

EXODUS Project

Interview of Sue Ann Lipsey

July 27, 2016

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Sue Ann Lipsey.ext

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Lynnie Mirvis: This is **Lynnie Mirvis** and I'm here with Sue Ann Lipsey at Temple Israel, and it is July 27th.

Sue Ann Lipsey: I know...in the...

Lynnie Mirvis: I can't believe...

Sue Ann Lipsey: End of the week, end of the month.

Lynnie Mirvis: It.

Sue Ann Lipsey: I can't believe it, oh.

Lynnie Mirvis: Okay, Sue Ann, when and where were you born?

Sue Ann Lipsey: I was born December the 16th, 1948 in Du Quoin, IL.

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh, I didn't know that.

Sue Ann Lipsey: It's about this big.

Lynnie Mirvis: It's that big, oh, well can you tell me something about growing there? Or did you really grow up there?

Sue Ann Lipsey: I didn't really grow up there.

Lynnie Mirvis: Yeah.

Sue Ann Lipsey: I don't remember really anything about living there.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Sometime after that my – we lived in another small town in southern Illinois called Mount Vernon.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

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Sue Ann Lipsey: It's a little easier to find on the map, and basically most of my life I've lived in small towns. My father was a clothing manufacturer, nonunion.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: So we lived in small towns where there was a plethora of people that had sewing skills, and also in small towns, mostly in the South because it was nonunion...

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh...

Sue Ann Lipsey: Manufacturing.

Lynnie Mirvis: So when did you come to Memphis?

Sue Ann Lipsey: I came to Memphis as a student at then, Memphis State University. After my freshman year at the University of Oklahoma, so that was the fall of...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: 1967...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: That I came to Memphis...

Lynnie Mirvis: Okay.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And that's when I met my husband Bernard in the Student Center and got married in 69 and I've been here ever since.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: So this is a big city for me.

Lynnie Mirvis: It's a big city, so you're – what was the last small town you remember and can you tell me something about...

Sue Ann Lipsey: Well...

Lynnie Mirvis: What that was like to grow up there?

Sue Ann Lipsey: I would say the most – the longest time I remember living in one place was Blainville, Arkansas where we moved to from New Madrid, Missouri...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And we moved there. I was in the 5th grade, so I was about 10, and I lived there the rest of my high school years, and my parents moved to Memphis in the 80's.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

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Sue Ann Lipsey: After my father retired...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: All that time they had also lived in a...

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh, yeah; mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: In Blainville.

Lynnie Mirvis: So what was Jewish life like there? Can you describe that...?

Sue Ann Lipsey: Um...

Lynnie Mirvis: Do you remember that?

Sue Ann Lipsey: We had a Reform Congregation...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Also called Temple Israel.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And it had been there for many, many years. I don't – I couldn't really tell you how many years. At the time that we moved there there were 3 or 4 families living there that still had children.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Other families that were living there were seniors. Their children had since finished school and moved on, and the same thing happened with those families who were then – who were there at that time. Their children finished school and they did not return, and that happened to the congregation that had families from southeast Missouri. All small towns...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And northeast Arkansas. The people that were in the small towns in Missouri...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Most of them settled in either Kansas City, or St. Louis.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: The ones that were in the northeast Arkansas part, they either lived in Memphis...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

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Sue Ann Lipsey: Or Dallas, or Atlanta; places like that.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm, yeah. What about Jewish celebrations? What do you remember about that?

Sue Ann Lipsey: We had – as I said we had...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: A small congregation...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: We had student rabbis from the Hebrew Union College that came once or twice a month. They were there for the holidays.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: We had, so of course we had Rosh Hashanah only on day, Yom Kippur...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: We would do Sukkot celebration on the Friday night, closest to Sukkot. So that was convenient. We always had a Friday night service. Even when there wasn't rabbi...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Lay people did the service, and my father was one of them. My father probably had the most Jewish education of most of the gentlemen in the congregation because he was born and raised in Europe, so he had a Shiva....

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh.

Sue Ann Lipsey: High school...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Education, and...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Which is more than some of the people who had been generations...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Living there...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

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Sue Ann Lipsey: In those small towns.

Lynnie Mirvis: They spoke Yiddish ____

Sue Ann Lipsey: He spoke it; yeah he read and spoke Hebrew.

