

## Gerry & Alan Memories - 3/15/2025 <sup>1</sup>



[00:00:00] **Rusty:** So, we're here in Cape Cod to celebrate Gerry's 80th birthday. All together as a family. We've got some people here gathered around the table at this beautiful party house to talk about whatever we want to talk about for this recording. We've got Gerry, we've got Alan, we've got Ruby and we've got Rusty and a little audience.

[00:00:29] **Gerry:** Well, Rusty, thank you for inviting me to this event and setting up for it. I see this weekend's event as an important family gathering of the Stahl family.

[00:00:48] We wanted to talk about our history as a family and as individuals. So, Alan and I will provide the basic information. And we have one seat here for everybody to rotate, so different people can take their turns in making their contributions.

[00:01:17] And Rusty is facilitating as a professional podcaster, with his equipment.

[00:01:28] So, one of the things that I remember from when I was a boy was my grandfather on my mother's side. Her parents, Nate, Nathan Miller.

[00:01:49] **Alan:** Zayde Nate.

[00:01:51] **Gerry:** Zayde, exactly. One of our Zaydes, yes. He was a very interesting character. I think he influenced our lives considerably, as a grandfather should.

[00:02:12] And, one of the things that he did. When he was 80 years old and had retired to Florida.

[00:02:22] And had an early version of this recording machine, one of the first available recording machines, tape recorders, that individuals could have. He got a tape recorder. On television at that time was a very popular show called *This Is Your Life*, where they had somebody of sufficient age come on the show as a guest and they said, "This is your life Mr. So-and-so or Mrs. So-and-so." And they brought in people from the person's earlier life, often someone they hadn't seen for decades, and so on. And anyway, the show was about their life. And my grandfather was especially interested in his life, which was an interesting life to me, too. And he recorded these sessions himself that were based on the show, *This Is Your Life*.

[00:03:36] Unfortunately, those recordings, that were kept by his daughters for some years, disappeared at some point. And unfortunately, I was never able to listen to them. But we're trying to do that now with modern technology, which will never be lost, because Rusty will probably put it on his website and so on, for the world to know.

[00:04:06] So anyway, my grandfather came over from Poland, a part of Poland that alternated between Russia and Poland. And he came to the United States in 1904, I think, before the 1905 revolution. The 1905 revolution in Russia was not the big Russian revolution of 1914, but was a preliminary attempt at it, the Menshevik, I guess. The Menshevik revolution, rather than the Bolshevik revolution.

[00:04:49] But, at any rate, they were revolting against the Tzar of Russia who was, I guess nowadays we'd call him an oligarch and very anti-Semitic for one thing, very anti-Semitic. So, they used to have these, what they called the pogroms, where the

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<sup>1</sup> This is a transcript from a tape-recorded discussion at a Stahl family reunion in celebration of Gerry's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. The transcript has been lightly edited for readability. You can view the original transcript synced to the audio at the following link: <https://share.descript.com/view/jVhN0SrDtOo>.

army, the Russian army, would come in and pretty much slaughter Jewish towns. He lived in a little town called Aradok,

[00:05:26] **Alan:** Araduk.

[00:05:28] **Gerry:** ... outside of ...

[00:05:33] **Alan:** Bialystok.

[00:05:34] **Gerry:** Yes.

[00:05:36] **Alan:** Between the two of us....

[00:05:37] **Gerry:** I brought my historian along. So, our grandfather was part of the resistance. He was a revolutionary organizer for the anti-Tzar force, which became the revolution of 1905. And the story that we heard when we were, when Alan and I were young, was how he had, this is the story I thought of how he met his future wife, our Bubby, Minnie,



Nathan Miller (right) with his sons-in-law, Clarence (with Paul) and Ben (with infant Gerry).

[00:06:16] He was circulating literature, anti-Tzar literature, in the countryside, and the Russian, police, I guess, were on his tail, chasing him, and so he ran over, across the fields of Russia and of Poland, and jumped a fence and tore his pants.

[00:06:50] And he was afraid that the police had seen him tear his pants and when they caught somebody who had torn pants, they would deal with him as a, as an illegal propagandist. So, he stopped in this farmhouse where this young lady was talented as a seamstress, and she repaired his pants for him. And then he went on his way safely and decided to get out of town and came over to Chicago, where this young lady also came over to Chicago at about the same time with her family.

[00:07:38] And, we actually have a photo of her and her mother and him settled in Chicago. So, that was the story that I know of his early life. And he maintained his political interest throughout his life. He read the leftist, Yiddish newspaper, the Vorwarts. And, he commissioned a copper engraving picture of Karl Marx with his principles, which I have now, across the street in the basement, hanging up. I think Rusty and Zake are fighting over who will inherit that when I'm finished with it, to keep the tradition of the family.

[00:08:47] **Alan:** I can, maybe I add a couple ....

[00:08:49] **Gerry:** Yes, please.

[00:08:51] **Alan:** He would be considered probably an undocumented immigrant. Immigrant, because the requirement for getting into the country was to have five dollars to show at Ellis Island. He somehow got onto the boat, but didn't have enough, but he managed to borrow it from someone on the boat. So that's how he got into the country. And he came to Chicago where Minnie was living in a three story house, with, I guess, her two brothers on the upper two floors. There were three families, one sibling on each floor, but I don't remember if she had two brothers or a brother and a sister.

[00:09:39] And they opened a rug and carpet cleaning company called American Rug and Carpet Cleaning, and that was his profession.

[00:09:52] **Gerry:** The three families did it.

[00:09:53] **Alan:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[00:09:55] **Rusty:** So, did you ever hear anything about the journey over?

[00:09:59] **Gerry:** No, when they ran the rug company, it was called the American Rug Company. Zayde, who I actually called "New-Natan." His name was Nathan, which in Yiddish would be Natan. And his wife always said to him, "Nu Natan?" -- which in Yiddish means "What's up Nathan?"

[00:10:36] But I was a young guy and I didn't really know the language, so I thought his name was Nunatan. And that's how I

thought of him, or knew him, or called him. One of his roles in the rug company was advertising. So, they did a lot of radio advertising, became quite well known across Chicago for rug cleaning. And he would write, script these ads -- comic ads -- and he would, I think, perform them.

[00:11:15] So they would be little, I don't know, little skits, related to or ending up with, that you should bring your rugs to the American Rug Cleaning Company.

[00:11:28] **Alan:** They also made a premium for their best customers, which was a bread knife with “American Rug and Carpet” written on the handle. And our mother swore that was the only decent bread knife that was ever made.

[00:11:42] **Gerry:** And I continue that tradition. I have it.

[00:11:45] **Alan:** *Still* have it?

[00:11:46] **Gerry:** Across the street. I have one of those. It doesn't anymore say “American Rug Cleaner.” That was rubbed off long ago, but it still works, still cuts challah or whatever.

[00:12:01] **Rusty:** Ruby, do you have any questions so far?

