in life.

GLORIA: Uhm-hmm.

DANIEL: How did they react to your dad's friendship with this very powerful man? Did they treat him differently or was he still their brother who they would kid and cajole and push around like any sibling?

GLORIA: Yeah, I think it was the same. I know that Doc, my Uncle Doc and his wife, Dora, they went to the inauguration I guess. There was a train, a car, a train that went

from Kansas City, Granoff, Abe and Dora and...but I went from Norman, Oklahoma to Kansas City and... And I know that they were impressed with everything, but I don't think that they treated him any differently.

DANIEL: Your dad and your mom took a couple of trips to Israel.

GLORIA: One.

DANIEL: One trip to Israel.

GLORIA: Uhm-hmm.

DANIEL: Tell me about it.

GLORIA: Well, they were invited by the Israeli government and they went, in those days you couldn't even go non-stop. They flew to Rome; they spent the night in Rome and then they went onto Israel. This was in the very early days, don't forget. And I have a film that they had a professional photographer meet them in all their travels through Israel. One thing my dad said he was very impressed with, they rode in a motorcade with the ambassador, McDonald. And as they were going down a street in Tel-Aviv, Daddy said that he hear a little boy obviously in English saying, "There's Eddie! There's Eddie!" So that impressed him, but they had a wonderful trip. They were given the royal treatment and shown everything. They met with Ben Gurion, Weizmann.

DANIEL: Did they ever think of moving there?

GLORIA: No. No, there was some talk about my dad being given the ambassadorship, but this life wasn't for him.

DANIEL: Did he like the political life? Did he like being involved in world affairs?

GLORIA: It was too exciting for him. His blood pressure would go up. No, he was really a very calm individual and he said that Kansas City, he always said that Kansas City was the garden spot of the world

DANIEL: He was happy being a haberdasher.

GLORIA: Very. He was a little bit colorblind between blues and greens and sometimes had to have my mother check both legs before he went to the store because in his business he couldn't afford to have one blue sock and one green. He handled the reds pretty well; in fact red was his favorite color...

DANIEL: Would he send clothing or packages of shirts and ties to the President?

GLORIA: Uhm-hmm.

DANIEL: Just at will, when he felt like? When he got a new tie and thought, "Hmm, Harry would like this?"

GLORIA: Yes, yes. I think that's why the pajamas were in the.

DANIEL: ...Did he talk about those things? Would you hear about it? "Yeah, I sent the President, I sent a package to the President today?"

GLORIA: Perhaps, especially if he got a letter of thanks to General Hennessey.

DANIEL: Would he show you those letter when he got them?

GLORIA: I wasn't around a lot, and like I say it's hard for me to know what came before and what, what I've learned since. But if I was at home, yes, I'd hear it just like the time I told you with the...

DANIEL: The last five, six years or seven years, eight years when your dad was operating the store were successful years for him.

GLORIA: Yes.

DANIEL: Did they move up and move into a new, a nicer house and drive nicer cars and all of that?

GLORIA: We moved into another home just about the time that he bought the store and he was, had a land debt there for a few years, and so and we never moved out of that home. And as far as cars, he always drove a Chevrolet and he traded it every year or two because he'd drive it a lot on the road, so he always had a car in good condition. But I don't think he ever drove anything...

DANIEL: ...He never started to drive Cadillacs or...

GLORIA: ...No, no, no. No, and I also remember driving in the car with him once when I admired his cufflinks. And he said, "It's a diamond. Can you imagine me wearing diamonds?" These were a set of cufflinks that...was *admired as*...

DANIEL: Did he like being known around town? He had to have become a well-known person in Kansas City. Did he enjoy having that role?

GLORIA: Well, possibly I think so, but don't forget he spent his whole life there. He knew a lot of people.

DANIEL: Right, but this would have elevated him way beyond...