Lynnie Mirvis: Ah, whoa.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Um...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: He spoke Hebrew because my father had been in pre-48 Israel when his family came to the United States in 38 he went to, then, Palestine.

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh, so he was there.

Sue Ann Lipsey: He was there and then came to the United States, was inducted into the United States Army...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And then became a citizen...

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Or became a citizen then was inducted into the Army, and was in a German Prisoner of war camp....

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh.

Sue Ann Lipsey: In south Florida.

Lynnie Mirvis: Whoa.

Sue Ann Lipsey: He was – well because he spoke German.

Lynnie Mirvis: He spoke German.

Sue Ann Lipsey: His community that he was in was very close to Germany...

Lynnie Mirvis: Uh-huh...

Sue Ann Lipsey: And he did speak German.

Lynnie Mirvis: Uh-huh, so he was in a German Prisoner of War camp, what was that...?

Sue Ann Lipsey: As a Translator.

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Lynnie Mirvis: As a Translator, ah, so he translated, so...

Sue Ann Lipsey: So my dad always teased us and said, "Well, I fought the battle of Miami Beach."

Lynnie Mirvis: He was needed...

Sue Ann Lipsey: Yes...

Lynnie Mirvis: And he was very needed.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Oh, yeah.

Lynnie Mirvis: Uh-huh.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Oh, yeah.

Lynnie Mirvis: So he had a Jewish background...

Sue Ann Lipsey: Yes he did.

Lynnie Mirvis: And your mom, **where was she from?**

Sue Ann Lipsey: My mom grew up in Du Quoin, Illinois...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Where her father had an auto supply business.

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh.

Sue Ann Lipsey: They did not have a congregation in Du Quoin. They had to travel to another small town in Illinois, Benton, Illinois. These are all in southern Illinois, so the next major city to them was St. Louis. So she had a minimal Jewish education...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Like I had.

Lynnie Mirvis: And, yeah, so could you tell me about – more about your education? You said you came here to U of M, what did you study?

Sue Ann Lipsey: Well, I majored in...

Lynnie Mirvis: Yeah.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Initially I was going to major in Home Economics.

Lynnie Mirvis: Uh-huh.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Uh, that was my favorite...

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Lynnie Mirvis: No, because you're a wonderful cook.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Class, yeah, that was my favorite...

Lynnie Mirvis: Yeah.

Sue Ann Lipsey: My favorite classes...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: In high school.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And whatever that Organic Chemistry...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: *[chuckles]*

Lynnie Mirvis: Yeah.

Sue Ann Lipsey: That threw me for a loop, so then I majored in...

Lynnie Mirvis: Ah.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Elementary Education, so I got a degree in Elementary Education. At that time I graduated – I was the last class that graduated in January.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: I – you and others may remember that they – you were off for the winter break, then you came back to school, had your finals, and then there was a semester break, and the spring semester...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Started, well now, you know they don't do that. They finish the semester in December...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: In most public universities. So I graduated a semester early and finished in January of 1970. My mother was worried I wasn't going to get a job...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: In the middle of the year...

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And so I enrolled in graduate school.

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Lynnie Mirvis: I did get a job. So I started graduate school and teaching at the same time, and then I...

Lynnie Mirvis: Yeah, where were you teaching?

Sue Ann Lipsey: Ended up with a – got a Master's in...

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Also in Elementary Education, and then I got a job at Bethel Grove Elementary.

Lynnie Mirvis: Uh-huh.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Our former mayor, Willie Harrington, was my principal.

Lynnie Mirvis: Really.

Sue Ann Lipsey: He was just "Mr. Harrington" Then.

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh wow, so what grade were you in?

Sue Ann Lipsey: I started in the 5th grade...

Lynnie Mirvis: Uh-huh.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And then the next year I taught the 3rd grade.

Lynnie Mirvis: So you were in education.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Mm-hm.

Lynnie Mirvis: Whoa.

Sue Ann Lipsey: I was.

Lynnie Mirvis: And thinking about your families journey, some from small towns, and then your father in pre-Palestine; where there any stories that they told you specifically about what that was like, what it was like for him to be in pre-Palestine?

Sue Ann Lipsey: Um...

Lynnie Mirvis: _____

Sue Ann Lipsey: He had some stories...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: He did have some stories, and I do remember...