[00:12:06] **Alan:** This would be your great-grandfather. No, your great-great-grandfather.

[00:12:12] **Rusty:** Great-grandfather.

[00:12:14] **Ruby:** No. I ....

[00:12:23] **Rusty:** And so, when you were born, were you born in Chicago? No, you weren't born in Chicago, but you were there as a baby because we have pictures of ....

[00:12:30] **Gerry:** We often went there, especially during Christmas vacation, and I remember, running around the rug factory ....

[00:12:40] **Rusty:** Oh, really?

[00:12:41] **Gerry:** .... when it wasn't in operation, just to play. And it was two floors. On the top floor, they cleaned the rugs and then they had some kind of chute or something to have the rugs come down and be, you know, cleaned, put available for pickup and so on.

[00:13:02] **Rusty:** And so the rug company was right next door to the house, or it was part of it?

[00:13:06] **Gerry:** Next door to the house, yeah. It was a red brick, factory building for cleaning rugs.

[00:13:12] **Alan:** On Chicago Avenue.

[00:13:15] **Rusty:** Right.

[00:13:15] **Alan:** On the near north side, I think.

[00:13:17] **Gerry:** Rusty, didn't you go there and look?

[00:13:19] **Rusty:** I've gone, and seen the house, I think once or twice, and it still looks kind of the same as the pictures in the “Stoop” book. So that's kind of how I think of it. But I think if you're facing the house was the rug factory on the left or the right?

[00:13:39] **Gerry:** On the left.



Nate & Minnie on left, her mother in front.

[00:13:40] **Rusty:** So, I think that's a vacant lot as I remember.

[00:13:44] You want to go ahead, Ruby, what do you want to say?

[00:13:48] **Ruby:** I would like to have a joke break.

[00:13:51] **Rusty:** Oh, a joke break, kind of like maybe a radio.

[00:13:54] **Ruby:** That does

[00:13:56] **Rusty:** Okay, let me figure out, which one was that, Ruby?

[00:13:59] **Ruby:** The blue one.

[00:14:01] **Rusty:** Okay.

[00:14:02] **Gerry:** Tell the joke.

[00:14:04] **Rusty:** But let someone try to answer it before you tell the punchline.

[00:14:09] **Ruby:** Why do some football players never sweat? Because of all the fans.

[00:14:16] **Gerry:** Oh,

[00:14:17] **Alan:** But you gave it away! We were supposed to guess the answer.

[00:14:21] **Rusty:** Do another one.

[00:14:22] Do another one and don't give us the answer.

[00:14:35] Don't do a sport one, though, because those are not a...

[00:14:37] **Alan:** Yeah. That's not a Stahl area of expertise.

[00:14:42] **Ruby:** Why did the invisible man quit the job?

[00:14:48] **Alan:** Carol, do you have the answer? So we can see the end. No.

[00:14:52] **Ruby:** No, he couldn't see himself doing it.

[00:15:03] **Gerry:** All right.

[00:15:04] **Rusty:** So, what about you, Alan? What do you remember about anything you would add to the story so far from your perspective or from what you know?

[00:15:13] **Alan:** Gerry was two and a half years older, still is. So, he remembers better the layout of things then. I remember Bubby wearing a fur coat, a black Persian lamb fur coat. That's my biggest memory of her. Standing probably in front, posing for a picture.

[00:15:37] **Gerry:** She was an interesting person as well. For one, what I remember is that she was an excellent cook, like both of my grandmothers were excellent and kept a lot of the cooking tradition of the old country. But she was also an activist, and she especially supported the City of Hope.

[00:16:09] **Alan:** March of Dimes, which I think was for the City of Hope. Maybe City of Hope. Yeah, I guess City of Hope.



[00:16:16] **Gerry:** She was on one of their boards.

[00:16:21] **Alan:** Actually, she was better educated than he. He spoke Yiddish almost entirely, and then learned English when he came over to America, to the point of every day reading the New York Times. But on the other hand, she knew Polish and Russian, which he had never learned.

[00:16:40] **Gerry:** When I learned German, and then we went to visit them after I had had a semester of German in high school, I tried to make it sound like Yiddish, like I was saying something in Yiddish. And he immediately said, Oh, that's German, not Yiddish. And then he explained to me that he knew lots of languages, despite some opinions.

[00:17:13] He knew Russian, German, Polish.... And "Henglish da best." And he spoke English to us.

[00:17:32] **Alan:** Yeah, no, he spoke English....

[00:17:34] **Gerry:** .... with a strong accent.

[00:17:36] **Rusty:** What about (the other) side? You want to, so that was your mom, that's Evelyn Stahl, Miller Stahl's side, your maternal, the Miller. So that was Nathan and Minnie Miller.

[00:17:50] **Alan:** It had been Milindovich and was changed at Ellis Island to Miller.

[00:17:55] **Rusty:** So they did come into Ellis Island

[00:17:57] **Alan:** I think so. It was changed wherever he came in, but I just suppose it was Ellis Island.

[00:18:04] **Rusty:** We don't know how or why they went to Chicago, do we?

[00:18:07] **Alan:** well, I think Minnie and her family went to Chicago and Nathan came into New York and then made his own way to Chicago as a single person to be with ....

[00:18:18] **Rusty:** Wow.

[00:18:19] **Gerry:** I'm not sure that he knew her before, despite my story.

[00:18:23] **Alan:** Okay, I had never heard that story. I heard the story about the torn pants, but I hadn't known that it was the woman he would eventually marry.

[00:18:30] **Gerry:** Maybe that was just my assumption. It was not true, according to Ruth -- that was made up by somebody, maybe me.

[00:18:39] **Alan:** They had three ....

[00:18:40] **Gerry:** What? In the *Stoop* book. Yeah.

[00:18:44] **Alan:** They had three daughters. The oldest was Ruth, the middle one was Janet, and the youngest was our mother, Evelyn.

[00:18:51] **Rusty:** Right.

[00:18:53] **Gerry:** So, our father's parents,

[00:18:55] **Rusty:** Oh, wait, wait, before you start that it's time for another break with Ruby Stahl. Go ahead, Ruby. What have you got for us?

[00:19:05] **Ruby:** Teacher, what can you tell us about the Dead Sea? Student, I didn't even know it was sick. Time.

[00:19:15] **Rusty:** Thank you, Ruby.

[00:19:17] **Gerry:** So, Ben. Ben's family came from Romania, and Rusty tracked down their landing at Ellis Island or in Philadelphia. Did they land in Philadelphia?

[00:19:31] **Rusty:** I have to look back at the records, but I know they had an address in Philadelphia, I think before Ben was born. He's not listed. So, I think it was before he was born, but I'll look back at the census listing.

[00:19:47] **Gerry:** In my book, in my autobiographical book, I have a lot of those facts. But, yeah, they came on. I don't know if they were already married or not when they came.

[00:20:03] **Alan:** That's Isaac and Anna Stahl.