GLORIA: ...Well none of that ever was apparent, not to anyone else, certainly. Like I said, I remember the time he walked in and said, "Well you peons," but he was joking. And he would not have said that to anyone else except his family.

DANIEL: Did he ever consider asking the President for other favors? Were there other things that he ever?

GLORIA: I don't think so. He asked as I said for the President to help, when he was a senator to get these relatives out of, and they were my mother's relatives, out of Germany. And, well he asked for help in Oswego, a favor. I think he asked Truman to intercede, things like that, but not, not any personal favors.

DANIEL: Did his, do you think his business went up because people knew he was a friend of the President?

GLORIA: Possibly.

DANIEL: And so that his store, people would come there asking for?

GLORIA: Yes, possibly.

DANIEL: Would he talk about it? Would he come home at night and say, "You wouldn't believe what I was asked to do today?"

GLORIA: Not to me. Probably to my mother.

DANIEL: At the very beginning you talked about your dad saying, "This was besheret." Besheret works when, when those who are involved recognize it, otherwise it doesn't matter. It seems clear that your father recognized what was going on.

GLORIA: Uhm-hmm.

DANIEL: How did that recognition express itself during those times? I mean would he talk about "this role that I've been thrust into?" Would he talk about the burden that he was carrying, or was it something that he was pleased to do, or was it a duty that he had to do?

GLORIA: No, I think he was pleased to do it. As I say, I think he had been converted to a Zionist point of view and I know he was very eager to go to Washington and help *him* through it because he made many, many trips after the state became recognized and sat in on meetings with Goldie, Golda Mayer and different ones who were on those committees. I know he always enjoyed doing that.

DANIEL: There are all sorts of records of President Truman's reaction to organized Jewry and the Organized Jewish World trying to get through to him and their failures

much more often than their successes. How did your dad react to sort of that Organized Jewish World?

GLORIA: Well as I say, he did not join it; he did not become a Zionist. He was aware that the Zionists had upset Truman...

DANIEL: ...Did he resent them or not?

GLORIA: Uhm-hmm, possibly. I know that when he went to Washington to see Truman and convince him to see Weizmann that he was quite nervous about it. I think he realized the importance of it. This man here, Frank Goldman, the one on the right, impressed upon him the importance of it. And I do know that after Truman said to him those favorite, famous words, "You...

DANIEL: ..."Baldheaded..."

GLORIA: ..."Hey, you baldheaded son-of-a-bitch," he went straight from that conference to the nearest bar and ordered a double bourbon, and I think it was in the morning and my dad was not a drinking man. So he was very...

DANIEL: ...His nerves were...

GLORIA: ...untied.

DANIEL: Do you remember hearing him come back home and report back on that meeting?

GLORIA: Yes.

DANIEL: Describe it.

GLORIA: Well, see I wasn't there at the time, so...

DANIEL: ...Right.

GLORIA: Now I mean...

DANIEL: ...Did he call you on the phone and tell you about it or?

GLORIA: No.

DANIEL: How did you hear about it?

GLORIA: Well, I don't remember. I just knew that he had gone to Washington and I knew that he had had a successful meeting. I must have talked to him after he got back because I remember him saying how he went from, he flew from there to New York and

went to the Waldorf Astoria where Weizmann was staying and how thrilled he was when he looked up and saw the Israeli flag flying next to the, so you know I remember certain things like that, but that's.

DANIEL: Do you remember his reaction to being called a "Baldheaded son-of-a-bitch?"

GLORIA: No. I'm sure he was quite used to Harry calling him that.

DANIEL: Is that, would they have spoken to each other in that...

GLORIA: ...Harry was very outspoken.

DANIEL: Would he have used that kind of...

GLORIA: ...Oh, yes.

DANIEL: ...language back and forth?

GLORIA: Yes.

DANIEL: What kinds, did your dad have names like that for Harry?

GLORIA: No, I don't think so. I mean my dad just didn't, didn't call anybody a son-of-a-bitch, except that man in Texas.

