



## SAMS Roots Interview transcript

Beryl Caplan interviewed by Caroline Pearce, transcribed by Helen Singer

16<sup>th</sup> March 2016 at Beryl's home in Southgate

Recording length 53m34s

CP: So Beryl, can you tell me a little bit about your background. I believe your father was born in South Africa and moved to England and your mother was from Yorkshire. So can you tell me, how did your father come to be in England and how your parents met?

BC: Right, my father was a doctor and he came over to Scotland to take a further degree and in the meantime he went to stay with a cousin who lived in Leeds and this cousin was already engaged to my mother's sister. So he met my mother and decided that he wouldn't go back to South Africa, he would stay, mainly because my mother would not go and live in South Africa. Her mother, my grandmother, had been left a widow with five young children and my mother was the eldest, so she had been the main supporter because grandma really couldn't cope, and as there were two teenage boys there was no way my mother was going to go off to South Africa. So my father stayed. And they married and they came to London and very soon after my sister was born, 1932. He came over about 1930. And it was very, if I say my father was not a good businessman, I think it would be a kindness to say that, but he really couldn't make a living. That was in the time when there was no National Health Service and patients paid the doctor and they were living in Clapton and because things were so difficult they decided to move and to go up North. And they ended up a very, very small, really a village rather than a town called Tinsley. Tinsley was known for its coal mines and my dad was the local doctor and I was born there. And we were looked upon as very important people because in those days the doctor had a certain kudos and within a very small community I think there was this expectation that the doctor and his family were very special people. But then war broke out and my darling father who was, I think he felt he wanted to contribute something, so he volunteered, as a South African, to join the British Army as a doctor.

CP: So he would have been about, how old?

BC: That would have been 1941

CP: So he would have been about 35, or 36 years old, with three children

BC: Yes, three children. My mother was not well. She always said it was a miracle she survived because she was a tiny baby and she had some sort of heart problem. So the upshot of that was, Dad having decided he was joining the British Army, that we three children would go to boarding school. And I was five, and off we went to a boarding school in North Wales and when Dad was posted abroad, my mother decided this was just not on, she was going to go home to mum. So then we moved to Leeds and that would have been 1941. So my sister and I and my mother actually went to live with grandma and my brother went to another boarding school, he went to a boys' boarding school, the one we'd gone to, we'd gone to one where I think there were very few boys, mainly girls. So I was about 7 when we went to Leeds and had a remarkably happy time there with my family.

Dad was away for years, I went to school, we had our youth clubs, a perfectly normal childhood. There was a war going on and I look back and I think why didn't it impinge more on my life, because I do remember going to school one morning past a site where there had been bombs but it was pretty rare, really quite unusual for us, for my sister and me to experience it

CP: So because it didn't really happen much in that area?

BC: Not really. I mean when we were in Manchester, what my father had done, we had the surgery in the house, in the basement, and he converted a couple of the rooms into bedrooms so there were bunkbeds. When there was bombing in Manchester we would go downstairs into the basement and have all the facilities there. Obviously very well thought out! But we went to Leeds and it was really very nice cos we were all very attached to my grandma, and she had one unmarried daughter, that's right she was going off to train to be a teacher and her sons, my uncles, one was in the Merchant Navy and one was in the RAF. So to that extent there were family members who were involved in the war, and I think my uncle who was in the Merchant Navy was in a very dangerous situation cos many of the ships were actually bombed, but everybody survived.

CP: That's quite remarkable

BC: Yes, fortunately. And my mother decided to, we stayed with grandma, she thought this really wasn't very sensible so she actually bought a house and we moved and I think I probably had a very happy childhood, it was a very welcoming community

CP: In Leeds you mean

BC: In Leeds, I mean not only the Jewish community, we had lots of friends, it was a busy normal child's life I suppose. And Dad came out of the army and it was very difficult to get a practice because people who were coming back from the war, were all, a lot of them already had contacts within different cities. So this was when the National Health Service started and my father decided he'd come back to London and so we ended up in Brixton which was a very interesting period of time particularly for my father who was a South African suddenly finding he had all these new patients which he coped with, I mean why not, he'd always been a very open-minded man

CP: You're talking about Jamaican immigrants, the 1950s...