[00:20:06] **Gerry:** Right.

[00:20:07] **Rusty:** That's my great ....

[00:20:09] **Alan:** Great-grandparents on Ben's side.

[00:20:13] **Rusty:** Was that the original name or was that changed?

[00:20:14] **Alan:** No, Stahl is a Jewish name in Romania, and it's a Gentile name in Germany.

[00:20:23] **Ruby:** Time for another joke break.

[00:20:24] **Alan:** It certainly is.

[00:20:25] **Rusty:** All right. Time for another break with Ruby.

[00:20:32] **Ruby:** Who was Mississippi married to?

[00:20:36] **Gerry:** Mr. Sippy,

[00:20:37] **Ruby:** Yes, correct.

[00:20:38] **Alan:** Hey, got one point!

[00:20:43] **Gerry:** Ben's family owned a furniture repair, and paint and luggage, little storefront in Kensington.

[00:21:03] **Alan:** Right under the El tracks. When you were in their house, the house would shake every time an El train went by.

[00:21:14] **Gerry:** So

[00:21:14] **Rusty:** Was that in front of the house, or did they live above?

[00:21:16] **Alan:** They lived above the storefront.

[00:21:18] **Gerry:** Yeah, and he was, an expert at furniture repair, reupholstery and stuff.

[00:21:25] **Rusty:** Wow. It's amazing. They both were able to establish ...

[00:21:31] **Gerry:** ... small ...

[00:21:31] **Rusty:** businesses like that. I wonder if they had businesses back in ...



[00:21:37] **Gerry:** Yeah, I don't know anything about what any of them did before they came over, what kind of life they lived. We don't know where in Romania they came from.

[00:21:47] **Alan:** Correct. There's the notorious green box where Ben and Evelyn kept all the important documents. And I remember, and it may be a false memory, that they had written down the name of the village in Romania in that green box, but we have lost track of the green box.

[00:22:05] **Rusty:** Right. And that slip of paper.

[00:22:08] **Alan:** That slip of paper. So, our whole heritage. But I gather most Jews from Romania were from Transylvania.

[00:22:19] **Gerry:** Right.

[00:22:20] **Rusty:** So, you remember being in that house too, or the store?

[00:22:23] **Gerry:** Oh yeah.

[00:22:24] **Alan:** Yeah, yeah.

[00:22:25] **Rusty:** Yeah. So that was, that was around when you guys were ...

[00:22:28] **Alan:** Right, right. They died, let's see, ...

[00:22:30] **Gerry:** He died.

[00:22:31] **Alan:** He died early when I was, I think around six. And then she remarried.

[00:22:38] **Gerry:** She had a boyfriend.

[00:22:39] **Alan:** Okay. Whatever. Because there was some contestation over her jewelry after her death. But yeah. Yeah, 'cause I think she was around until I was 10 or 11, something like that.

[00:23:00] **Rusty:** Ruby, do you have any, any questions so far about what's happening?

[00:23:06] **Ruby:** Did you hear about Italy?

[00:23:08] **Gerry:** No, what about Italy?

[00:23:10] **Ruby:** It got Hungary, ate Turkey, went shopping in Iceland, and slipped on Greece, and then got eaten by Wales.

[00:23:22] **Gerry:** Wales? The whales were from Hungary?

[00:23:26] **Rusty:** If anyone wants to, swap out with Ruby?

[00:23:30] **Gerry:** Maybe Nastasja would. She had a lot of questions for us.

[00:23:34] **Ruby:** I choose Nastasja.

[00:23:36] **Rusty:** All right, Nastasja, come on

[00:23:37] **Ruby:** You do the jokes.

[00:23:39] **Rusty:** Here. You can do the jokes too. Okay. So, anything more you can paint the picture of the house shook when the El went by. Where did you say it was? I know it's in ....

[00:23:48] **Alan:** In what is now considered, the poorest section of Philadelphia, Kensington.

[00:23:56] **Rusty:** No, Kensington is now very hip.

[00:23:58] **Alan:** Oh, it's being gentrified. Okay, I'm behind the times then.

[00:24:03] **Rusty:** No.

[00:24:07] **Alan:** Was a solid middle class, I guess solidly Jewish community. I remember they had neon signs in their storefront in Yiddish.

[00:24:17] **Gerry:** Oh, really?

[00:24:18] **Alan:** Yeah.

[00:24:19] **Rusty:** Hmm, do you remember that? The neon?

[00:24:25] **Alan:** And, and they had, I think they had seven children who survived into adulthood, and I think there were a couple others who didn't. And Ben was the youngest. And Ben never really learned Yiddish, and his parents never really learned English, so it was his older sisters who acted as an intermediary between him and his parents.

[00:24:52] **Rusty:** Can you imagine that? So what year was he born? '08? No.

[00:25:00] **Alan:** Now,

[00:25:01] **Rusty:** he died in '98 in his 80s, right? So, he would have been born in the '10s somewhere.

[00:25:07] **Alan:** I think we're out. Let's see. Evelyn was born in 1920, and I think he was about ten years older than she? No, maybe just five years older than she.

[00:25:19] **Gerry:** I don't know, the dates, their dates are in my ....

[00:25:22] **Rusty:** Yeah,

[00:25:23] **Alan:** Look it up.

[00:25:23] **Rusty:** .... book, the companion book recording. Okay. All right, Nastasja, you have any, any questions or thoughts so far from what you've heard?

[00:25:33] **Nastasja:** Yeah, what are your two's relationship with the Yiddish language then? Oh, I have to go closer. Okay. given that there's all this, this cultural exchange and people learn Yiddish and then English, then not, neither of either, and then some of both, what are your guys' end result of all of that kind of assimilation and cultural exchange, your relationship with Yiddish and Hebrew or anything else like that?

[00:26:02] Okay.

[00:26:03] **Gerry:** All I can say is "Oy vey."

[00:26:06] **Alan:** It, this is typical, I think, of immigrants. Yiddish was the language people used, so we wouldn't understand them as we were growing up. I once tried. Evelyn tried to teach me Yiddish once, and that lasted about a week or two, so I picked up a little bit, and then recently we watched a series on television set in Israel, but of a family that spoke mainly Yiddish, and I was surprised at how much I understood between knowing German and, being exposed to how Yiddish was sort of different from German, the transformations, but never read it because it's written in Hebrew letters, so totally unreadable to me.

[00:27:00] **Gerry:** Yeah, I probably studied German, wanted to study German because, partly because it would, it might help me understand Yiddish.



[00:27:12] **Nastasja:** Did it?

[00:27:12] **Gerry:** And, no, well, yeah, I mean, like Alan says, a lot of the vocabulary is the same, it's just pronounced slightly different, and, the sentence structure is the same, so it helped me, I think, I was, I had an advantage in learning German because my brain was already, from my brain's exposure to Yiddish, even though I didn't understand Yiddish, I was exposed to it, and I think the fact that, the verb is always at the end of the sentence in Yiddish and German, which gives a lot of people who are learning German a problem, was not a problem for me. It seemed natural.