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Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Interesting that you asked that because I been going through...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: So old pictures to look for a...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Specific, which I cannot find...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And he had a very close friend who went from Poland...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: With him. They snuck into the country, they were arrested...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: He had to pull some strings with some people he knew to get out of jail. They were building roads...

Lynnie Mirvis: Whoa.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And I don't know if you knew my father, but he was similar in structure to your dad. My father was about...

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh.

Sue Ann Lipsey: 5' 4" tall and probably weighed a hundred and...

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh.

Sue Ann Lipsey: 30 lbs....

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: So I had many pictures like the small old pictures, which are probably...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: 2 x 2 black and white pictures of him with a pickax.

Lynnie Mirvis: Hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: No shirt....

Lynnie Mirvis: Uh-huh.

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Sue Ann Lipsey: And this was up in northern Israel building a road...

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh.

Sue Ann Lipsey: In 1940.

Lynnie Mirvis: So he basically escaped Hitler? I mean, was his...

Sue Ann Lipsey: His family did.

Lynnie Mirvis: Okay.

Sue Ann Lipsey: His family did, they had...

Lynnie Mirvis: Yeah.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Relatives in Chicago...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Who were wealthy; these were relatives on my grandmother's side...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And they sponsored them to come.

Lynnie Mirvis: And he chose to go somewhere else?

Sue Ann Lipsey: He chose to go because you know; he had been in the Zionist Youth Movement...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And so he chose to go to Palestine, but then his father had a very difficult time with the transition. They were from a small town Kutno, Poland, and my paternal grandfather was the Miller...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Which is very surprising that when they came into the country our name didn't end up being Miller.

Lynnie Mirvis: *[laughs]*

Sue Ann Lipsey: Because we know that happened to many, many people.

Lynnie Mirvis: Lipsey? No.

Sue Ann Lipsey: No, Fisher.

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Lynnie Mirvis: Fisher.

Sue Ann Lipsey: But their name was Fizchel...

Lynnie Mirvis: Uh-huh.

Sue Ann Lipsey: F – I – Z – C – H – E – L and they made that into Fisher.

Lynnie Mirvis: Yeah, oh, it was Fizchel.

Sue Ann Lipsey: From the passports, right; Fizchel.

Lynnie Mirvis: So he was a Miller, yeah.

Sue Ann Lipsey: He was a Miller, and you know, supposedly beloved by all of the people in the town...

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And nothing like that could happen to us and etc., etc.

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh.

Sue Ann Lipsey: So his family really had to push him to move...

Lynnie Mirvis: Uh-huh.

Sue Ann Lipsey: You know to make the move to the United States, but he never got over it.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: So I think after a while being in pre-48 Israel, my father at the insistence of his...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Family; did come to join them...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm, mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And so anyway, back to this dear friend, he did stay in Israel; married, had some children and both of his sons came to visit with us in...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: In New Madrid, Missouri.

Lynnie Mirvis: Whoa.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Subsequently one of those young men were killed the War of 67.

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Lynnie Mirvis: Oh, how sad, wow.

Sue Ann Lipsey: But my father, I remember him calling...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Calling Israel to talk to his...

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh, yeah.

Sue Ann Lipsey: To his friend and you, I mean nowadays you pick up the cellphone and it's as if they're in the next room. In those days he was like shouting over the...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Over the receiver to talk to him. I do remember that, but he did talk about...

Lynnie Mirvis: Uh-huh.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Things like that and he...

Lynnie Mirvis: Right, the story.

Sue Ann Lipsey: He knew those early guys.

Lynnie Mirvis: He knew though, he was there, wow. So I know you joined the, moving up, the Jewish Family Service...

Sue Ann Lipsey: I did.

Lynnie Mirvis: At a crucial point during the Russian Re-Settlement...

Sue Ann Lipsey: Yes.

Lynnie Mirvis: Period, so how did you get started doing that? Can you describe that?

Sue Ann Lipsey: Well, I know you know that a group of *[clears throat]* Refuseniks came to Memphis in 1979 when they first let people out because of...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Pressure and they were arbitrarily sent to Memphis. It was just like...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Dealing the cards. They had no – they knew no one here; they – so they came here and made a start. Then in 1990 when the Soviet Union collapsed and the immigration laws for the refugee status were loosened and we knew, the community knew that they could get more...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

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Sue Ann Lipsey: Of – probably started it in 89. They started that program again...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And they knew that we were getting more refugees who were all...