BC: Yes, it was the Windrush time, and a lot of them came to Brixton. And we lived, with the practice, for quite some time

CP: In your house?

BC: In our house. The basement was dentistry, the ground floor was doctor, and first and second floor was where we lived.

CP: It was quite common in those days? To have the surgery in the house.

BC: It was. Very often the doctors had been dispensing the medicines as well and one obviously didn't always go to a chemist

CP: Did that change with the NHS then?

BC: I think, I don't know what the history of that is but funnily enough I know where the chemist was in relation to the surgery. But that was the day when patients just used to come to the surgery and sit and wait until they could go in and see the doctor. They would all just sit there as long as....and my dad used to do all these visits and as a family we really didn't sit down to have evening meals except once a week and that was Friday night when we always sat down together, however late it

was we would wait for my dad. But there was evening surgery which would go on until 9, 10 o'clock at night and he'd do visits, I mean it was a single-handed practice (*possible clip? 10 minutes in*)

CP: He really had no help

BC: No, mother answered the phone, no mobile phones, not quite sure how it happened, she used to have half a day a week, which was Thursday afternoon

CP: That was her time to help do you mean?

BC: I think he just used to shut shop and there'd be a notice on the door saying surgery closed, reopen Friday morning, he always had Thursday afternoon

CP: And did he have surgery at the weekends or not?

BC: Certainly Saturday, oh yes, yes, Sundays no. Sunday was a day when, that was family time. So there we were

CP: What was it like for you? You would have been about 12 then, when you went to Brixton, and you were the youngest of the three children

BC: Yes, my sister stayed in Leeds to take her school certificate and my brother and I came and went to school in London. I went to St Martin in the Fields Grammar School which was in West Norwood which has a contact with the church at Trafalgar Square and every year we used to go for a service all dressed in our clean uniform, it was really quite fun. My brother went to Archbishop Tennyson School which overlooked the Oval Cricket Ground and in those days my brother and I were very keen on cricket and on rugby because we moved from Brixton, we then went to Herne Hill which is not very far away and we used to go to rugby matches and support the London Welsh because that was the nearest rugby team. But school, oh it was fine, I was not a very good pupil, I thoroughly enjoyed myself, I was very sporty and did my O levels and then I left and I did my A levels at another school

CP: In Brixton?

BC: No, I went to Queen's College in Harley Street which was a private school

CP: So things had picked up financially?

BC: Financially things were better. And then I decided I was going to be a teacher so I got into Goldsmith's College which is part of the University of London and in those days it was a 2 year course. So I did my teacher training and then I met my future husband

CP: How did you meet Harold?

BC: I met him through my sister and she'd made an evening for some friends and my husband to be was supposed to be meeting another woman who didn't come and I'd been staying at my sister's, I think I'd been babysitting for them and this man said can I take you home because I was still living over south of the river and I said thank you very much and he said can I take you out? So that was that! So I finished my teaching because my mother had very strong views that women had to be able to earn their own living. So I finished college on Friday and I got married on Monday.

CP: Really? So you hadn't known Harold that long?

BC: Yes. Well we went out three times and then he proposed. The first time he took me to a performance of Under Milk Wood, the second time he took me out for dinner and the third time he took me to a Marx Brothers film. And he said to me later that if I hadn't laughed that he wasn't going to propose!

CP: So your sense of humour was being tested!

BC: Absolutely, cos he had a great sense of humour

CP: Wonderful. And you were married

BC: Nearly 54 years. But I had seen him at a party at my parents' silver wedding. He'd come with his sister and his brother in law, and his brother in law and my father had been in the army together, so there was a link already. And apparently I'd said to my aunt, that's the man I'm going to marry

CP: Really?

