

# Western Australian Jewish Seniors Oral History Project

Transcription of an interview with  
**Max Kay (AM)**

---

JEWISH HISTORICAL & GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA  
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

DATE OF INTERVIEW:	15 August 2018
INTERVIEWER:	HELENA COHEN-ROBERTSON
TRANSCRIBER:	HELENA COHEN-ROBERTSON
DURATION:	115 MIN
REFERENCE:	OHP2018/21
COPYRIGHT:	JEWISH HISTORICAL & GENEALOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA INC



KNOW  
YOUR  
NATION

7 Dumbarton Crescent, Menora, 15 August 2018.

Know Your Nation: If we start off by you saying your full name and your date of birth.

Max Kay: OK. No, I would not give you my date of birth.

KYN: OK. Can you give me your year of birth?

MK: No.

KYN: Decade? For some context?

MK: Max Kay, quite old.

KYN: OK.

MK: I'll tell you why. I am firmly of the belief and I've been quoted on this before, there is age discrimination, very, very serious age discrimination. And once they know you're a certain age, they assume that a certain duties and certain things you cannot perform, which is of course grossly untrue. So to me, age is a very, very important thing. And I have a case in point. When we have the civic theatre, this woman used to come in with her group. They used to sell bras and panties and whatnot and I think it was called the Bra Shop or something. And this happened twice, one there and one in a warehouse in Osborne Park. And the woman worked with these people. They were friends. They used to go drinking and whatnot. And when the woman turned 60, they shunned her. They never realised she was 60. They thought she was more like them. And she said "The worst I could do was celebrate my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. They never - they thought I was 50, 45, and it was fine. The moment I turned 60, I was not a part of the group anymore." And I thought "Well, that's a case in point."

So it's just a mind thing that people are like this so I never ever tell anybody my age. In fact, I tell someone a lie about my age. I forget what the age actually. The only time I'm telling them, the very first thing they have to do when you are in hospital and when you're having a procedure, anything like radiotherapy where you have to give your name and your date of birth every day to make sure they got the right person all the time, and that's the only thing. So there you are.

KYN: So your name is Max Kay. That's what we've got so far.

MK: That's right.

KYN: And where were you born?

MK: I was born in Glasgow, in Scotland.

KYN: Were you born at home?

MK: I was born - no. I was born in - I was not at home. I was born in a hospital in Glasgow. I think it might have been called Good Samaritans. And I was very ugly, very ugly. My grandmother - I

really was quite ugly because I think I was premature, slightly premature. I think they call it a blue - there was a blue baby, I was that. So I was very rat-like. I'm not the handsome man you see now. [Laughter]

KYN: And do you have brothers and sisters?

MK: I do. I have one brother deceased. I have two brothers. In fact, they were sort of - there were three boys. My mother had two boys - three boys. One has died just last year and both of them lived in Canada. So all the boys went to different - I went to Australia and they went to Canada.

KYN: And where were you in the ranking?

MK: I was middle. I was the middle child. I was the put-upon child.

KYN: I was going to say, do you think you got particular treatment as the middle child?

MK: Yeah, I did get - yeah, I got - I was not ostracised but I wasn't their - I was the favourite son. I was my mother's favourite son. But all the goodness was lavished on my oldest brother who became an accountant and whatnot. And my education - I certainly wasn't lacking. It certainly wasn't lacking. But they couldn't afford to send me to a university. I'd like to send him - they only sent one boy and that was him. But I got - I did my things in the university of life. I went up to the 18 - I was in school until I was 17. And then I went to the university of life.

KYN: And then what about your younger brother then if your older brother was the one who went to the university?

MK: My younger brother was kind of wayward. He was a wayward kind of child and quite big and hefty. And he was the kind of black sheep of the family. Still within the family and always forgiven and the eventually went to Toronto in Canada. I believe that he may have had to go to Toronto. He may have had to go out of the country because he was a naughty boy.

KYN: Were the three of you close when you were growing up?

MK: Growing up, we were very close, yeah. We were very close. And believe me, we became very close when I came here and my brother, my older brother decided he would come. He was divorced by this time. He had a lovely family in Toronto. And he came here to see us and he said "I always thought you almost fell on your feet. I didn't realised you worked so hard." We had a theatre at that time because we had the theatre here for 25 years, which we used to show. I produced shows which I was in and it was hugely successful, hugely successful. And he didn't realise that nobody falls with you. It's like golfer - the guy says to the golfer "You're so lucky." He said "You know that's right. And the more I practice, the luckier I get." And that's what happens.

KYN: So let's do some name-dropping. What were your parents' names?

MK: My parents' name, my father's name was Joe, Joseph but it wasn't that. It was actually Jeremiah but nobody ever called him that. Nobody called him that. So he was Joe. And my mother's name Millie Malka.

KYN: Malka. And what's her maiden name?

MK: Her maiden name was Kay. And I took my mother's maiden name to go to the theatre.

KYN: What was your father's family name?

MK: My father's family name was Klein. They were - my father's parents were German-Jews, who I never ever met. They came from Vienna. And I never met them. They died long before I was born. But they had a remarkable family. They had a family of, they had a family of about - I think there were ten children. My father was one probably. He was probably the third youngest. There were two below him. Maybe not. Maybe three below him. And all the rest were there. And they would - they travelled. They went to America. They had one son in London, children in London. Then went to New Jersey then went to New York, had children there. And my father was born in West Chester, Pennsylvania.

KYN: Do we know why they were doing so much travelling?

MK: I think they were just trying that somewhere to be. And then eventually came back to Glasgow, to Scotland. You wouldn't believe after all the travelling they did, dropping children all over the place. I used to think that - well, I do in my life story when I do a life story on stage, and I thought they were like cuckoos. The only thing is that they took the children with them. They didn't just drop them in the nest and walk away.