Lynnie Mirvis: Uh-huh.

Sue Ann Lipsey: First degree relatives of those people who were already resettled here.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And they – Henry Marcus had already been hired, and she suggested me to Bob Silver for the job.

Lynnie Mirvis: What was your title?

Sue Ann Lipsey: It was just *[speaking very low]*...

Lynnie Mirvis: *[chuckles]*

Sue Ann Lipsey: Volunteer Coordinator. *[laughs]*

Lynnie Mirvis: But, okay *[laughs]* Volunteer Coordinator.

Sue Ann Lipsey: *[laughs]* For...

Lynnie Mirvis: Right, okay.

Sue Ann Lipsey: For Russian Resettlement.

Lynnie Mirvis: Yeah, so what made you, you know; want to do this kind of work?

Sue Ann Lipsey: Well, I...

Lynnie Mirvis: Or a teacher?

Sue Ann Lipsey: I'm a friend of Henry's...

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And she had talked about it so I felt like I could do it to help her, and I did it until the – just for a few years until the numbers slacked off, but...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: When we were busy, we were very busy...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

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Sue Ann Lipsey: With families coming in.

Lynnie Mirvis: Can you describe some of the actual details of the work that you did?

Sue Ann Lipsey: So, it was our responsibility...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Through funds from Jewish Family Service, provided by the community; from their gifts to Federation we found housing...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: We set up accounts for them with – like gas and water, and the telephone company, and we made arrangements for them, met them at the airport, put food in their pantry, arranged for volunteer families to assist them with their incoming, and to make like a homecoming for them.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: We got furniture donations. Often times clothing donations because we knew that what they would have would be limited, and when they arrived, then we made assessments of what they would need.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Many of them needed, well the majority needed English a Second Language classes.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: They were given by catholic charities at the time, and then we started giving them because we had – our numbers were so great; we started giving them at the Jewish Family Service office, and that was sponsored by the Memphis City schools.

Lynnie Mirvis: Hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: They had an adult education program at Messick High School, which was no longer being used...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: As a regular high school, so...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Some of the people were signed for classes that could help them move into a field that was...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Marketable.

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Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm, oh.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And we helped them find jobs.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And got them independent.

Lynnie Mirvis: That – wow.

Sue Ann Lipsey: *[laughs]*

Lynnie Mirvis: Wonderful, can...

Sue Ann Lipsey: It was a lot.

Lynnie Mirvis: Yeah, can you actually remember that you've met a family? Like the families and what that was like?

Sue Ann Lipsey: I don't know if I can say that I remember meeting the "first family"...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: But I do remember meeting some families...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Who you know stick out in your mind as being...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Memorable.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: One family, specifically came both the husband and wife were excellent English speakers...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: The husband's mother had been a Translator of textbooks...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: From English to Russian.

Lynnie Mirvis: Wow, mm-hm, mm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: So she spoke English, and the father, and we're talking about much older people...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

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Sue Ann Lipsey: Spoke English and their family who was here that sponsored them, their first degree relatives...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: They were all speaking English, and so they were an outstanding couple. The wife came here she was expecting a baby and I think within 30 days he had a job at St. Jude in a tech area. She had the baby...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: She had gone to medical school and staying within these first 30 days, had already realized and learned what she would have to do to get her medical license...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm, I see.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Degree approved here, and then she did have to do some courses, and she's a practicing Pediatrician in this city that a lot of people go to.

Lynnie Mirvis: That's – what a great story.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Yeah they're a very successful story.

Lynnie Mirvis: That's great. Oh, so what was that like for? Can you describe your feelings about that or...?

Sue Ann Lipsey: You know it was – I'll say this, I also had the opportunity to go and meet a plane of Russian only, arriving in Israel. It was very exciting to meet the plane of people coming to Memphis, but it was much more emotional...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: To get up at 3:00 in the morning to – from Jerusalem to go to Tel Aviv to meet a plane of Olim coming to Israel. That was much more an emotional experience for me. The meeting the plane of people coming to Memphis it was almost an anticlimactic experience because all the work...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: That we had done to get everything ready for them prior, you know they were finally here. Even though we had a lot more work to do because they had to have medical exams, you had to take a – you know, allow them to get a driver's license, go to social security; all of that, and all that was still to do. So it was a little bit of a different experience for me.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm _____. What was memorable about being in Israel that – can you pinpoint that like the difference?