[00:27:59] **Alan:** Evelyn traveled a fair amount in Germany when Gerry was a student there, and she always spoke Yiddish to everyone, and they thought she was from some weird valley in Austria, she reported.

[00:28:15] **Rusty:** Oh, so she came and visited you in Germany, or she?

[00:28:18] **Gerry:** She wanted to be there when Zake was born. yeah.

[00:28:24] **Alan:** I think that sort of broke the taboo, there was a taboo among American Jews of going to Germany and having anything to do with Germany. And though they traveled, Ben and Evelyn traveled throughout Europe, they had never been to Germany until, I guess, Zake was born when finally she said, okay, this is,

[00:28:46] **Rusty:** Yeah. Give him a reason to go.

[00:28:49] **Alan:** Yeah.

[00:28:51] **Rusty:** Well, what, what was it like, I mean, skipping forward in your life to go to Germany? Cause you went in the sixties. Can you talk about why you went and what interested you in German philosophy and what was it like to go? Cause that was only, you know, what, 20, 30 years after the World War. I guess it felt like a long time, but now it seems like a short time compared to the distance we have from it.

[00:29:19] **Gerry:** I never really worried about that issue. When I went to Germany, the war, the war had been over since pretty much the day I was born, the year I was born anyway, so I didn't really experience that, and all the anti-German feeling in America. It was more, the feeling was America was, you know, trying to re-establish Germany as a peaceful, democratic place. And I got interested in, I've always been interested in philosophy, and to study philosophy these days is mainly to study the German. and also German, yeah. One of my professors at MIT had spent a year in Germany, the most influential philosophy professor I had, and he had had a German fellowship to go and study.

[00:30:35] So Germany had these exchange fellowships for American students that paid your whole way over for the year there. And I applied for that and got it. And so,

[00:30:52] I went there right after college. And, in between college and going there I got married to your Bubby, Doris. And her mother was not happy that she was going to Germany for that reason. And if her father had still been alive, he would have tried to not allow it at all, but we went anyway.

[00:31:31] Her father had died a couple years before that. And I had a great time. I just loved it. It was a great year there. And, to top off the year, Zake was born. So, it was all around a great year. We traveled a lot during the year, in Europe, including to Israel. Visited Hadar and Dena, and learned a lot of philosophy, which still influences me to this day.

[00:32:08] **Rusty:** You want to say who that influential professor was at MIT and we can go backwards. How'd you end up at MIT studying philosophy?

[00:32:18] **Gerry:** Well, I always liked philosophy, and this guy Sam Todes was his name. He and a buddy of his, Herbert Dreyfus, had both graduated recently from Harvard in philosophy and they were interested in existentialism and phenomenology and German philosophy generally. I think each of them had on separate occasions met with Heidegger in person -- Heidegger being the most famous contemporary philosopher, who I studied as well.

[00:33:07] So, I've always been interested in philosophy and I found while I was at MIT, starting as a major in philosophy,

math and physics, that my interests in math and physics were largely philosophical interests and were not really addressed by studies in mathematics and physics. So, I kind of lost interest or stopped pursuing math and physics while I was there and switched over to philosophy.

[00:33:47] **Rusty:** So, Alan, what do you remember about Gerry in high school? All this math and were you into math and physics and philosophy?

[00:33:57] **Alan:** No, no, not at all. And we went to different high schools. Gerry went to Bensalem High, the local public school in the suburb of Philadelphia that we lived in. And for various reasons, it was decided that I wouldn't be happy there. I wasn't happy in the junior high there. And I think it probably, from today's perspective, would be that there was no way to be gay there, even closeted gay, in that environment.

[00:34:30] So I went to the school that Ben had gone to, Central High in Philadelphia, an all-boys school, and I was very happy there. Although not at all out. Yeah, I just felt much more.... Also, it was an academic school, so no one was sort of anti-intellectual, the way they were, I mean, Gerry stood out at Bensalem as the big intellectual, but for the most part they were just not academically inclined.

[00:35:01] **Rusty:** Hmm. But you, so you went to Central from?

[00:35:06] **Alan:** I did 7th and 8th grade in, in Bensalem, and then Central was a four year school that you started in 9th grade.

[00:35:14] **Rusty:** But did you have to commute?

[00:35:15] **Alan:** Commuted it every day.

[00:35:17] **Rusty:** I never thought about that. You had ....

[00:35:19] **Alan:** And yeah, and it's sort of one of the leitmotifs of my life, is train commuting. I'm now commuting down to Princeton from where we live in Westchester County.

[00:35:31] And being on a train on the way to a school is sort of normal for me.

[00:35:38] **Rusty:** All the way from back then. So, you like a SEPTA train or no SEPTA.

[00:35:43] **Alan:** The Reading, West Trenton local to Reading Terminal at 12th and Market.

[00:35:52] **Rusty:** Okay. So, Reading Terminal was still actually a train shed.

[00:35:56] Wow that's cool. And what was it like to go to different high schools for you two? Did you, was it weird or was it, do you remember, anything about that? Yeah. Why didn't Gerry go to Central? Well, we heard some of it, yeah. What was that Carol?

[00:36:15] Is that what you were asking, Carol?

[00:36:19] **Gerry:** Oh, I don't remember. I'm not sure the option was put to me, or if I just didn't want to. Commuting didn't appeal to me. I don't like commuting. So that's another concept. I mean, in retrospect, by the time I was applying for college, I probably wished I had gone to a better school.

[00:36:52] **Alan:** Well, on the other hand, Central was like 95 percent Jewish, and very few people from Central got into the Ivy Leagues. Whereas from Bensalem, with a name like Stahl, which was sort of neutral, they wouldn't have known. Because in those days, just as now, often they have quotas on Asian students at colleges, in those days, they had quotas of Jewish students.

[00:37:23] **Rusty:** Like to a maximum.

[00:37:25] **Alan:** Right, because the idea was if you didn't do that and you solely took people on the basis of their SAT scores

and the like, you'd end up, in those days, with an all-Jewish college, now an all-East-Asian college.

[00:37:41] **Rusty:** Mm-hmm And you told me, Gerry, I think I remember you saying there was some kind of fellowship or something before you went to MIT in the summer on a math thing or something like that. Am I making that up?

[00:37:55] **Gerry:**

[00:37:56] **Rusty:** It wasn't MIT, but what, what were your extracurriculars?

[00:38:00] **Gerry:** Between, junior and senior years, I went to a, a physics program.

[00:38:09] **Alan:** Tell you right?

[00:38:11] **Gerry:** A physics program, for high school students in Tucson, Arizona. Yeah. So, that was a great experience in physics.

[00:38:26] **Rusty:** Was that your first time in the Southwest?