DANIEL: Something triggered in your dad a willingness to go meet with the President and take him on...

GLORIA: ...Oh, yes.

DANIEL: ...in that meeting.

GLORIA: Well I'm sure it was getting to know all the Zionists' problems that he learned when he went to these meetings in Kansas City at Nell Peiser's house.

DANIEL: Do you think, do you think your dad was prepared to have that meeting go the wrong way?

GLORIA: In the White House?

DANIEL: In the White House?

GLORIA: Well I don't know. I guess it could have, but he knew Truman pretty well. I guess he knew or certainly hoped that Truman would follow his instincts, which he felt would be successful.

DANIEL: How did you learn about the State of Israel be declared in May of '48?

GLORIA: I do remember Truman's reaction. I was in the dorm in college and we would read, listen to the returns 'till late at night. Of course they didn't...

DANIEL: ...Right

GLORIA: ...so I went to bed. And this friend of mine that I told you moved up half a block from us and touched Truman's...

DANIEL: ...Pajamas.

GLORIA: ...pajamas, she was in my sorority in college. And I remember about six o'clock in the morning she came in and you know flipped the light on and yelled, "Jake! Jake! He won!" And that's how I learned about his victory. I don't remember...

DANIEL: Do you remember how the President would greet you? Would he say, "Hi, Gloria, how are you?" He knew your name?

GLORIA: Yes, uhm-hmm.

DANIEL: And you would call him Mr. President.

GLORIA: Yes.

DANIEL: Do you remember hearing whether your father called him Mr. President or called him Harry?

GLORIA: Oh, he called him Harry, but I'm sure he called him Mr. President too, just joking with him.

DANIEL: But private, in a poker game...

GLORIA: ...Oh, yes, he was Harry.

DANIEL: ...even while he was in the White House...

GLORIA: ...Yes.

DANIEL: ...he was still Harry?

GLORIA: Yes. He was a very down-to-earth man.

DANIEL: Did your dad ever react to the criticisms that Truman received when Truman had all sorts of unfavorable press I guess is a good way to put it...

GLORIA: ...Yes.

DANIEL: ...while he was in the White House. Do you remember your father reacting to...

GLORIA: Well, Black Monday or Black Saturday, whatever it was, the day that the State Department went against Truman's wishes

DANIEL: Right, it was a Friday.

GLORIA: A Friday...

DANIEL: ...The ambassador at the UN...

GLORIA: ...Right.

DANIEL: ...Warren Austin.

GLORIA: Right.

DANIEL: Warren Austin.

GLORIA: Right. That, at that time I think he, my dad ran it and it had...it's in the scrapbook. It was either the *Jewish Chronicle* or I know that it was the *Kansas City Star*, but it was a page ad, said that he was trying to set the record straight and...it's *straight*.

DANIEL: Your dad records in one of his written remarks, I wanna say it was in a letter to Joseph Cohen, Weizmann's aide, that he felt utterly sick after hearing about that event at the United Nations and spent most of the weekend in bed. Is that hyperbole or is that literal?

GLORIA: No, he was really sick about that.

DANIEL: Physically? I mean really physically made him...

GLORIA: ...Oh, I don't know about physically, but he was just very upset by him.

DANIEL: He took that whole thing rather personally then.

GLORIA: Well, he didn't, I guess he wasn't expecting it and probably didn't know how to take it. If you read the letter that Weizmann wrote to him afterwards, he was certainly very understanding.

DANIEL: Right. There was a phone call that was made from Weizmann to your dad reassuring him, saying...

GLORIA: ...Yes, I think there was.

DANIEL: ..."I still trust Truman."

GLORIA: See, I told you you'd know more that I did.

(Side B)

DANIEL: The time is passing by, and so I wanna wrap this up a little bit. One of the concluding chapters that I'm gonna write is gonna deal with the legacy of your father and sort of how your father has gone down in history and how he is remembered today. Tell me about how you would like your father to be remembered. Let's start there.