BC: He'd never even spoken to me and I'd seen him in this room, very funny. Anyway it worked, it worked,

CP: It's interesting you met him through your sister and your mother had met your father through her sister

BC: Very interesting actually. Well I actually met him really through my parents but the proper meeting him was really through my sister because he had, he was in his thirties, unmarried, and I think they felt it was time he got married, so he ended up with me

CP: And his birthday is the same day as your mother's

BC: we had four birthdays on the same day, my mother, and my husband and my sister and two of her children all on the 14<sup>th</sup> of January, very strange

CP: Yeah it is. So going back to your childhood again, Jewish experience in all the different places you lived in must have been different

BC: Well when we lived in Lancashire there was virtually nothing Jewish. I mean I think my mother had organised for the kosher meat to be put on the train in Manchester and she would meet the train and then we'd have kosher meat but in terms of going to synagogue or anything there was nothing. Then when we went to Leeds I was so ignorant, I mean I didn't know Hebrew at all, couldn't read it, so I was enrolled in Hebrew Classes which were a riot, an absolute riot

CP: In a good way?

BC: No we were horrible!

CP: Literally a riot

BC: But then I used to go very regularly to synagogue and of course I learnt to read Hebrew and we became much more observant. My sister joined a Jewish youth group, I was too young and that was, she belonged to [Bnei Akivah](#), I don't think we had BA at my age, maybe we did?

CP: Your brother was still at boarding school?

BC: My brother was still at boarding school, yes, and then when he came back he used to have intensive lessons because he'd missed out on his Jewish education and this lovely chap used to come and give him private Hebrew lessons. Because he had his [barmitzvah](#) in Leeds.

CP: Ok, so there was more of a Jewish community

BC: There was a very active Jewish community and my mother's younger sister married a chap who'd been a prisoner of war of the Japanese and I remember my sister and I were bridesmaids only I wasn't, I was sick, I never got to be a bridesmaid

CP: Oh shame, were you quite young at the time?

BC: Well it would have been about 194....I think dad was back, must have been about 1947

CP: Ok, you must have been so disappointed!

BC: Heartbroken!

CP: Yes, I can imagine, at that age, girls, little girls want to be bridesmaids

BC: Dreadful, dreadful thing, my one and only opportunity. Anyway, one of those things. But the Jewish community was very vibrant. Quite interesting looking back because card playing was a very sort of common social event. They used to go off and play cards, they'd play bridge or solo, I remember my grandma'd play solo

CP: I don't know that one, solo

BC: I don't know even know how to...I've only ever heard of it. I think that was that generation that played games like that. And I know my father was one of six and one of his brothers came to stay with us and he taught me to play [clobyosh](#), I was absolutely addicted to this game, I couldn't get home from school fast enough to play with Uncle Louis! And actually it's become quite popular now but I couldn't tell you how to play it, it's so many years since I played. We used to play for shells.

CP: I was just reading about that game yesterday because someone else mentioned it. I interviewed him and then I thought how do you spell that and I started looking it up. So I have heard of it but just since yesterday.

BC: It might be worth looking and seeing what it was cos I was addicted. But we lived near beautiful parks, lovely open spaces. The winters were very cold and we used to go with our sledges, we used to go to a place called Hill 60 and slide down, all wrapped up. We used to have street parties, November 5<sup>th</sup> we'd have a bonfire in a little close and we always had parkin which is like gingerbread, common to Lancashire and Yorkshire, and hot soup. And when I had my own children, I didn't make the ginger thing but we always had hot soup after they'd been to a firework display. So we had sort of a ritual if you like.