But they eventually came back to Glasgow. And my father, he never realised that he was an American citizen until the war broke, the second World War, when he went to enlist in the army and they wouldn't take him because he was an alien, because America had not yet come into the war. They came in 1942-ish you might remember.

So he shouldn't join the army because he was an alien despite the fact that they were our allies. So became an alien during the war.

KYN: So he tried to join the English - the British Army?

MK: Yeah, British Army because he never had a concept of the fact that he was American.

KYN: So how old was he when he first left Vienna, do you know?

MK: When he left ...

KYN: Vienna.

MK: The father, you mean the grandfather? This is not my father. It was my grandfather. My grandparents left Vienna. These were my

grandparents who had all these children and my father was one of these children.

KYN: Right. OK. So did your father speak only English or did he also have other languages under his belt?

MK: No, no. My father only spoke English in a Scottish, with a Scottish accent. He never spoke - because he was very young when he came back from - and they brought him back from America when he was quite - very young, a baby. So he never really had any concept of the fact that he was an American citizen, that he had been born there.

As a result of this, I became President of the Australian American Association here. I was president about three times here, when it was a very important organisation because in 1942, the Americans saved our bacon because the - I shouldn't mention the word "bacon" - I hope that the rabbi will forgive me. Back in 1942, the Japanese were just ready to invade Australia and the Americans came to our aid and the Battle of the Coral Sea ensued, et cetera, and it's, which neither won nor lost but it was such a battle that many Australian ships went down and Americans - many Japanese ships went down.

So months later when the Battle of the Midway came, which was a decisive victory for the US, it was because of the Battle of the Coral Sea because they'd disabled so many big carriers during that fight and the thought of invading Australia just went entirely. Later on, the Japanese said they never intended to invade Australia, but they did. It's easy to say that after you've lost, you know.

KYN: So what about your mum's side?

MK: My mother side, they came from Manchester. My mother - my grandmother, God rest her, who was my favourite person in the whole world, apart from my mother of course, was born in Kovne in Russia and Lithuania, the same village that Sholem Aleichem who wrote the Fiddler on the Roof came from. He was born there.

And her father and mother had a little farm thing in the shtetls, you know, and she witnessed her father and mother being killed. All the family had gone, her sisters and brothers. One brother had been taken by the Russians to serve in the army. I think he was nine or eleven, something nine or eleven. Judibera was his name and he was - not Yogi Bearer but Judibera and he was taken and served in the thing and became - eventually became a Cossack and eventually escaped later and came to Manchester to see his sisters and his brothers.

But my mother, because she was very young, the parents wouldn't let her travel. They said, "We will keep her here." But when they came, they told her to hide and do nothing, not make a sound when they came. And they slaughtered her mother and father and she could see them from where she was hiding. Then she had to stop - she was just turning 16. I think she was 15. And she had to make her journey all through the rest of Germany and various other lands to get through this. It was at the beginning of the century, to get eventually and eventually came. Very resourceful woman, small, beautiful woman, a lovely woman.

KYN: Did she have to make that journey on the road?

MK: Yes, on her own. On her own she made it.

KYN: Did she talk about the journey?

MK: She talked about it but it was like something she wanted to forget, you know. But she picked up languages on her way, funny enough. Again, she could speak – smatterings some various other languages that she learned on the road. And she was a really hard working woman. And then she came to Manchester and whilst in Manchester, where her sister was, her sister, Rachel, was there and they had already kind of established themselves. She had a brother – her brother was – what was his name, Vel, not Sol, Abraham. Abraham. She had a brother Abraham. She had a sister Rachel and she had a brother Judibera, who they thought they'd lost and never find him again because he was taken by the Russians to serve in the army. And he came eventually after – I think it was before – maybe before the war or just after the war. And he came to settle in Manchester.

And my mother, who was born in Manchester met a man there who was just a few years older but he owned businesses and whatnot and he had a business there. He was an alcoholic, who died at 37. So she saw plenty of misery, you know, being married to someone – a very nice man, a Jewish man, a lovely man but her life wasn't happy. She wasn't happy, being married to an alcoholic. It wasn't a happy life. And he managed to blow all the business and do that. So she had one, two, three boys, Issy, Isador, Benny, Benjamin who – there was one – and my mother. So there were four children. She had four children. But Chayman, his name was Chayman, they lived in south side of Glasgow, in Gorbals, in a very rough area of the Gorbals and that's where Jews lived because there were four or five shules in the Gorbals. So they lived in that area. That was the first place. They eventually moved down. But they lived there.

You never saw trucks on the road because it was the beginning of the century, it was 1919, 1920s and around about that area, that time. So Chayman was the youngest child. And the thing in Glasgow was you shouted at your mother up there in the tenements to throw you a sandwich. They call it a piece in Scotland.

KYN: How do you spell a piece?

MK: P-I-E-C-E. Apiece was like normally jam and wrapped up in paper and thrown out the window to you. And he was only about three years of age. No traffic on the road. A step and a truck, probably the only truck they saw in that thing and that thing hit him and my mother saw him get killed.

So that was like – apart from the husband, the bad husband that she had, this was another tragedy of her life. My mother had rheumatic fever when she was 16 years of age which left her with a bad heart and as a result, and had a bad heart all of her life because of this rheumatic fever she had. So she was very, very protective of my mama, very protective, not as protective of the other boys. But that was the tragedy. So she lived with a lot of tragedy. She became – she

was a tailoress. She could sew and cut and do all these things. And she used to sew, intricate sewing, all hand stitching on lapels, button holes, and do all these hand things that she did. She was fantastic.