[00:38:28] **Gerry:** Yeah, I loved it. I fell in love with the desert when I was there. I used to go out walking on the streets at noon, and I'd be the only one crazy enough to be out in the Tucson noonday sun in August.

[00:38:44] But I loved it. They took us on field trips into the desert. And, I took a trip, a bus trip up to the Grand Canyon and Painted Desert, and all. And, I worked with a guy there, as part of the physics program. Who did cosmic ray analysis with a cloud chamber and taking pictures of the rays going through and so on.

[00:39:14] So I did some basic physics research. That was fun!

[00:39:19] My roommate there was from California. And at the end of the summer his family invited me to come back with him and visit, and then we saw the redwoods in California, and they took us up to the Seattle World's Fair, which was going on then, so I got to see it. There I was interested in science.

[00:39:43] And I got to see this exhibit, world-class exhibits of the future of science in the world. They had a computer. I remember one of the exhibits was a computer that could understand spoken language, human language.

[00:40:01] **Rusty:** Wow. Really? What?

[00:40:03] **Gerry:** Very primitive compared, certainly compared to ChatGPT.

[00:40:08] **Rusty:** What do you remember about that World's Fair? Do you remember? So that was one exhibit.

[00:40:13] **Gerry:** They had the monorail, which is still in Seattle, going to the World's Fair site from Center City.

[00:40:19] **Alan:** You had built a computer, right, at home when you were in high school?

[00:40:24] **Gerry:** I did build a little Brainiac.

[00:40:27] **Alan:** Brainiac with all sorts of tubes that lit up and the like.

[00:40:31] **Gerry:** Little lights, yeah.

[00:40:35] **Rusty:** Wow, so you'd already built a computer at that point.

[00:40:37] **Gerry:** Not what you would call a computer now, but it could add numbers, something like that, to basic binary, arithmetic logic.

[00:40:48] **Rusty:** Nastasja, do you have any questions or thoughts at this point?

[00:40:54] **Nastasja:** So, you guys were at different schools and how long, how long was that commute like an hour or two hours?

[00:41:02] **Alan:** Yeah, I guess about an hour or so.

[00:41:05] **Nastasja:** Did you guys feel like you quote unquote had each other's backs during that period of your life? Like, were you close back then? I guess that answers it...

[00:41:17] **Alan:** I suppose that, ...

[00:41:19] **Nastasja:** ... pretty succinctly.

[00:41:20] **Rusty:** Well, did you fight a lot as kids?

[00:41:22] **Alan:** Oh, as little kids we did, but the way little kids fight. But we didn't as high school kids or anything, I don't think.

[00:41:32] **Gerry:** We weren't, we weren't into fighting, generally, but ....

[00:41:36] **Rusty:** Hmm. And Alan, had you already, did you already have an interest in history and stuff at that point, or did that develop later?

[00:41:44] **Alan:** That developed later when I was almost finished with college. I did my junior year abroad, and that's where my interest, I went to France, and that's where my interest in history started. I really had virtually none before that.

[00:42:02] **Rusty:** What, what were your interests before that, do you remember?

[00:42:05] **Alan:** I was a sociology major.

[00:42:07] **Rusty:** okay.

[00:42:09] **Alan:** Actually, at Berkeley, I did what was called a social science field major, where you did some sociology, some anthropology, some psychology, etc. But I was going to go on to graduate school in sociology.

[00:42:23] **Rusty:** Oh, wow.

[00:42:25] **Alan:** And the only thing that stopped that was Vietnam, because when I graduated in 1968, I guess Gerry had a deferment because of Zake.

[00:42:37] If you had a child, you could get a deferment in 1968, but I couldn't get a deferment. So, if I'd gone on to graduate school, I would have been drafted. And so, Ben found me a job in the Philadelphia school system, teaching high school French in South Philly. That kept me out of the draft for four years.

[00:43:02] **Rusty:** You did that for four years.

[00:43:03] **Alan:** But two years at Bach Vocational South Philly and two years at Overbrook High.

[00:43:11] **Rusty:** What was it like teaching French to those kids or working in those schools?

[00:43:17] **Alan:** Impossible.



[00:43:19] **Rusty:** Those are high schools? Yeah.

[00:43:23] **Nastasja:** Yeah, I got a C in French in high school, so the legacy carries on throughout the generations. Was it kind of stressful though, knowing the draft was over your head?

[00:43:34] **Alan:** Terribly stressful. Terribly stressful. I think to all of us, Gerry, you managed to squeak by with deferments, but it, it was ....

[00:43:43] **Gerry:** A whole series of different maneuvers.

[00:43:45] **Alan:** Yeah. Yeah.

[00:43:46] **Nastasja:** What are some of them?

[00:43:49] **Gerry:** Well, they kept changing the rules, is the thing. They needed more and more bodies to send over there. So, first, if you were in college, that was a deferment. And then, I don't really remember all the details, but then like Alan says, having a, having a child was a deferment for a while.

[00:44:23] I guess working in a school in a low-income area was a deferment. So, while Alan was teaching French I tried teaching remedial math at a high school in southwest Philly. Forget the name, begins with a B.

[00:44:51] **Rusty:** Bach? No.

[00:44:52] You were at Bach. Bartram.

[00:44:54] **Gerry:** Bartram.

[00:44:56] **Rusty:** Oh, Carol comes through with that. Okay. Thank you, Carol.

[00:45:00] **Gerry:** I didn't last long there. It was too frustrating, and I didn't have the patience that Alan had.

[00:45:08] **Alan:** There was a difference between the two of us, which became important. Gerry turned 18 when Ben and Evelyn were living in Trevoze, so his draft board was in the suburbs. I turned 18 after they had moved into the city, so my draft board was in South Philly. South Philly had a lot of volunteers because it was sort of right-wing Italian-American, plus a fair number of minority students.

[00:45:37] So there was less pressure for me to, you know, to get a deferment, whereas in the Philadelphia suburbs, no one wanted to go, and so there's more pressure on Gerry.

[00:45:52] **Rusty:** I didn't realize the draft was by ...

[00:45:55] **Alan:** You had a draft ...

[00:45:56] **Rusty:** ... zip code or whatever region.

[00:45:58] **Alan:** ... in whatever place you turned 18.

[00:46:02] **Gerry:** So, the final thing was we went to Germany,

[00:46:11] And I got a notice there to appear for my physical to be drafted into the army, to report in Bensalem Township, like Alan says, at my local draft board. But I had researched what the law was, the draft law, and I knew that they were required to tell me to report someplace close to where I physically was, which would have been Germany, and there were military bases there.

[00:46:46] I'm sure they could have had me report there, but I waited until, you know, the last moment that I was allowed to



respond to this letter. And informed them that they had broken their own rule. And that was it. They had broken their own rule and there was nothing they could say against that. And I don't know if they even wrote me back or not, but that was the end of my draft worries for a number of decades.