CP: And so it really doesn't sound like the war impacted you necessarily at all, as you've got all these happy memories

BC: Extraordinary when I look back. And actually not long ago I said to my sister did you miss dad and she said no! And I said neither did I. So I actually think that's a credit to my mother that we weren't pining for this man. I can remember so clearly when he came home, he must have got home at night time and we were all in bed and he kissed me. My father had a moustache and I can still sort of feel the tickle of his moustache. Next morning when I got up he gave me a banana to take to school. So I tucked it in my tunic pocket and off we went to school. And it came to break time, I'd brought out this brown, squashed thing which I threw away, would you believe it? And that was, who'd seen bananas, that was, cos we'd had to queue, the word would go round, the co-op's got oranges so we'd all make a beeline and queue I mean it was

CP: Coupon, I mean rationing

BC: Absolutely, I mean rationing was really quite difficult and I remember I was quite anaemic and it was very difficult to get food which was not on the black market

CP: Really, and what about getting kosher food, was that even harder?

BC: There was a kosher butcher but we only got the ration, obviously we didn't get anything extra. But I don't think we felt deprived, I mean sweets were rationed and one terrible day I lost my sweet coupon

CP: Oh no

BC: I had to go without because nobody would give me theirs, because I wouldn't have given them my sweet coupons either!

CP: It sounds like your mum was a very strong person, you said she was ill but also she kind of instilled this ethic, this work ethic and about women standing on their own two feet

BC: Absolutely

CP: And did she get that from her mother because her mother had been left a widow

BC: I think it was because my grandmother was so dependent that it made her just the opposite, she was incredibly independent and we were brought up as girls to be independent, you are not to be dependent on your husbands for your living, I mean it was and you've got the vote, you use it! I mean she, these were sort of things instilled in us from a very early age. And she was, she was a tough lady and she died at 87 with her heart probably, we laughed about that. I think she suffered from over-doctoring, it can happen, oh yes. But she was a tough cookie.

CP: And had she had a sort of orthodox, United sort of synagogue upbringing?

BC: I don't know, I don't think their Hebrew education was much, I mean I suppose they went for High Holydays and they kept a kosher home. I'm not sure that my mother could actually read Hebrew, never asked her(?)

CP: What about your father?

BC: My father was yes, I mean he was brought up in a very Jewish home where, I mean he spoke [Yiddish](#) quite fluently and my mother spoke not a word of Yiddish so it really was quite funny that this was South African Jews. I mean his father would have come from Lithuania where a lot of South African Jews came from and he was a very educated man. When he went to South Africa he opened a printing business and my grandfather in Leeds, he owned a clothing factory, and they closed on Friday afternoon. They kept [Shabbat](#) which was quite interesting. So there was, it was an acknowledgement and the degree of practice but without the knowledge I suppose

CP: From your mum's point of view do you mean?

BC: I mean what I think she managed to do, she made sure we all had a good Jewish education. So maybe where she missed out, we had it.

CP: So it was important to her and obviously to your father too

BC: Yes so [Seder](#) nights were very important to all of us and very big family gatherings. Yes and my mother used to change the dishes, she did all the right things

CP: Did she change over so you had a completely different set of crockery and cutlery and pans, and milk and meat separately as well I expect and the spring cleaning that goes along with all of that?

BC: That's a dirty word! Oh dear!

CP: So you were involved in that?

BC: Yes, I mean it was part and parcel of my childhood, you know, getting ready, laying the table, making sure the candles and the [Challah](#) were there and when we'd all, we used to [bench](#) because the three of us had all gone to religious camps in our youth movements, we used to bench and so it was something I did with my own children, I don't see it being continued now but we used to bench on a Friday night and Saturday lunchtime very often so these were things which were normal. I didn't see them as out of the ordinary.

CP: And at school did you encounter any sort of issues around that or were they

BC: I did in Leeds, I mean how, it would have been about the time of the establishment of the, I'm trying to think which months, State of Israel,

CP: In May?

BC: May, that was 1948. We moved in August I think it was. So I was still at school and I can still hear two girls saying to me why don't you go back to Israel? And she really didn't know what she was talking about, she really didn't know. The School I went to had a quota for Jewish children and when my sister and I went for our interviews, we got in. Our surname was not a Jewish name, our surname was Smithson. Would you like to know how we came to be Smithson?