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Sue Ann Lipsey: When – I know you remember because I actually have a picture of you [laughs]....

Lynnie Mirvis: [laughs]

Sue Ann Lipsey: Going through these old pictures and you remember a lot. Remember when we used to have a run for Soviet jury?

Lynnie Mirvis: Uh-huh.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And we had those t-shirts that said, “From Slavery to Freedom”?

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.’

Sue Ann Lipsey: So I felt meeting that plane, that those people that were getting off that plane and literally some of them bending down and kissing the ground when they arrived, and this is the older days I’m talking about in the 90’s, early 90’s, they bent down and kissed the ground when they got off the plane in Israel. Nobody did that when they arrived Memphis...

Lynnie Mirvis: [laughs]

Sue Ann Lipsey: No offense to Memphis, they were just exhausted.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right, right; uh-huh.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And they were helping to build the country.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: They were helping to build the country, whereas I don’t know if I can say that the new Americans, a minority number of the people that came helped to build our Jewish community. They came here...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: They came for a better life. They came because the economics, education, etc. I don’t – I can’t really say that they helped to build our Jewish community.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm, what – why do you think that is?

Sue Ann Lipsey: Because of their lack...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: An identification with the Jewish people, they didn’t really integrate themselves into Judaism.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: The majority, there is a minority number of people that did, and you know many of them...

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Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Who did, but even though their children may have gone to the day school or and even...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: The high – the Usheva High School...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: I don't know if they had that connection with Judaism that I feel that the Jewish refugees that came to Israel will have because they're living it...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm, yeah.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Every day.

Lynnie Mirvis: Every day.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Whether you want to or not....

Lynnie Mirvis: *[laughs]*

Sue Ann Lipsey: *[laughs]* You're going to live it.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right, you're living it; right.

Sue Ann Lipsey: I mean that's my opinion.

Lynnie Mirvis: So looking back can you think of something that was the most rewarding for you in being in this program helping?

Sue Ann Lipsey: There were several rewarding experiences. One was this woman, this young woman that I told you about.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: The one that was a – pregnant, and I know that she has a thriving pediatric practice. Her old – her child that she had when she first came here has graduated college already.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And there was another, gosh, stop it for a second. There was another, oh yes, another young person that I'm thinking of. He came here. He was already in college; brilliant. I took him to CBU because he wanted to go to engineering, and the professor that we met with in the mathematics department said, "I'm going to give you – I don't know where to place you."

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Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: They let him to school, they offered him a scholarship. He said, "I'm going to give you an exam, and if you can do this exam..."

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: "Then, well I'll know where to place you." So he literally by taking this exam copped out of most of the physics and math that would have been required for more than 2 years of college at CBU.

Lynnie Mirvis: Wow.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And so when he left Moldova his girlfriend...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Had gone to Australia.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Her older sibling had gone to Australia. So when things were relaxed that's where her family went. She was still in school, and he kept telling me about his girlfriend, and "When she finishes school I'm going to Australia to get her."

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And he did...

Lynnie Mirvis: Hum.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And they got married. She was probably 18 or 19...

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And then she went to school. They are living an Orthodox life...

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh.

Sue Ann Lipsey: They're very observant. They don't live in Memphis anymore. He is working for the United States Air Force.

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Doing Aeronautical Engineering...

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh, wow.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And they're a true success story.

Lynnie Mirvis: How wonderful.

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Sue Ann Lipsey: Yeah it is, that's a wonderful story.

Lynnie Mirvis: Wonderful.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And then I ended up in my capacity, as a Campaign Chair for the Jewish Federation. I ended up going to their city of Chişinău of Moldova.

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh, how fabulous. What was that like?

Sue Ann Lipsey: In later years. That was very interesting.

Lynnie Mirvis: Ah.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Very, very poor; very poor.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm, mm. So what would you say was the most challenging aspect of the job?

Sue Ann Lipsey: The most challenging aspect to me was trying to get people out of their Russian mindset into an open democratic, competitive...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Mindset. I learned a lot, a lot from the refugees that came. I'll give you an example. I don't even know where this fellow is. He was single...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Came here with his family, and he was in the military...