GLORIA: Well, I'd like for him to be remembered just the way he was, humble, honest, compassionate. I feel he was a great man, but of course he was my dad.

DANIEL: Fun loving, you've described your dad having a good sense of humor and being...

GLORIA: ...Uhm-hmm.

DANIEL: ...quick to make someone smile.

GLORIA: Right. He was, I don't even know how to put it to you, Dan, but his legacy, I know some of the things that have thrilled me. When I went to Beit Hatsfutsot, I looked up his name in here, reams of material; I was just shocked. It thrilled me when my Hebrew compatriot knew him just like that. I had dinner one night this past summer in Massachusetts at a table, I don't know how it came up, oh, I do know how it came up. Somebody mentioned the name Harry Truman and my husband spoke up very quickly and said, "Now be careful. Be careful what you say because there are people at this table who have a very personal stake in Harry Truman." And they said, "Oh," you know and everybody looked around.

And so then when he told them who, who my father was, the man next to me just almost had a... "Oh," he says, "am I sitting next to Eddie Jacobson's daughter? Oh, my goodness," he said, "I can't believe it. Wait 'till I tell my wife." And so you know those things are fond when I know that people do know his name and...

DANIEL: ...Do you think your dad should be taught in Hebrew schools? You think, you think that it merits?

GLORIA: Well, in Sunday school you mean?

DANIEL: Yeah, in the Sunday school.

GLORIA: Yes, I do. I do know that in Israel at one time, now this also was many years ago, but we went to Israel, my sister and her husband, the four of us, for an unveiling of a street sign in Rechovot on Eddie Jacobson, Kikar (square) Eddie Jacobson I think it was. And they had some school children come out and they all knew everything about this story. So now I don't know if he's still teaching there, but I have an idea they certainly do there more than here.

DANIEL: We've kicked around the word "hero" a couple of times. Do you call your dad a hero?

GLORIA: I don't know. He wouldn't call himself a hero.

DANIEL: No?

GLORIA: No, I don't think so. He was *Besheret*. He said you know that this was his friend and these were his people and he wanted to help his people, so I don't know if that's being a hero or not. To a lot of people he was perceived as a hero because that's how they treated him afterwards. I told you they, people gave him gifts, these cufflinks, a watch, all sorts of things, and he had many, many things done in his honor like dinner in Washington. And then on his sixtieth birthday they had a big celebration for him in the Muelbach Hotel in Kansas City. I'll show you a picture of him. I have him in...that was taken by at, at that luncheon. And the President came in, surprised him. So those things you know meant a lot to him.

DANIEL: Did your dad marvel at his, at who he'd become in life, at what life had handed him? Did he ever look and say, "How'd this happen to me?"

GLORIA: I don't think so.

DANIEL: Or not?

GLORIA: I don't think so. I think, Dan, I want you to send me your thesis. Will you do that?

DANIEL: Of course, of course. That goes without saying.

GLORIA: I'd like, it would be interesting for me to know how differently my sister and I answered these same questions.

DANIEL: Of course, of course. I've asked the same question...

GLORIA: ...I don't think...

DANIEL: ...to both her and I'll ask to her, and I asked them to the other three people I met with, your cousin Herb, and with Frank Adler and with Loeb Granoff.

GLORIA: Well did they feel like my dad had changed?

DANIEL: No, no. They all, they all have said roughly the same thing you have said, and in many ways that for me is what's so extraordinary about him. What's so...

GLORIA: ...He wasn't or he was?

DANIEL: ...extraordinary is that he never reacted to it, that he, it just, he said that's...

GLORIA: ...It was the right thing to do and he was the right one to do it, that's all.

DANIEL: And it never went to his head and it never went beyond that. They've all, the others have equally said that it's sad that that chapter of American-Jewish history isn't repeated as often as it maybe should be.