CP: I was just thinking that and hoping you were going to tell me

BC: My father's family name was Schmulian.

CP: Can you spell that for me if you can?

BC: Schmulian. And there was a lot of suspicion around foreign names. So when my father decided to get married he went with my uncle to change his name and they decided Smith was too common so they put Smithson, so that's how he became Smithson, he came home and he said to my mother I've changed my name, I'm no longer Schmulian, I'm now Smithson.

CP: So how did she feel about that

BC: I don't think she had any choice, she wasn't exactly enamoured, if you're going to change your name you could have done with something maybe a little more enterprising, anyway. So they ended up going from Schmulian to Smithson and my father's family was very angry

CP: Oh really

BC: Because they all remained, even the men, remained Schmulian

CP: They wanted to retain that symbol of Judaism

BC: Yes. And one of my father's brothers came over and settled as a GP near Newcastle and he was still Schmulian.

CP: Really?

BC: Yes and I have cousins who are still Schmulian.

CP: Interesting. Well I guess some people felt differently about it, they felt that being in England, it was important to fit in

BC: I think so. When I was at St Martins I think there was just one other Jewish girl. At Queen's there were Jewish girls. At college I only met one other Jewish person.

CP: Do you think that was one other person who admitted to being Jewish?

BC: It really was very strange, I wasn't used to a Jewish world. I mean where we lived wasn't Jewish, I mean there was Brixton synagogue which was where I was married

CP: Oh really?

BC: Yes, it's where we were married, and my aspiration was to live north of the Thames, it was a disjointed community I think, very snobbish

CP: What, the Jewish community in Brixton was snobbish?

BC: Very snobbish

CP: What kind of an area was it then, wasn't it .....

BC: Some of it was very affluent, very, yes. There was a lovely, lovely Rabbi who became a [dayan](#) and I'm very good friends with his daughter.

CP: Really, yes, wonderful that you've kept that connection

BC: Yes, she's a very special person and we have this link from her father which for us was a very joyous occasion and she had been in the camps, she'd had a very, very difficult childhood. So we've really got a very special link through her to our past which we keep going today.

CP: So it was her father that married you.

BC: Yes.

CP: And so was he in the camps too?

BC: He was, they came through Poland, he was in Australia and this girl and her mother were of a group of Jews who were to be used as hostages and she survived.

CP: Goodness, hostages in what

BC: To be used in exchanges or something, quite extraordinary

CP: You're talking about during the war?

BC: Yes

CP: I didn't know that, that they were used as hostages

BC: Very strange, very strange

CP: Oh that's another story, isn't it?

BC: Her story is much more interesting than mine

CP: But this is fascinating, I'm loving your story, it's great! So when you were in Brixton as we were talking about before, and there was this influx of Jamaican immigrants, so how did it change the area? And also, there was this affluent Jewish community and there was this Caribbean community that was coming and looking for work, presumably looking for a better life

BC: It didn't impinge on me because actually I used to come to North West London, my parents had very good friends who were very good to me so that I had friends in North London or North West London so my social life was not from school because there were no Jewish children at all, no Jewish girls, and I suppose then I went to Jewish study group and then I got my friends from then which I still have today, this is how you keep things going.



CP: A network...

BC: Very much, I mean it's not a new thing, this networking. People tend to think it's a new phrase but not at all.

CP: No, it's just a word for it

BC: It is, and I kept contact with one particular friend from my time up in Yorkshire and eventually she moved a couple of times, we went to stay there and eventually they came to live very near by. And our friendship is now coming up to 70 years

CP: That's amazing, how wonderful

BC: It is, she's a very, very good friend very special

CP: So you've got friends in all parts

BC: Different places

CP: From all parts of your life. OK, can we talk a little bit about SAMS and what brought you to SAMS?

