

CELEBRATING OUR STORIES
Jewish Life in Ann Arbor

Abe Ingber and Bob Faber
Recorded April 23, 2013

2:49-4:08

Bob: . . . We got started—I came with my little son David, who was about a year old, a year-and-a-half old. Euni was very, very pregnant at the time. I worked with a carpenter. We built shelving, and we're gonna open up Monday morning. Jarvis and Saul Beacheck, I don't know if you remember him, and their wives, came Sunday night. We're gonna go out to dinner. When Euni is walking down the steps to get her coat on, her water bag broke, and I had to rush her to the hospital. Rushed her to the hospital in such a hurry that I wound up in Ypsilanti, instead of Ann Arbor, so I had to turn around and go back again. She had the baby at 7:00 in the morning, on Monday morning, and at 9:00 Monday morning, Faber's Fabrics was born. We got into business there. That's where we were, for the next almost 30 years, in that little fabric store.

The world changed a lot. The women stopped sewing, so if they're going to stop sewing, they're going to stop buying fabrics. That destroyed what I was doing, so I got into the travel business instead. That was okay, except the kids now are so adept at using their computers, they didn't need us anymore. . .

4:21-6:46 2:25

Bob: When did you get out of your business?

Abe: I was there until about five or six years ago. It started with my dad. My two brothers, George worked over at the auto—George and Jerry both graduated from the university. My dad asked me to help him for the summer, and I've been there ever since.

Bob: It was a good time for you, though. You made a lot of friends out there, and made a good name for yourself out there.

Abe: I think we did. I hope we did.

Bob: Are you a—this is, to some degree, involved with Beth Israel, which is where we are right now. I was wondering if you have any relationship with Beth Israel or the people or whatever it would be.

Abe: In its formative years, we were quite active. My folks were active in it, and my wife Molly was active in it. We had several—my dad would sponsor spaghetti dinners to raise money, and things like that. They would go door to door, to all the merchants in town, and make sure they bought a ten-dollar ticket for all the spaghetti they could eat. It was a very joyful life.

Bob: You were part of the Jewish community in Ann Arbor.

Abe: I wasn't as active as my dad and mother and Molly was. I was busy working, as my wife would put it

Bob: We didn't have—I came from—I was Jewish, I am Jewish, my wife and her family Jewish, but surprisingly—I'll tell you surprisingly, and then why, but surprisingly, we were Jewish, but there was nothing—we were not participants in the traditions of Judaism. We didn't celebrate the holidays or anything of that sort. I remember being really impressed one time, when I was a kid, we had new dishes, at the time of, I guess, Pesach, whatever it was. I thought there was some relationship between the two. Turns out that the old dishes had all broken, so we had bought new dishes. I tried to ascribe to it some meaning.

11:22-12:38

Bob: One of the points of this discussion, I guess, is to see what kind of community we live in, as Jews. I never had any—except for that incident,* I don't think I ever had any anti-Semitism that was thrown in my face. No sign—well, little signs of opposition. I dunno if you had that or not. What was your?

Abe: I have to differ with you a little bit. We lived in the German town, so to speak, basically German population. I was always aware of the fact that we had relatives who were killed in the pogroms in Europe, and things like that. It hit home rather hard. I got to hear my mother and dad speak all the time about, so-and-so has been—they don't know how to find her, and they don't know how to find—how to locate them at various spots. I remember my grandmother and grandfather being brought over by my folks. We lived with them for a while. My grandmother was not happy here. She went back to Israel, and then she tried to come back here, but they wouldn't let her back in.

* Refers to an incident mentioned in the full transcript that occurred outside of Ann Arbor.

15:02-16:45

Abe:

. . . We lived kitty-corner from another family, and at the age of ten years, my son and their son became friendly. As usually happens, there's some difference of opinion or you followed and I didn't follow, or something like that. He ended up calling my son a dirty Jew. I walked across the street. I said, "This can't go on." I told 'em, "I'd like to talk to your son." As I told my brothers, he has to have heard it some place. It had to come from within the family, in my opinion. I could be wrong, but my first assumption is they must've said something about Jewish people.

That was the worst experience I had in town, in spite of the fact that I dealt with thousands of customers, if not more—many thousands of customers. Only two have expressed a dissatisfaction. In those days, it was a teletype service. You're familiar with that. Parts were hard to get during the war, World War Two. If we didn't have it, we offered the service of locating it on a teletype. In the entire city of Ann Arbor and surrounding areas, there are a lotta body shops and automobile shops. Only two of 'em didn't say it, but implied that I gouged 'em. I had no—I offered the service to them, and even so, I was branded as one of those. Those are the only experiences in this town, in spite of this being predominantly German.

28:38-30:02

StoryCorps:

Bob, can I ask you a question? Your wife, was she—she was active in the Jewish community, wasn't she?

Bob:

Active is the wrong word. Her friends were all Jewish. Her life was centered on Judaism, but none of the traditions crept into her activities. We didn't go to shul—not that we were opposed to it, but we had no interest. That was not part of our life. That's where both of us were. I think we shared that. She was closer to it than was I, because she didn't have, I guess, the same illogic thwarting her as I do. I'm more involved with other people because of the business. I was more involved—and because of politics. I was involved in city council. Then I was involved in a whole bunch of other things. She had her life fairly focused on me and on the kids, and I guess on the fact of Judaism, the fact of Judaism, including the problems of being Jewish in any community. That ruled who she was and what she did, but there was nothing much beyond that.