Her name was Annie Chana.

KYN: So when did she move from Manchester to Glasgow?

MK: With her husband, who had businesses there. They are called the Mastersons, I think it was called. And she moved there to Glasgow with him.

KYN: Did she ever remarry?

MK: She never remarried. No, she never remarried.

KYN: So how ...

MK: She devoted herself to the children.

KYN: How often would you have you seen her?

MK: I saw her all the time. And every day even during the war when I was a little boy, I remember she used to come from the Gorbals to where we were and she would come and walk through the Blitz to get to the house to make sure that Malka, her son and daughter were safe. She was an amazing woman, amazing woman. I was probably more inspired by her. She would just say to me "Darling," she used to say "get a job that you love and you'll never need to work a day in your life." And she would say it with broken English. Funny enough, of all the languages she did know, she spoke Yiddish fluently of course, but her English was very fractured but it was charming with her accent you know.

KYN: How was she received by other people in the Glasgow area? Were people ...

MK: Wonderful. It was very difficult not to like her. She had a way - she also had a way with animals and plants, everything growing. Birds. Pigeons used to come to the window and she would feed them. She shouldn't have done but she used to feed them. And one came to the window and had a broken leg and she took it in and it let her do it, and she put matchsticks on his leg because of the broken leg and with the intricacy of the thread she used to use, you know, she could almost do - she tied a splint on the leg and the bird stayed there to be fed until it was better and always walked with a limp after that that it always came back to her. And she had a cat. She would go to the pictures. From where we lived, she walked down and the cat would stay outside the picture when she came and then walked home with her. The cat responded to Yiddish - commands in Yiddish. She had to speak Yiddish to the cat. If she had spoken English to it then - it was just incredible. She was incredible. She just had a thing with animals and plants. She once took a - she saw - she was taking rubbish to the - they called it the Midden in Glasgow and she saw a plant. It was a tiny, tiny thing that had been thrown out. It was an Aspidistra. And she nurtured that plant and washed its leaves and soaked it and did whatever. And it was easily the biggest Aspidistra

in the world. It was like the biggest Aspidistra. She made it into the biggest thing. She nurtured it from – so young, from when it was just ready to die and into one huge thing – which she passed on to her son who never married, Issy, and he had it. And then I don't know what happened to it after that. We had come here. But Aspidistra was still growing.

KYN: Did she ever tell you parables or about little traditions that they used to have when she was growing up? Anything like that?

MK: She did. She used to talk about making cholent, how they used to go to a place that was like a bakehouse where you will put your cholent in on early Friday because you shouldn't cook on Shabbat. So you would go through and they would take the cholent. They didn't cook it in their house. They cooked it in this place and bring the cholent out for food on Saturday, on Shabbat, which she made – she was fantastic. Her cholent was the best in the world. You know, it was – I don't know what your parents – where your parents from. What is their background?

So, because they were Litvaks, they were Lithuanians, they have different style of cooking from say Poles'. Polish people would make cholent but they would make it with prunes and various other sweet things. It was very tasty. My wife makes it and she is absolutely at it. And it's just full of flavour. So she used to tell me things like that.

KYN: I was going to say, was she religious?

MK: Pardon?

KYN: Was she a religious woman there?

MK: Yeah, she was more of – she was religious. Yeah. She was religious. And everything we did was out of respect for her. Everything we did. She was religious. She used to worry about the world and whatever events, stories. I don't know what she saw but she just feels that she have to say something, make a prayer for people who are less fortunate in places that you never heard of. She was one of these – she was just a remarkable, remarkable woman.

KYN: So did your uncles on your mother side live closely connected ...

MK: Yes they did eventually. They lived in the Gorbals and we lived – not very far away but it was really – it was a tram ride. But she used to walk that distance during the war in the dark because it was all black out to get to our house. And we may have even – when the tension got there, we might have been in the airraid shelters already. These were things that I vividly remember. I was a boy, a young, young boy.

And then eventually when my mother was ill, she would come to the house and she would stay there to look after her and to make after the family. In fact, I remember more about my grandmother, God rest her soul, her cooking and making life for us than I did about my mother because my mother was constantly ill.

KYN: So how did the ill – how did the sickness manifest itself in your eyes when you’re a young boy?

MK: My mother?

KYN: Yeah.

MK: Well, her legs used to swell. It was a heart disease which was not being treated well in Glasgow, where a doctor may have had 10,000 patients on his, what they call a panel. He may have – and you had to go to that doctor. Nothing ever got better. Nothing ever, ever got better with them. There was kind of no new things. When you were on that, you were stuck in that little ridge – there was no explorative surgery or anything else. Nobody suggested anything.

Surprisingly, 1970 – ’70, ’69 or ’70, she came here to stay with us and she came off the boat – and she was – her legs were like huge, just monstrously, full of liquid – of water, fluid. And I said “You have to go to hospital.” Took her immediately and they took her in there. And they had her – they made her like a new woman because we already – we were good at what we did here. Australia was a good – medically, it was a great country for the size of it. And of course, it was a manageable size. We didn’t have a huge population so we could cater for these people.

So they took her into hospital here and they looked after her. They even spoke about an operation. It was in its infancy, you know the heart operation, replacement of the heart, replacement of valves, et cetera. And they said they would do that here. And they said there was a good chance like 70/30 and she said, and because my brother was still at home, my youngest brother, the wayward one, so she had to eventually go home. While she was here, she was absolutely in sparkling health. I’ve never seen that. In all my life, I’ve never seen her so healthy.

KYN: So as a boy, was it like she couldn’t really run around after you, so she couldn’t really play with you or was she like that ...