[00:47:20] And then at my 50th high school reunion I ran into some of my old buddies who had been drafted instead of me, and they were not in such good shape, even well after the Vietnam War, and so I had thought that, well, you know, my draft board is in a working-class area. There's probably a lot of, you know, volunteers like Alan says, or, people who wouldn't really mind going into the army, and I let them do that.

[00:47:58] I wouldn't worry about it. But then I was confronted by the fact that, in fact, some of the people who got drafted when I avoided it were old buddies of mine and they had, you know, suffered the kind of trauma that stays with them. Which didn't make me feel like I should have joined the army. But, ....

[00:48:28] **Rusty:** But just, you saw what you might have suffered or become if you survived the war, right?

[00:48:36] **Nastasja:** Did something like that happened to you, Alan, when you saw old friends come back?

[00:48:42] **Alan:** No. No, I don't.

[00:48:43] **Nastasja:** Good. Cool.

[00:48:45] **Alan:** I think from Central High, the people I knew there, probably like me figured out ways to keep from getting drafted because they were all, you know, from well-connected middle class families.

[00:48:57] **Rusty:** Mm-hmm.

[00:48:58] **Nastasja:** Hmm.

[00:48:59] **Rusty:** Well, we talked about your grandparents and some of your, stories. But before we wrap up this segment, do you wanna share anything about your parents? Memories of your parents. I know that that may be complicated, but you want to talk about how they came up and some of what they were like?

[00:49:24] **Gerry:** Well, ....

[00:49:28] You know, part of growing up, and I don't know if I should say this in front of my own children, but part of growing up is becoming independent of your parents and not just accepting them in their ways. So, I was very resistant to a lot of my mother's, in particular my mother's, opinions and so on. and things about her, her taste in art and literature and things like that. And more and more, recently I've grown to respect her opinions in those things.

[00:50:32] So, that's one thing I would say.

[00:50:35] **Rusty:** Well, she was not always an easy person to deal a relationship with.

[00:50:43] **Gerry:** I think that was especially true for you.

[00:50:45] **Rusty:** Yeah.

[00:50:46] **Nastasja:** it was.

[00:50:49] **Rusty:** Yeah. But, how about you guys? Do you remember, rebelling? Alan, you had some rebellious moments.



[00:50:59] **Alan:** In truth. as I said, I did my junior year in France. And I got all into medieval art and medieval culture. Actually, because by accident I read on the boat over (those days you took the boat to Europe for your junior year) Henry Adams, *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*, which is a late 19th century view of the Middle Ages that's very over romanticized.



[00:51:30] It's virtually unreadable to me today, but then I took it as my guidebook. And the major thing about it is Chartres, which is a cathedral in France. And I had arranged to meet up with Ben and Evelyn at the end of my year, and we would travel together. And shortly after we met up, we went to Chartres, and I am sure I was obnoxious and unbearable in my enthusiasm for it.

[00:52:05] And Evelyn was very abrupt in her lack of enthusiasm, and actually we didn't travel together for the rest of the summer. We met up again much later, but the plans for traveling together were blasted by that experience.

[00:52:24] **Rusty:** Wow. That's, that's pretty dramatic itself.

[00:52:28] **Alan:** Yeah, yeah.

[00:52:30] **Gerry:** I wonder if Zake wants to, replace Nastasja temporarily.

[00:52:38] **Zake:** Just from a difference in aesthetics was the root of that. Well.

[00:52:45] **Alan:** I mean, I was all caught up in the romanticism of Medieval Christianity, and that was about as far from anything that Evelyn had positive feelings about as possible. Ben and Evelyn were very politically involved. They met at a convention of the Young People's Socialist League. And one of the, you know, their main ties and themes of their life was socialism.

[00:53:16] That is democratic left wing stuff. And so they were always positioning themselves left of just about everyone else, but not communist. This was a period where the most anti-communist people were the socialists. And, to some extent, I think this is something that Evelyn especially held against your mother, because she came from a background which, at least in Evelyn's eyes, was communist.

[00:53:48] **Rusty:** Mm hmm, right.

[00:53:50] **Gerry:** Not just in her eyes.

[00:53:51] **Alan:** Okay, yeah, okay.

[00:53:53] **Rusty:** Her parents.

[00:53:54] **Alan:** But that was what was the most important thing about Doris to Evelyn, at least, I think, was that she came from a communist background rather than socialist.

[00:54:06] **Rusty:** Mm-hmm

[00:54:09] **Zake:** Even though they've, they've fled communism.

[00:54:13] **Alan:** You know, Republicans, atheists, they were much less bad than Communists in the eyes of not just them, of the whole group of democratic socialists of the early 20th century.

[00:54:28] **Zake:** They all fled different forms of totalitarianism and communism to come to the United States, though.

[00:54:35] **Alan:** Yeah, but Ben and Evelyn were born here. So it wasn't that, it was just that, well, Evelyn's parents were socialists, although she was always angry at her father for supporting Castro. That was the one unforgivable thing he did. He was a democratic socialist, but he liked Castro. Ah, but she came from a socialist background.

[00:55:02] Ben came from a totally religious background. He was supposed to become a rabbi. and he got active in college politics and was booted out of Temple University for starting a demonstration against America's, I guess, beginning to be involved in war again after the first world war. He was very much an anti-war activist.

[00:55:32] And so he got booted out of Temple. I think he eventually went back and got his degree. So, he came to left-wing

politics on his own, she came with her family background.

[00:55:43] **Rusty:** Wow, yeah that's a difference. But I mean, they were both very committed throughout their lives. Huh?

[00:55:53] **Gerry:** The politics that Alan's, referring to -- these distinctions are largely a result of Stalinism, Stalinism in Russia. In response to Stalin taking over after the Russian Revolution. The left, the whole socialist/communist community split into those who continued to support Stalin, or not.

[00:56:28] Because he sort of inherited the revolution, and those who saw him as a dictator who was, you know, murdering a lot of people and so on, and they defined socialist as opposed to Stalin having taken over communism. So, the Communist Party in different countries, including in America, continue to support Stalinist Russia.

[00:57:00] And that's where Doris's parents were members of the Communist Party of America. and, our parents were part of the socialist democratic reaction against Stalinism. That's why it's confusing to you, because it was a historical split.

[00:57:23] **Alan:** Also at least a third group of Trotskyites. And Trotsky believed not so much in what was happening in Russia, but in spreading the revolution throughout the world. And that's sort of where Castro comes in.

[00:57:37] **Rusty:** Mmm.

[00:57:38] **Alan:** Because he would be the person that the Trotskyites would say, look, the revolution has spread to the Americas.

[00:57:46] **Gerry:** Che Guevara, for instance.

[00:57:50] **Rusty:** Mm Hmm. Then, Alan, you came up in where you were in college in Berkeley in the sixties. So, there was a whole other revolution going on then. How did you guys? And then you went to Europe.

[00:58:05] **Alan:** And you were in SDS when it was being formed.