GLORIA: Probably, because as I say, a lot of the younger people have never heard of Eddie Jacobson, and most, for the most part the people who have are Eastern...New Yorkers and you know have more of a religious upbringing than we did.

DANIEL: At lunch you spoke about your dad making a contribution to UJA where Golda Mayer was then Goldie *Myerson* spoke, and he gave him twenty-five dollar contribution. It's clear to me hearing that story at that point your dad already had a very strong connection to the land of Israel.

GLORIA: Right.

DANIEL: It's also clear that at the time of your birth that connection may not have been anywhere near as strong.

GLORIA: First of all, there wasn't a...

DANIEL: ...Right. There's a metamorphosis that took place inside your father.

GLORIA: And I think that had to do a lot with the war, the Holocaust, and what he learned from, from his...

DANIEL: Did your mother mimic that? Did your also gain this strong connection?

GLORIA: Well yes, I think so. She was certainly didn't go to these meetings and she...

DANIEL: ...He went to them alone.

GLORIA: Yes, and...

DANIEL: ...Was that the style of the day, the wives didn't go, or did she just not...

GLORIA: ...No, but I think only wives who were strictly interested in being Zionists went.

DANIEL: Did your mother ever say...

GLORIA: ...He would come home and tell, he would come home and tell her about them.

DANIEL: Was your mother ever bothered by his higher profile?

GLORIA: ...

DANIEL: When all is said and done, your father has more than just a passing reference in American history, given at least the events of the last fifty-five, fifty-eight years. Do you think it's possible, do you think his kind of contribution is possible to be recreated, or was his one of these things that was so unique with the characteristics of the people and the events, the particulars that it was really a once, a one-time deal in every sense of the phrase?

GLORIA: You ask tough questions. I think it was probably a one-time deal because of the circumstances. I mean it was the creation of the State at Israel. It was right after the war with all the Holocaust victims. Hopefully, this will never happen again.

DANIEL: Your dad was involved in the political...

GLORIA: ...Uhm-hmm.

DANIEL: ...machinery with Israel. Was he off raising money for Israel?

GLORIA: No. You mean like speaking or?

DANIEL: ...Right, and getting into philanthropy.

GLORIA: No. I don't think so.

DANIEL: He stayed in the more public government and....

GLORIA: Right. He did raise money for Truman when Truman was running for reelection.

DANIEL: Right, but he wasn't going doing UJA?

GLORIA: Well my dad always gave to UJA...

DANIEL: But he wasn't off raising money for them. He would contribute himself but not...

GLORIA: ...No, and he would call the names on his list to contribute.

DANIEL: Right.

GLORIA: But they were always the lower end of the list because my dad was not wealthy and he couldn't solicit the higher ones, so, but he always, I grew up in that atmosphere. And I, even my mother's parents who were German, we lived with my grandma, my grandparents, my maternal grandparents. And oh, even during the Depression days, you know right after the Depression, beggars would come to our back door; I remember this very vividly. And my grandmother would always have something for them, always. And if she didn't she'd say, "Oh, my goodness, I'm so sorry I didn't cook today. Please go to my next door neighbor. She made a pot of soup. She'll have something for you." I mean I grew up in a compassionate household where you helped someone if you could.

DANIEL: And your father got along just fine with his in-laws.

GLORIA: Yes.

DANIEL: The relations were good and...

GLORIA: ...Yes, absolutely.

DANIEL: So maybe your dad was a hero in more ways than one.

GLORIA: Well I think he was, but like I said before, he was my dad. I remember when he died that Rabbi Mayerberg was at the house that morning when we drove in from Tulsa. He said that sometime later, about a month later he'd like to have a memorial service for my dad. And I said, 'No...' And we argued and he said, "Your dad," he said, "I know he was your daddy," but he said, "he also belonged to us." And he finally convinced me to have the memorial service. But I remember that because he kept saying, "Don't forget he was your dad," and I guess that does make a difference.

DANIEL: Sure.

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