MK: No, she did. She did every – everything she did. It was my father who was away most of the time. Not away but he was working most of the time. He never really played. My mother did and encouraged it and things. We used to have back game concerts in the tenements where I would organise concerts and we would sing and dance and do all the things. So I also have that kind of spot. I was always comedic in my approach even at school, a bit too comedic for the teachers’ likes.

But she was there. She was always there. She was – where she could. But as a boy, I learned to cook. I could cook a meal by the time I was 10 years of age. I could cook and do every – I would clean and wash and do all the things.

KYN: Do you think it was – that was just happenstance or do you think your mum somehow inadvertently – your grandma inadvertently promoted that blurring of gender lines?

MK: Oh, I think so. No question about it. A need, a necessity is the mother of invention. That's - you either did it or you would not going to be there. You couldn't let this - my grandmother does everything and she wasn't there all the time so you had to do it. So we made meals. We knew - I mean some of the boys didn't but I could do it. I could actually make meals and do that and I learned to cook.

KYN: So, what was your dad doing?

MK: My dad was in - what would you say, a credit draper. So he would go to people with catalogues, et cetera and sell goods to them and then they would pay up and et cetera, et cetera. So he would get it from form and because we were in a country, they were not in a place where there were big, big shops available so he would go there.

KYN: And did you mom take on additional work too or she just ...

MK: My mother was a milliner, a very, very talented milliner and she was always working in the house. They always make - people used to come up while she was making hats. She was very talented milliner.

KYN: Did she use a hat model - a head model?

MK: No, I used to wear the hats and turn them into cowboy hats and do all that. "Put them down," she would scream and shout. Some weird hats, I might tell you, but she had a great clientele. She was a milliner, Millie the milliner.

KYN: Sorry for interrupting you. So the tenements, were they largely Jewish or ...

MK: No. There was often a number, yes. There was a number certainly in the next - we call them closers, you're going down the end there. So in ours, we had like three, three Jewish people, three families. I was being on the first floor. Leightons on the bottom floor. They were Jewish. Then Gretchen who was from a camp, she had come from the camp. She was on the top floor. The rest of them were non Jewish but there was no antisemitism at that time. If there was, I wasn't aware of it. Never aware of it.

KYN: Was there a closeness in the community with the other children? Like describe the interplay between you putting on the concerts and how the other kids around you reacted.

MK: Oh, just fantastic. Everybody came in. Everybody enjoyed it and everybody came and tried to do a part, you know. We would erect a little stage and then everybody would come in to pay there. I can't remember what it was, six pence or what it was and they put it in and we would put on this concert and everybody loved it. They just loved it. It became tremendous. It was singing, dancing because the kids used to go to dancing classes and whatnot you know. So they're older a little bit. It was quite professional. It was kind of a good background for me being an entrepreneur later in life, you know.

KYN: Do you think that you got your interesting theatre and component from that experience or from a different influence and practice?

MK: I don't know where I got it from. I was always performing. I was a bit of a performer. But I can remember vividly when I was seven years of age, Danny Kaye came to the Empire in Glasgow. And my father never very much bothered with that kind of thing, he used to sing but he had this diabolically bad voice. But he sang classics. He used to whistle or maybe sing but not much better. But he could whistle better than he could sing. And he would sing classics.

But when Danny Kaye came to the Empire, he got tickets for it. And people had to queue all night for tickets. It was just - there were queues right around the theatre waiting for the box office to open. And we saw it and he took us to see this. And I sat there mesmerised with Danny Kaye. I thought this - and at that point, I knew what I wanted to do with the rest of my life. I said "This is what I want to do. I want to be and I want to play here." And believe me, I did play there. I played there three times and first time I played - we played - we did a week - two weeks. Hugely successful. Then they gave us two with Andy Stewart - the Scottish entertainer. We did two seasons and the longest season has ever known in Scottish theatre, it went from - as I remember, June - beginning of June right through until nearly October, they show twice in that and they're packed to the doors, 3000-seater in the Glasgow Empire.

The death of so many comedians and we played that twice nightly for two years in a row. Packed to the doors.

KYN: When you were playing that, did you get a sense of "Now I finally made it! Now I've made it."

MK: Yeah, I made it. I'm here. I got that the first week, I did, because I went out and did that very solo spot. And I did a couple of Jolson songs and I did at least one, 'Rocker by your baby...' And it absolutely killed them. They love that because it was very - that picture had come out the Jolson story or the Jolson songs. And it was huge. It was absolutely huge.

But I hadn't started any comedy. It was only slightly borderline comedic stuff by that time. So I did that and it was just to - I decided that's what I want to do and nothing could dissuade me from that. Nothing.

KYN: Did you decide to have Kay as your kind of theatre stage name because of Danny Kaye?

MK: No. No, it's because of my mother's name from my mother's maiden name. I never thought of that. And it's K-A-Y, mine, not K-A-Y-E. But obviously, there could have been subconsciously something there. It could have been. It could have been. But it is a thing, my mother's name was Kay. And the name really Kay was because when her - when they came there, the name Kay was Schlüssel, which is a key. And they said his name was Schlüssel. And they said, "How do you spell it? What does that mean?" Somebody said "It's a key". So they put down Kay. They heard them say the key. They said the Kay, K-A-Y. And that's it. So the name wasn't Kay at all. It's was Schlüssel.

KYN: So tell me about that Jewish cultural stuff aside from cholent. Friday nights for example. What did a Friday night look like?

MK: Friday night was always a Friday night, a Shabbos dinner. Always a Shabbos. And when I was young, we used to go to shule on a Friday night. And we used to go to shule on Shabbat as well because as you are growing up, you were learning bar mitzvah and whatnot. You have to do that. So we always had a Friday night dinner, always.