[00:58:08] **Gerry:** Alan was on the cover of, what was it?

[00:58:11] **Alan:** Very ironic. There was, yeah, lots of demonstrations and fighting and everything in Berkeley in the 1960s. But in 1968, I think, when I was a senior at Berkeley, there was a gathering led by the president of the university in the Greek theater, which was a big outdoor meeting space. And I was photographed there, and I know that that's there because I was sitting next to my roommate at the time.

[00:58:45] And it was the only time we ever were together at anything like that. And that picture was used in Pravda with the caption, "American students fight against the establishment." No, no. It was first used by the New York Times and it was on the cover of Time Magazine for an article about the Berkeley uprisings.

[00:59:10] And then Pravda took that picture and cut it down pretty much just to me and my roommate sitting there. But we were sitting there peacefully listening to the president of the university. We weren't protesting. I mean, I got involved, but just on the fringe of protests, I was never taken up in the protesting. Maybe sort of as a reaction against my parents.

[00:59:33] **Rusty:** Mm-hmm

[00:59:34] **Gerry:** So, Alan was the poster child of the Free Speech Movement, despite his, not as a result of conscious effort so much. I was

[00:59:50] at MIT. I started it, as a member of the Socialist Club of MIT, which was, I don't know, maybe kind of Trotskyist at the time.

[01:00:12] I took a course with Noam Chomsky on "Intellectuals and Social Change," which was the name of his course and the name of the article that he published in the New York Review of Books, or whatever.

[01:00:32] Anyway, it was a great course and I loved Chomsky's politics. I didn't really like his philosophy so much, but that doesn't matter. And his linguistics is very important. but anyway. His sister, Ben, knew his sister, because the Chomsky's were from Philadelphia. And I was involved in Students for a Democratic Society, which was the student left in America at the time.

[01:01:14] And, I went up to Chomsky and invited him to speak at one of our sit-ins. We had sit-ins in Boston universities then. So, I was elected president of MIT's SDS chapter, mainly because it had been started by graduate students and they thought that it should really be an undergraduate organization and should be headed by an undergraduate, so they encouraged me to take that on, and a lot of the emphasis was anti-Vietnam War. But SDS was more. It had a general philosophy of participatory democracy at every level.

[01:02:15] And so I emphasized, academic things. For instance, I, organized a campaign against grades at MIT to have everything pass/fail, because I thought grades distorted the educational process. And actually, after I left, while I was in Germany, the SDS chapter at MIT became publicized around the world for its actions against Lincoln Labs, which was the big research place at MIT, where they had military grants to produce, you know, military equipment.

[01:03:08] **Rusty:** Hmm.

[01:03:09] **Gerry:** Also, since then, I found out that freshman classes at MIT are now pass/fail.

[01:03:21] So I don't know if that was my influence or not. And in fact, the graduate courses were pretty much already pass /fail. Like I took a couple graduate courses while I was an undergraduate there and got A's in them even though I had very little clue as to what was going on in the course. Because if you just come and look like you're doing what you're supposed to do they give you an A.

[01:03:48] **Rusty:** And how do you think Alan said he kind of was not, didn't get involved in campus activism, maybe in reaction to growing up in this activist household? How do you think your parent's politics and activism ended up influencing you at that point?

[01:04:08] **Gerry:** But we were brought up to be politically active. We used to go before college, we used to go to anti-nuclear demonstrations and Quaker demonstrations against nuclear bombs and ...

[01:04:29] **Alan:** ... And civil rights marches

[01:04:31] **Gerry:** ... Civil rights.

[01:04:34] Yeah, we used to help, you know, prepare mailings for union things and civil rights things and so on.

[01:04:43] **Rusty:** Mm hmm.,

[01:04:44] **Gerry:** You know, I never reacted against my parent's beliefs along those lines. Yeah.

[01:04:52] **Rusty:** ... just their taste in art.

[01:04:56] **Gerry:** You know, I remember they were, much later when I was living in Germantown and active in Germantown, they were working with Cesar Chavez, helping him. They were writing grant proposals for him and stuff like that. And they went traveling with a group of his, I guess, I don't think Cesar was there, but the group of his supporters.

[01:05:29] Traveling around the country and their parade or whatever, their march, came into Germantown and I officially greeted them in the name of the Germantown community.

[01:05:47] **Rusty:** I don't

[01:05:47] **Zake:** I remember that. I went on one of those with them. Did you? Mm-hmm. It was on the grape-pickers thing, right?

[01:05:54] **Rusty:** Oh, where'd you go Zake? in Philly?

[01:05:56] **Zake:** Somewhere in Pennsylvania. I don't remember where it was.

[01:06:00] **Rusty:** Remember about it? Cause you, you remember the experience?

[01:06:04] **Zake:** Um. I think, I think it was pretty later on because Ben wasn't walking. He took their car and he was like in the back of the parade, there was a bunch of vehicles and, and I was walking with, I don't know, I guess it was Evelyn, I don't remember who else was there. I feel like I was pretty young, but yeah, it was just a grape, with the big banners and boycott, something or other at the time. Whatever the manufacturer was, or distributor. Yeah. So how do you, how do you two, qualify, Rusty's activism and efforts? do they align with, the ancestral, leanings?

[01:06:54] **Gerry:** No, he's going totally in the wrong direction. I mean, it's just crazy the things that Rusty does these days. Look at, look at what he's wearing.

[01:07:08] **Alan:** No, no, he's very much carrying on the tradition.

[01:07:13] **Rusty:** Oh, thank you

...

[01:07:15] **Alan:** I think at this point Evelyn would forgive you being ....

[01:07:19] **Rusty:** for doing that.

[01:07:20] **Alan:** doing, for everything else that came before that.

[01:07:23] **Zake:** Yeah, we'll note he's wearing a hoodie that says, "defend nonprofits, defend democracy."

[01:07:30] **Rusty:** Yeah, I think definitely they influenced me heavily, you know, in that regard, especially Ben, but both of them. And, you know, one thing we haven't talked about, but it's connected is their connection to civil rights and desegregation. And I think that for me is a point of pride that, especially that there was so much division among these factions.

[01:07:54] And I somehow got that message that the communists, you know, that our Bubbies. You know, and her, you know, deceased husband had been kind of in this other camp from, you know, our other grandparents and that there was that some history, some beef there, even though the fact that Ben, you know, seemed to bring factions together or span across them, somehow he managed to, you know, be, you know, Jewish, even though he wasn't very religious, he was somehow involved with the Jewish politics and women's rights and civil rights and labor and all those things, even still today, I see is very, they have their silos and they're different movements. And he, he seemed to somehow for the most part to be involved with many of them.

[01:08:53] **Alan:** Yeah, there, Evelyn was always saying that no matter who he worked for or was officially aligned with, he went to the same meetings regardless. And I think an important step in their life, in our lives, he had been an organizer for the CIO, the labor union, and then it merged with the AFL, which he didn't much like, but he went on to the merged AFL-CIO, led the initiative to have a union formed of the union organizers. And at that point he was fired.