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And was a musician in the military; played in the military band. Retirement for him was at age 35...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: So to have full employment they would – in the greater Russian...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Economy everybody's working. They – for the military band you had to retire people at a young so that the next person could come in.

Lynnie Mirvis: Hum.

Sue Ann Lipsey: They didn't have dated like 65; they just decided arbitrarily how many years they thought you could work doing whatever your job was...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Whatever engineer they assigned to you, and then you retired and received a pension. So it was very hard for people who were say, age 50, who were

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retired from whatever position they had, and had been receiving a pension to tell them that there's no pension here.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: You don't get a pension because you haven't worked here.

Lynnie Mirvis: Uh-huh.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Now, thanks to all of us taxpayers, we do have something here called "Supplemental Security Income," but you're not eligible for that until you're 65, and if a person comes here and they're 50...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Doesn't have English, they have 15 years before they can collect this...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: minor amount of money and be eligible for Medicaid...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Which you know what that means; there's a gap and they have to find a job.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: So that I think was the biggest challenge.

Lynnie Mirvis: Yes, whoa.

Sue Ann Lipsey: That's the biggest challenge, and when I spoke with some people and I know we all heard about it, and it was almost like a joke that "everyone was an Engineer, everyone was an Engineer." Well, it's a title.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: So we had a gentleman who told me who was an Engineer, he worked in the airline – in the airline industry...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: So I asked him "What did we do?" And now, his English was not great. Anyway we narrowed it down through drawing...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: That what he did was install airline seats.

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh, who knew? *[laughs]*

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Sue Ann Lipsey: In a manufacturing...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Aspect, so he was an Airline Engineer.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm, wow.

Sue Ann Lipsey: We don't have an Airline Manufacturing here.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Sue Ann Lipsey: So it was very difficult for him.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: He had a really difficult time.

Lynnie Mirvis: Challenging.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Very challenging. That was the biggest – that was the hardest thing.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm, mm-hm. So I was just going to ask if you think about what kind of impact do you think being in this Russian Resettlement Program, and being the Volunteer Coordinator had on your life and your family's life in the – what you did afterwards? Was there anything that you could think of?

Sue Ann Lipsey: Interesting since our daughter is also a Volunteer Coordinator.

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh, you want to talk about that?

Sue Ann Lipsey: Yeah, you know.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Hum, I don't know a lot of times maybe I felt like my family was a little resentful of the time I spent away...

Lynnie Mirvis: *[laughs]* Oh.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Um...

Lynnie Mirvis: Yeah.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Doing my job, but it did get me in touch with a lot of people...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: In the community. I was impressed with the people who said, "Yes," and did so much work pro bono.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

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Sue Ann Lipsey: Very impressed with that in this community.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm. There was a lot of giving.

Sue Ann Lipsey: A lot of giving monetarily, and non-monetarily.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: So...

Lynnie Mirvis: Does anything come to mind specifically about that in these special cases?

Sue Ann Lipsey: Yes.

Lynnie Mirvis: Hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: I'll give you a special case which actually came to mind. We had a young man, and this man was not, this man was not Jewish. He came in with family, so someone else in his family was a First Degree relative to someone that was here...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And he was...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: An "add-on" so to speak. He had horrible psoriasis, horrible. When we went to the Shelby County Health Department to get a TB skin test, there was not a clear place on his arm to do a skin test.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Can I give names?

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: I took him to...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Larissa Bear's dad...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Dad, Dr. Rosenberg and he 99% cured him.

Lynnie Mirvis: Whoa.

Sue Ann Lipsey: This guy never wore a short sleeve shirt...

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Lynnie Mirvis: Mm, wow.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And he cured him.

Lynnie Mirvis: Wow, ___ anything.

Sue Ann Lipsey: It was – and totally free, even got the medicine for him free.

Lynnie Mirvis: Beautiful...

Sue Ann Lipsey: So, yeah it does, it really warms your heart. They came through, the Memphians came through.

Lynnie Mirvis: Hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: So I know some family owned businesses at the time hired a lot of people. Cleo Rapp, Wurzburg Brothers, National Mortgage; there were a lot of family owned businesses at the time. Some of the real estate companies, Epstein Real Estate hired – they hired people in their – to do work in their offices, or to do maintenance work.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: They were very good, very good.