KYN: And what did that look like?

MK: What did it look like? Like I did in Friday night Shabbas dinner. It was there with everything and the Challah and everything was in place. We did everything as planned. We were Orthodox Jewish. We are Orthodox Jewish. But we were not like Verbrinte Orthodox - it wasn't - it was deeply ingrained but it was more of a generic thing rather than a devoutness. We didn't have a devoutness at all. We used to laugh and joke and things you know. And we used to be grandmother would tell us shhht. It's because we weren't taking it seriously. While we were doing Kiddush and things like that but we always had it. We always did it.

KYN: Is it run by your grandma or by adult?

MK: Done by my dad, my dad, when he wanted to do it. And then eventually as we grow up, we did it. I did it.

KYN: And did you ...

MK: "Yeshiva boy, you do it". Sadly.

KYN: Did you - was it like a kind of going through the motions thing for you or did you somehow stop and think "This is what the 10 commandments say" really think about what was happening?

MK: I'd like to say yes to that but I can't actually say yes to that because I didn't. It was doing things by wrote because that's what my family did and that's what the family before them did. It was something that was ingrained in us. We were there. We were generic Jews. That's exactly what we were supposed to do and we did it. Just as we bought new clothes to go to shule on Rosh Hashanna and Yom Kippur and keep it. Why did you do with your clothes? But we did. We have to all be well-kitted out to go to the shule.

KYN: Did your mum go to shule too?

MK: Yes. Yeah, she used to. Yeah. Almost funny enough, I always had a thing, a bee in my bonnet, about a man and woman sitting together. "Why" I used to say all the time, I used to question "Why do women have to sit there and men sit here? Why can't family sit together? Like they do, you've seen when they go to church and they all sit together. Isn't that nicer. Isn't that a better thing to do?"

I used to ask Revs all the time and they all came up with their gratitude that you're going to be devout. They were anything but devout. I mean you would find - if you go to a shule, any shule, the noise, the chatter about football or about anything else is ridiculous. Just nonsense. So very few of them and there might be a handful of people who are getting some sort of religious, good nachus from it.

But generally, people are just there to do things by wrote and do the things that they've got to do. And every so often, someday, maybe a sermon by the Rev or something just hits home and then you realise what you're here for. But generally, it's just a thing that you did because that's what everybody did. That's what we did. That was our role in life.

KYN: Did you have a favourite festival?

MK: Yeah. I used to like Simchas Torah. I love Simchas Torah. And I remember in the service in Simchas Torah they used to do the blessing of the big, big tallis over all of us, all the boys. And I used to tie all the tallisim all together underneath that thing there. When they came apart, it was chaos. It was chaos. [Laughter] It was chaos. And we were punished for it many times but we - it was so funny not to be able to do it. [Laughter] It was so funny. I just thought it was great. And the guys, the boys used to just kill themselves laughing. We were all so terrible. We were young. And before we were bar mitzvah and before we were old enough to fast, we would go down with Rowntree gums, eating them. [Laughter] Unforgivable really. Really unforgivable. Quite unforgivable. We were just larrikins. But it was just - it was funny.

It was just a wonderful thing. There was a humour attached to everything we did. So it was a good life. It was a nice life. You know? And of course, Yom Kippur, as we grew older, because it was all day, we used to go visit shules. We used to do all the shules in Glasgow you know because there was better girls there. If you wanted to meet, it was like a dating thing. Yom kipper became a dating day. Who you could find better women in different places. And we thought that was a special thing as well.

KYN: Did you guys have a sukkah?

MK: No, we never because we lived in a tenement and it was very difficult. But we used to go to the shule, always had a sukkah. And we would do Kiddush in the sukkah and whatnot just before. So we didn't have sukkah but if you were wealthy and land and you have a house standing on its own ground and in general, then sukkah.

KYN: Did you usually take days off school to do the high holy days?

MK: Yes, we did. Well, we went to school where we were allowed off at - I think we were allowed to have past 2:00, 3:00 o'clock, when we got that, because Shabbat came in early, we were allowed to. And if anything antagonised gentiles more - that was the thing really antagonised them. That was - really antagonised them.

KYN: In what? They have to finish school?

MK: Us being able to dog off school, whether we went to shule or not. That would be terrible. That's awful. But that was a kind of a slap in the face for them you know. I remember, in the secondary school, the first bit of real anti-semitism I found. And this guy, a rogue he was, a real bully he was and he was intimidating all the Jewish boys. It was over the gym, we had just finished gym and we were all going

home. And there was a balcony and down there was the gym. And this boy came and he was throwing everybody's clothes on the floor and he was smacking boys in the face and he came to me and he started that. I said "Don't do that again, please. Don't do that." He smacked me in the face. It was more than a smack. It was like a punch in the face. And I was sitting, from the sitting position, I rushed to him with the head in the middle of his stomach and it threw him over the balcony. I couldn't believe I've done it. I was so mad already. I watched him do all this and I saw red and I thought "He's not going to get away with that." And I went for him with my head and propelled him and he fell over the balcony. I didn't throw him. He fell. Maybe a little push. [Laughter] And he bounced off, you know the back. He bounced with his back into the floor and lay there unconscious. It was the worst moment of my life, the worst moment in my life. And I remember the PE teacher, who was anti-semitic as well said "You'll go to jail for this and you'll do this." And I eventually thought I've got to get my father. And my father came up. And I said - I was brought in front of the Headmaster and I said "This boy was antagonising all the Jewish boys. He was hitting them. Nobody was fighting back and nobody was doing anything." I said "And I was willing to let that go but then he started on me. He started throwing my stuff on the ground and wiping his feet on it" and I said "And then he smacked me. He more than smacked me, he tried to punch me." And I said "I just rushed him." I said, "I didn't for a minute think he was going over the balcony."