[01:09:36] **Rusty:** Oh, wow. I never heard that. Huh.

[01:09:38] **Alan:** So, the AFL CIO was no better an employer than anyone else. And he, he was sort of at loose ends and unemployed for a while, and then he got this job as head of the Philadelphia branch of the Jewish Labor Committee. And he, again, he went to the same meetings as he had done all up to that time, but now someone else was paying him.

[01:10:07] **Rusty:** Right. And so, one where

[01:10:13] **Gerry:** AFL! I was there when it happened, in the room. I don't know if Alan was too?

[01:10:20] **Alan:** Yeah, yeah, we went to that convention.

[01:10:22] **Gerry:** They brought us there because they knew it was a very historic moment. And even though we were too young to understand it, they brought us up in the balcony when it took place.

[01:10:35] **Rusty:** was that convention? What do you remember about that?

[01:10:37] **Gerry:** It was cool.

[01:10:40] **Alan:** You could look it up.

[01:10:43] **Gerry:** It was in a big hall, probably in New York City or something,

[01:10:46] **Rusty:** Right.

[01:10:47] **Gerry:** But I've got to understand, just like I've come to understand a lot of Evelyn's values more, I've also understood how both of them, how important the issues were that they both addressed throughout their lives. both the civil rights and the labor organizing.



[01:11:12] And at one point, I organized a union at Temple University in the computer center. And Ben helped us. He gave us guidance in what union to go to and affiliate with and so on. And, I don't know, he didn't ever really say anything much about what he thought about the fact that I had gotten involved in union organizing, but, uh,

[01:11:49] I felt, really good that I was doing a little bit of, you know, what he had done.

[01:11:57] **Alan:** There was another aspect of his public life that there must have been problems reconciling. He was very active in Philadelphia Democratic politics, and he was campaign manager, I think, for Dilworth or, I don't know. one or two of the big democratic campaigns in Philadelphia and statewide. And that, I think, presented some problems, not for him, but probably with the people he was with.

[01:12:30] To be known as a socialist, but still be active in local Democratic politics.

[01:12:39] **Gerry:** We used, just from our personal side, we used to go on election night to the headquarters in Philadelphia to watch the political returns for some of those campaigns that he had advised and, or whatever. That was, that was pretty exciting.

[01:13:06] Just that he had it when he was quite young. Nah.

[01:13:12] **Alan:** Carol's asking about Ben's history of polio. Yeah, I think he had it as an infant, and so he always limped, but it wasn't until he was in his 70s, probably, that he took to a cane and then eventually to a wheelchair.

[01:13:30] **Gerry:** Yeah, that was considered "post-polio."

[01:13:32] **Alan:** And that's just, I think that was technically the cause of his death, was post-polio syndrome.

[01:13:39] **Gerry:** Yeah, so one of his legs never really developed much, so it was very thin and not very strong. So, you know, he wasn't athletic, and as a result, possibly, neither Alan nor I, I think, consider ourselves athletic or were as kids involved that much in sports.

[01:14:08] **Rusty:** I love it. I remember him watching the Owls, the Temple Owls and the 76ers on TV. He, he would, he would. Do you remember that either? TV was always on with basketball.

[01:14:21] **Alan:** Really? I don't remember at all.

[01:14:23] **Zake:** Because it was a Temple team.

[01:14:24] **Gerry:** Yeah. Must have been.

[01:14:26] **Rusty:** Well, he went to Central as well, right?

[01:14:28] **Alan:** Yeah, he went to Central.

[01:14:31] **Rusty:** So, one thing that I know was a challenge in our family was when you came out. And so that was, you know, maybe a blind spot for Ben and Evelyn and their politics. We've been talking about all these,

[01:14:48] **Alan:** Because in those days it wasn't considered politics. That is, it was just a kind of anti-socialism that did not fit in with the kinds of anti-establishment that they represented. And it was, they were openly hostile to my husband Bill when they first met him. And that created a lot of tension.

[01:15:15] It was only really when gay rights was taken over by the left as one of the things that the left supported, that Ben came around and Evelyn just sort of eased up and in the end she welcomed Bill as one of her caretakers while she, when she was dying, but it took a long time to get there.

[01:15:45] **Rusty:** That's a long time between when she met him and when that happened.

[01:15:49] **Alan:** Yeah.

[01:15:50] **Rusty:** That must've been really hard.

[01:15:52] **Alan:** Yeah. because it had never occurred to me that they would be hostile. And, you know, I guess we went to visit them at the lake, what, a couple months after we met? And I had been telling him what great left wingers they were, and liberal and you know, what a great place and, we got to their house on the lake and absolutely frozen out.

[01:16:22] **Rusty:** Wow. Yeah. That was. But you had married and divorced before that.

[01:16:26] **Alan:** Yeah. Yeah. But they were very happy when I married a woman right out of college and unhappy when we were divorced a couple years later

[01:16:38] **Rusty:** Yeah.

[01:16:39] **Alan:** Evelyn's phrase when I told her that was, "Oh, that's too bad, but you don't have to tell me anything about it."

[01:16:49] **Rusty:** Wow. About the divorce, or ....

[01:16:51] **Alan:** About? No, that was long before Bill. There were a couple more years before I really came out.

[01:16:58] **Various:** That was two weeks before me.



[01:17:00] **Alan:** Yeah, I met him two weeks after I came out to myself and a couple close friends. And Gerry, I think Gerry was one of the first people. You don't remember that?

[01:17:13] **Gerry:** Before you met Bill?

[01:17:14] **Alan:** No, no, no, no, I guess not, but,

[01:17:17] **Gerry:** I don't think so. I don't think we were close for or so. I think I was off in Germany or something. I don't, you know, I don't remember you getting divorced, for instance. I barely met your wife, maybe twice, at your apartment or something. I wasn't....

[01:17:42] **Alan:** Well, I didn't, visit. I didn't legally get divorced until she wanted to get remarried because there was no reason for me to get a divorce.

[01:17:51] **Rusty:** Hmm. So, what years did that all happen? Just for context.

[01:17:55] **Alan:** Okay, well. I met her my senior year in Berkeley in 1968 and she came to Philadelphia with me and we got married I think that same year in '68. And then we split up in around 1970 and I met Bill in '74. So, there's four years of me sort of processing things.

[01:18:17] **Rusty:** Hmm. Wow.

[01:18:22] Well, I think we've been talking a long time. So why don't we take, yeah, why don't we stop this? Thank you, everybody.

[01:18:28] **Gerry:** Thank you.

[01:18:28] **Alan:** Thank you.

[01:18:34] We lost the kids, all of them.

[01:18:36] **Gerry:** Really? I would think they'd be fascinated. I thought I'd qualified it. Yeah.

[01:18:41] **Alan:** We lost almost all of them. Thank you!