Lynnie Mirvis: Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Sue Ann Lipsey: I'd just like to say that I'm very proud for the people who are still here...

Lynnie Mirvis: Uh-huh.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Who are still in touch and in their cases, some of them whose children grew up here. A lot of them have – if they went to college out West, you know that's...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Glory [*chuckles*]...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: They stayed there a lot of them, maybe if they went to school up East...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: They stayed there a lot of them, maybe if they went to school up East...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

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Sue Ann Lipsey: They stayed there and then there were some – some had moved on, but those who've stayed here they have friendships with both of people from the Russian community and other people in the community, and I'm very proud of all of them.

Lynnie Mirvis: That's wonderful. You know, there was one more thing that I didn't ask and I – we had talked about what Jewish life was like for you growing up and I was just wondering about, you know the present and now, and then raising your children here, how that Jewish life was for here, and if there was anything you wanted to say about that?

Sue Ann Lipsey: Well, it was the opposite of what I had...

Lynnie Mirvis: _____

Sue Ann Lipsey: Growing up *[laughs]*...

Lynnie Mirvis: Yeah, yeah.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Total opposite...

Lynnie Mirvis: And then...

Sue Ann Lipsey: You know, when you are the only Jewish...

Lynnie Mirvis: Yeah.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Person in your high school...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: To my kids going to public high school, White Station High School where they sat at the Jewish table for lunch...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: It's just a whole opposite, and my husband grew up the same way I did, but at least he had a few other Jewish...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Kids in his high school, but it's because he's from Lepanto and there were...

Lynnie Mirvis: Uh-huh.

Sue Ann Lipsey: They had other Jewish families with kids so it's...

Lynnie Mirvis: Yeah.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Yeah, it's different, but it was great.

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh that's great then. Do you think that your Jewish values impacted on the work that you did?

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Sue Ann Lipsey: I hope so.

Lynnie Mirvis: _____

Sue Ann Lipsey: *[laughs]* I hope so.

Lynnie Mirvis: Yeah.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Interesting...

Lynnie Mirvis: Yeah.

Sue Ann Lipsey: I'm trying to think of the name of the business...

Lynnie Mirvis: Yeah.

Sue Ann Lipsey: I took several people to a business that was like a – it's like a canteen business...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And they were in, they would have been in charge of going to like vending machines...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And taking out the money and bringing it back to the business, and reloading the vending machines with food, and of course now even vending machines have changed. They're not the same anymore. And they had to take like a personality test...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And because of the language barrier they let me sit in and try and explain some of the questions, and to try and explain to them that it would have been – it would be wrong...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: To take any of the money...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: From the vending machine or any they maybe fell out because that money belongs to the company...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Not to you; you know it was – there was – there you had to use your...

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Lynnie Mirvis: Mm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Your Jewish values.

Lynnie Mirvis: Uh-huh, oh interesting.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And talking about would – “If you saw a fellow employee stealing....”

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hm.

Sue Ann Lipsey: “Would you tell?” That was one of the questions on this personality test.

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh interesting.

Sue Ann Lipsey: And I said, “He would have said no because the other...” I said, “But you should because you’re working for – the – Mr. So and So and it’s his company, and he relies on you to make sure you know, that everything goes correctly,” so...

Lynnie Mirvis: Do you think it’s the different cultures that....

Sue Ann Lipsey: Yes.

Lynnie Mirvis: Came into play here?

Sue Ann Lipsey: Oh, yes.

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh, that’s just...

Sue Ann Lipsey: Oh, yeah.

Lynnie Mirvis: Yeah.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Because they had the – a “Black Market” mentality.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right, right.

Sue Ann Lipsey: So it’s different, it’s different.

Lynnie Mirvis: It’s very different.

Sue Ann Lipsey: Very different.

Lynnie Mirvis: Sue Ann, thank you so much and...

Sue Ann Lipsey: You’re welcome.

Lynnie Mirvis: In closing is there one last word [laughs] **you want to add**, just call Henry Marcus.

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Sue Ann Lipsey: *[laughs]*

Lynnie Mirvis: Alright, well, thank you so much.

Sue Ann Lipsey: You're welcome.

EXODUS/pti:nl