Even yet to this day, he was doubtful but then I actually meant to put him over the balcony. But he did go over the balcony. And he said "Do you realise you could have killed him?" I said, "Yes, I did."

And I remember now, so they let me away with it because he is a bully and because he antagonised only Jewish guys, boys. And I remember saying "I have to-" when he got better, I didn't see him for weeks and weeks and weeks, when he got better I remember thinking he was out to get me. [Laughter] And it took me a long time to revise different ways to leave school. By different routes and all that. We never came face to face again. We saw each other in the playground but he didn't - we never came face - I mean that was secondary school as well.

KYN: How did your peers respond?

MK: My ...?

KYN: Your peers, like other people at school, whether they were Jewish or not Jewish?

MK: I was a bit of hero. I was a little hero for them. They might have thought me to be very brave having done that because he was much bigger.

KYN: Do you think that experiences informed the way that you live anything else in your life or ...?

MK: Yeah. I hate to see - I don't like bullies. I don't like bullying in anything and I would bet - my wife says even at my age, I could be killed easily because I intervene. And I've always kind of even in the

theatre, I would come around and talk to people, even use a funny story or something to try and break it up but I just hate bullies. I don't like people taking advantage of people lesser than themselves. And I've always done that. I don't say I'm a champion on anything with that. I just don't like to see unfairness taking place. I've never been unfair with anybody and I don't want people to be unfair with me, you know. I don't want to see it. So it leaves an impression in your life. It does leave an impression. It also leaves an impression that I could have gone to jail if I killed him.

KYN: Now, tell me - you said that you have lots - you said you remember the airraid shelters and things like that, what ...

MK: I do.

KYN: Can you throw some war memories at me?

MK: I remember that when I was three years of age during a bombing raid and the church is around the corner from us, I went missing. And my father was home, found me. He went looking. He couldn't believe it. In the middle of an airraid, and the place had been burning, and I went missing. I went out the door and I had a basin. You know one of these basins? He found me with all the people watching. Amongst all the people watching the church burn, I was amongst them, this little boy, what we called a basin on your head. It was a basin. You know the basin? And I had it on my head like the shoulders wear helmets. And I had this on my head, [Laughter] upon me. And they couldn't believe it that I'd gone missing.

KYN: Do you remember actually going to this place?

MK: Well, I was three. I was three years of age. And I can remember - yeah, I remember standing there. I certainly remember standing there and I remember my father saying "What are you doing here?" And I had a basin. I remember having a basin on my head, a white basin.

KYN: Do you remember why?

MK: In case anything fell on my head. So I knew enough about that. Maybe, I don't know. We didn't have television in those days but you saw movies and whatnot, you know, people getting bashed on the heads. And I put a basin on my head and went there for no reason at all.

I also remember at school, the first day of school, my mother had bought me blazer and all the other kind of stuff for school and we were told immediately to go to the shelter and not to take any of your stuff with you to go. And I had my blazer up on the thing and I didn't want to lose it so I undid it and I put it on. And I ran all the way home. I wasn't very far from the school but I ran all the way up the main street while a Major Smith was actually strafing the streets with bullets. And I was out and they couldn't believe it. I was really quite incorrigible when it came to things like that. And I ran up the street and eventually got home because I didn't want my new blazer to be - it was difficult to buy a new blazers and new clothes. I didn't get my new clothes very often.

So I wanted to preserve it, so. And I was only young. I must have been five, maybe five.

KYN: What was the air raid shelter like?

MK: The air raid shelter was certainly used after the war. It was a rounded thing with a concrete roof. It was bricks. And then an arch over the top of it, a concrete on top of them with a door, a kind of reinforced door and it wasn't very big.

KYN: And did you share one with the people?

MK: And you share. People just went into the shelter.

KYN: What did you do when you were in there?

MK: People used to bring cake. I called it the air raid cake, cake, tea, flasks and whatnot and bring it to shelter because you could be there for another two hours, three hours.

Eventually, my father never wanted to leave the house. He said "If you're going to get hit, you'll get hit." And the very night that he did it, he said "We'll all go under the table." And we all went under the table and then an incendiary bomb dropped because in these tenements, the bottom was the laundries. They were very basic laundries but they were laundries. Not the laundry you would expect nowadays. Just basins and whatnot. And an incendiary bomb went into that little thing and blew out all the windows while we were in there. It blew the windows out of the house. All the houses. It was incredible.

KYN: Do you think you were fearful of things related to the war or were you too young to feel fear?

MK: I don't think I was fearful then. I think that maybe it was a bit of an adventure then because I didn't really know what the war - I was young and I didn't know what the war meant. You knew that bad people - Hitler - because of the caricatures and whatnot. He was a bad person. But you didn't really - it didn't sink in who they were and why they were doing it. They did it in Glasgow because it was close to the shipyards and whatnot and bombed the shipyards. So I think maybe this was incidental damage because you were close. But I never ever, ever - there was no animosity there because I didn't know them well enough, only what I saw in films and the kind of propaganda files they used to use. But I didn't know. It was a kind of an adventure. People were trying to blow us up. But it was never any fear.

KYN: Do you remember the first time you - do you remember how you felt when you were kind of becoming more ofay about the fact that the Holocaust was happening or had happened?