BC: Why did we come to SAMS? Well it started out with my younger daughter who had been living in Israel and she and her husband decided to return to the UK

CP: This is Jo and Andy

BC: Jo and Andy. And they'd done their research very carefully cos they were looking for good schools, property that they could afford to buy because they were living on a **yeshuv** (?moshav ?add to glossary) in Israel so they had a house to sell. And through a friend who recommended St Albans so she and, Jo and Andy moved with their 3 children, got the children into school

CP: 2002 I think

BC: Something like that, and then their middle son, oh no the children had their, Maya had her batmitzvah, we thought it was all very strange because women were reading from the [Sefer Torah](#) very strange, particularly for my husband who was a traditionalist.

CP: So you both, well he grew up in the United Synagogue

BC: He grew up in the orthodox background, his father died when he was 7 and his mother who was, bless her, she was a very superstitious lady, but my husband went to [Yeshiva](#)

CP: Really?

BC: He was very well versed in things Jewish, much more than I

CP: So it was peculiar

BC: Very odd. But we went and then my husband became physically less able to walk to our local synagogue and rather foolishly he asked the Rabbi I have a problem because I can't walk and at one stage I used to drive and park around the corner and he could walk but then that also became too much.

CP: Because usually....

BC: We don't drive to synagogue and that was it. And it was uncomfortable and I could sense he wasn't happy and we were, we went shopping to London Colney in, just outside St Albans and we

met a couple who I'd known for many, many years, we met Eileen and David Fox. Years ago our sons went to prep school together when they were four years old! So when we started to go to the one which was at the Quaker Meeting House, David said why don't you join SAMS? They're such a lovely community and I'm sure you'll feel more comfortable.

CP: And you wouldn't have felt bad about driving there because it's a different set-up, and going towards egalitarianism

BC: Totally different, exactly and I could sit next to my husband which was even more important because he needed help. Now we had, my boys had joined the [Masorti](#) community in Finchley so, but theirs was still a very traditional service, the men and women still sat separately but the boys were there to look after my husband. And you could still drive. So there was already, we were beginning to change. And then we started to go regularly to St Albans because we could park the car, we had a disabled badge, all we had to do was cross the road and so that was really

CP: And your daughter was there

BC: And Jo was there, she didn't bother to go always, we would just go the two of us which was fine. So I have had to keep my membership of the orthodox community because I have burial rights which are infinitely cheaper than anywhere else, having been a member of the United Synagogue for over 50 years, that's what happens, your fees are reduced considerably.

CP: Sort of an insurance policy for burial, all of that

BC: It is, but I love going to the Masorti, I go sometimes I go to the one in East End Road where my younger son, his wife is a [Shamash](#) there and my son and grandson take part in the service, really they're very immersed in it. My elder son and his wife go there as and when, I mean not just for High Holydays

CP: And their children were all bar and bat mitzvah?

BC: Yes, I've been to, we have the last one coming up in December

CP: That's the youngest of your grandchildren is it? This is one of David's sons

BC: That's David's, he's going to be 13 in December

CP: Goodness

BC: So we've been to 2 batmitzvahs and 3 barmitzvahs in East End Road and another one to come. So...

CP: And at SAMS?

BC: At SAMS we've had Jo's children have all been there, yes, the three of them have. So it's been, seeing them go through the different stages, be part of the youth movement, taking part in things and my son in law who does security which I think is amazing and taking part in communal life which I never thought they would

CP: It's a very different atmosphere at SAMS though from any United Synagogue that I've ever been to as well, I mean can you explain for those who don't know what the differences would be in the service, apart from the fact you said that you could sit next to your husband, men and women sit together at SAMS cos its totally egalitarian, so

BC: Well, I suppose the main difference is that, what I noticed principally, is the decorum which is quite interesting, is how much better behaved the congregation is in the Masorti than it ever is in

[www.e-sams.org](http://www.e-sams.org)

the United Synagogue and I cannot explain why but there's a lot of chit chat. There's a lot more emphasis on your appearance, particularly for women, I think, women cover their heads whereas in the Masorti you can if you want and if you don't it's up to you as an individual to decide. There's a degree of informality but at the same time the Masorti is doing everything in the traditional way. In some of the Masorti the women will take the lead in the service or participate on an even level, sometimes there are more women than men and women can be part of the quorum for praying. In a United or religious community you have to have ten men whereas we can say, well a woman can be part of the number for ten to start the service. There are minor differences in repeating part of the prayers but really and truly there isn't that much difference. It's just something to do with the atmosphere and the, I think the level of interpretation is probably different

CP: In that, it might be more academic in the United?