MK: I didn't know it until I was much older. I didn't know about that until I was much older. And then it was horrific. It was horrific. As I grow old and I realised that was a - it was a terrible thing. Remember, at the beginning of the war, it was quite - even the allies wouldn't believe

what was going on you know. It wasn't until you were well into the war and towards the end of the war you realised what are horrific scenes were there and what they actually had been doing to the Jewish people. So we were never really - despite the fact that we're being bombed, et cetera, it wasn't connected with the Holocaust. That wasn't part of it. They were having a go at Britain and that's the whole thing. And that's what we knew you know.

Union Jacks and we're all very brave and whatnot. And for kids, it was probably a bit of an adventure you know. The only thing people never liked was putting gas masks on because whenever there was a drill, you have to put a gas mask on. It was a bit claustrophobic, wearing a gas mask. And you have to go with your gas mask everywhere you went.

KYN: What did it smell like?

MK: Rubber. Rubber. It was rubber. It was cone at the front there with all the - with the grill at the front and there was obviously things inside to stop the gas going. And it was just hard. You put it over your head and it was rubber and there is a very vile smell of rubber. We began to hate the smell.

KYN: Do you remember - did you have to wear them when you were in the air raid shelter?

MK: No. I don't ever remember. We used to take them. We used to take them. But I don't ever remember wearing them. But you had to wear them. Generally you did. Yeah, that one I could think about it. Now, you did have to wear them. It didn't do much because how are you going to eat your cake? How are you are going to eat your air raid cake if you couldn't do that. Air raid cake, I've since found this called Albert cake and it's the kind of stiff pastry at the bottom with the soft thing at the top and down with jam and I think it's called Albert cake. It was very British, very English. And I can almost taste it when I'm talking about it and I can't taste much. It was just - there was something very special about that. It was almost worthwhile going into the shelter for it.

KYN: Do you remember where - what you did when you found out that war is finished?

MK: I remember there was a huge celebrations in the streets and they were burning effigies and everyone was kissing each other. There were bonfires everywhere and everywhere was going 1945. And it was a great feeling of relief you know. And we all - as kids would think because as kids, we're going to be able to buy sweeties now because everything was in ration. You only could get E1s and - if you bought a quarter of sweets, a quarter pound of sweets, there are only about a half dozen sweets in that. That was the only you got and you got them once a month. I can't remember. It was very - we were only worried about sweets. But mums and dads were worried about eggs and sugar and whatnot, all the things you couldn't buy. The only good thing was because there was no sugar and there was very little eggs and if you wanted sugar, you'd have to buy it on the black market. Teeth - children's teeth were considered or were considerably better during the war than after that when it became

there. But bearing in mind that Britain didn't have - they didn't stop their ration until about 1953 I think it was, '52 or '53. So that was well after the war. We were still rationing. Well, Germany was building and building itself up. And we were still - we still had bomb sites all over the place. Quite amazing.

KYN: Did you use to play on the bomb sites?

MK: Yeah. Yeah, and the shelters. The shelters were the thing. Maybe I shouldn't say this but I lost my virginity in a shelter. I did. In an air raid shelter. And I was very young. But nowadays, I would probably had them in the court for it but I, no. But I can't believe - I don't believe - I shouldn't be recording this just now. But I find it difficult to believe when you hear these stories about a woman, an attractive teacher seduce the boy and he doxed her. At some point, I don't believe that's really - I cannot believe me at 17 or 16 years of age would have doxed a good-looking teacher because she seduced me. [Laughter] Not then, not now. Not ever. [Laughter]

KYN: So speaking of teachers, tell me about Max the schoolboy.

MK: I was a naughty schoolboy. I used to do terrible things. I was play acting things all the time. I remember I got - when I was called out, I was called to stand there with the teacher because you were misbehaving and I can't remember why I was misbehaving. But I was. And I remember a wall, which was planks of woods. You know these lovely planks that then it was out of hook and I got the hook and I was holding the hook and I put it under my belt and I was actually swaying, you know how you do? With the thing, and the place was in an uproar. They were screaming. Until the whole thing gave way and the plank came out. Can you imagine? It was absolutely terrible. It was absolutely terrible. I think my father had to pay for the repair of it. It was terrible.

And I was quite light really but I was hooked in the back and I would do - I've done it since on stage with shoes. You fit them into the stage and you can sway all the way. You can sway that way and that way. But I was doing this with this thing so I learned it there. I was learning good tricks at that point. Then the whole thing came away from the wall. [Laughter] Place was in an uproar, screaming and laughing. It satisfied me when people laugh. I just thought it was great.

KYN: Is it more important to make people than to study?

MK: No. I was very - I always thought I was fortunate. I always passed exams. Touch wood. I've always been able to pass exams and always with flying colours. I used to put it down to the night before I would study and that's what I got. But I've since thought "That's not possible". That I just happen to study what I got the following day. Always that. It could happen once or twice but it cannot happen always. And I think I was taking in knowledge and it was because I was bored having taken it in and retained it - I have a great retention for things for words and things. I've always been good at these things you know. Less good at that mathematical, and certainly not with arithmetic, very good arithmetic. But geometry, I always thought "What point is that?" And algebra "What is that all about?" I

used to think "What good is that? I'm like Billy Connolly. I must have missed the X time tables. I must have been off that day, when they did the X times table, A, B, and C. It meant nothing to me.

But literature, history, I love history. I had a wonderful teacher, history teacher. And I love history. So I've always been good at that. I was good at English, always good retention. I can remember as I can now remember lines and songs and things. And was very good at making - the brain works quickly and I'm able to make songs and stories and whatnot quickly.

KYN: Did your school have a focus on drama, performing arts, and music and stuff?

MK: No. No, they had no performing - none of that. You had to do it yourself. That's the - I felt that was my duty to provide that for the family because the school were not providing it I thought it was my duty to provide it on their behalf.