BC: It depends on the Rabbi I suppose, I mean some of it is very intellectual, but I think part of the United Synagogue is struggling to find the medium which is sufficiently attractive to keep members, I think this is why the Masorti movement is very popular because they are, they're not inward looking, that's what I think I'm saying

CP: It's more accessible, the services

BC: It's more accessible and tolerant whereas the other, these are the rules, you live by the rules, there is no, you cannot, can't be flexible. And yet I could give you an instance where flexibility absolutely astonished me as a member of an orthodox community, when my American sister in law died, now my husband wasn't well and I phoned up the Rabbi of the orthodox community and I said to him, look we have a problem, Harold can't sit for 7 days mourning, his sister, this is just not practical, he is sick and I think we can only do one night. And he said to me, that is no problem. And I was really, I said to him are you sure because if not I will find...No no he said, the trouble is people assume we're inflexible but they don't ask. So maybe there is a degree of flexibility but I was truly shocked.

CP: Because I think the perception is largely that there is a sort of big gap between you know, the clergy and the management and the, you know and of course there is a division between men and women so some women can feel like they're not part of it at all whereas in the Masorti community, in SAMS, a lot of people have commented on the closeness of the community and how everyone feels welcome and integrated and part of it. But as you said, with the service being largely very traditional, so would you say that was accurate of the community?

BC: The SAMS community is exceptional because it's small. Now what has happened is the popularity of the community in East End Road, it is just growing so much, and my daughter in law who goes there says it's losing something, it's losing its intimacy cos there are so many people, you go there on an ordinary Saturday morning, you have about 5 or 600 people, that's normal

CP: Really? And that's in the main service

BC: Yes and then they have other services so you can, really and truly there are vast numbers, it's very attractive, a very charismatic Rabbi so it attracts people, it's also a very intelligent community, there's no talking down to people, you go, and you are educated. Having sat through a few of those sermons but you always come out with something which is meaningful. It's not a pedestrian type of, I've got to give a [droscha](#) and I've got to say something. Whereas I think the orthodox tend to, they always obviously take it from what we've read in the service and relate it back but it's, I don't know, it lacks some sort of humanity, maybe that's what it is, it brings it related to where we are in the present day with these people who are sitting here, it is, I hadn't really thought about that but I

think that's what it is. I mean SAMS is, it is lovely, I mean you just feel warm and welcome, it doesn't matter I mean, who you're going with. You know one of the things I do like is the fact that there are people who don't have Jewish partners so they're still welcome. And it does make a difference.

CP: It does make a huge difference

BC: Because if you alienate one, you've alienated a whole family and you've lost them. And I can see that it can create problems but better to open the door than shut it.

CP: Exactly. Well, I can attest to that.

BC: Well I do feel quite strongly about that, it's not because I can see what's happening in my own family, there are things beyond my control which is a good job I suppose, I don't think I'm a control freak or maybe I am but it is something which is very unusual

CP: Well I mean the ethos of welcoming everybody and encouraging those who have non Jewish partners as well, it creates a place where non Jewish people feel part of it, don't feel disconnected from it, so whatever part they can have in it, they will and that is important

BC: Yes, well exactly, you don't have to be a fully fledged Jew in order to participate, there are things that you can take from it, that you can value as well as enjoy, I mean I think that's, it's quite difficult to get that combination if you think about it

CP: I haven't seen it anywhere else but then I haven't been looking

BC: Well who would want to convert to Judaism anyway?!

CP: Well, maybe on that note I think we are probably out of time now, thank you very much.

[Interview ends]