KYN: So did you first like make a club or anything?

MK: No, I didn't. It was all then. And when I was 14, at Queens Park School, I joined the 730 Club. It was a Jewish club for kids, but older kids, 16 you had to be. But I got in. I was 14 because I could sing and I used to sing with a band. And I was always singing. My voice was discovered when I was in primary school, the last year of primary school. A teacher, who was absolutely horrible to everyone, her name was Miss Dick, and she would rap you over the knuckles with a ruler on its edge, you know and give you what for, and we were singing "Young Moldy who lives at the foot of the hill, whose faith every virgin with every knock will."

And I had a soprano voice. And she was listening and she was going from person to person "Keep singing, keep singing." And I was singing. And then finally, she alighted on me. And when she heard my voice, that was my life changed. She took such a keen interest in me. There's no way I could have failed the exam. And I got - it was the time of the 11 plus you know when you are going into secondary school. And I got huge mark - I got prizes for it and I got all sorts of things. And it was because of her.

And it was because I had a voice, she took such an interest in me after that "You have the voice of angel," she said. And I had a great soprano voice, which I lost quickly enough I'm sure.

KYN: Did you use in your bar mitzvah?

MK: Pardon?

KYN: Did you use it in your bar mitzvah?

MK: I did. I did. I used it in my bar mitzvah. Yes, I did. I used it in my bar mitzvah. [Sings from his portion.] I could sing at bar mitzvah and I could sing it beautifully.

KYN: Was bar mitzvah like a really special time for you or is it again one of those things that was just kind of ingrained?

MK: No, no. Bar mitzvah was special. You are shining. It was your chance to shine, your chance to do something and to know that you are there. It didn't mean like a big deal to me that I was becoming a man. I thought I was a man anyway you know. But it was a chance to shine, you know to show that you're taking in what you've been taught and you could do your portion and you can do Maftir and Haftorah and everything and it was a great thing.

KYN: Did you have a party?

MK: I had a party. Yeah. Not big. A very small party as I remember. I'm just trying to think about it now. It's not memorable. It's not memorable. There was a party of sorts. And I remember I had the Kiddush after the thing in the shule.

KYN: So you say that's going to your 17 and you had your bar mitzvah, how do you deal with the changes during those sort teenage years before being an adult?

MK: I was always performing. There was not a time in my life where I wasn't performing. I was always performing. Even as a kid, I used to dress up and do things. But I was always performing. And when I went from there, I thought I was grown up. By 14, I was joining a 16-year-old club, at least the minimal age was 16. And I got interested in - bearing in mind that I had been seduced before I was 13, when I was talking to you about the air raid shelter, that's - a young girl from--who was 14 and I think I was 12 or 11 or 12.

Anyway, so I was growing up fairly quickly and aware. So I was always interested in doing things you know and singing, in singing with bands and learning songs and doing things. And I did - and I sang with a band I was very young when I started singing with bands. I mean proper bands with all the guys playing in it. And I did - went to the 730 Club and I used to sing there with the band.

And eventually, when I was about 15 or 16, the guy who ran these bands said to me "Would you like come on a Saturday afternoon and sing? You'd be paid for it." And he gave me my first wage, £2, to sing in a furniture shop it was, and we were down there. It was called Wood House, the furniture shop and there was like a big balcony there and we were in the middle of the floor on the thing. We play all the standards and things I was singing with them. And it was a remarkable thing for me to do. And I was really young, really young singing all the jazz songs you know.

KYN: So, who was the audience?

MK: The people, the people who would be shopping in the place. It was like the shopping malls but it wasn't a shopping mall. It was a shop, a big shop and it had a band and they would stand and listen and applaud and do all that. It was right up my alley to do this, right up my alley. It was fitting in with my plans beautifully.

KYN: So did you - how old were you then, were you still in school?

MK: No, it wasn't - I didn't leave school until I was 17. I would be about 15, 16 by that time. And I was already going - doing things. Then when I was 18, 17, I started a rock and roll band called the Arc Angels. No, it wasn't then. It was after that. The Arc Angels, yeah, it was the Arc Angels then when I was just 17, just before - because I went into the army 18. They conscripted me into the Royal Signals when I was 18. So it was there I started this. And I did my very first professional gig, apart from singing with the band, we did a professional gig in the theatre.

As the band, they would clap and say "Bring on my musicians." And we would come on as a thing and we'd play our rock selection. But we were very good as a thing and it was Jewish boys. And because of one thing and another, their parents didn't want them to be in the theatre and didn't want them - but I was so keen. And there were some good musicians amongst them. Really good musicians and we were very, very popular. I think I've got photographs of it somewhere. And we were called the Arc Angels and were really good and we were getting some notoriety. And that was between - I was 17. And then of course my papers arrived for the army.

KYN: Can I ask a quick question? Why didn't the parents of some of the Jewish boys want their boys in the theatre?

MK: They didn't want them in look and didn't want them in anything. Some of them were fairly well-off and they didn't want their children to be involved with that you know. It was kind of frowned upon.

KYN: So do they have to stop and you had to get new recruits?

MK: Yeah. What happened was, was this letter. It stopped. And I think we restarted again after I came out of the army. And then one of our - I've got it in my life story in fact which I do on stage, I do. There's a lot of comedy in it as well. And I say in this life story that "It was one for all, all for one. The band that plays together, stays together. There can be no exception to that rule." And then one day, this guy came to me, they're Jewish people who own The Metropole Theatre in Glasgow and said to me they want me to go solo and they offered me £50 a week to go as a solo performer. And I said "Nothing could dissuade me from that course of action. A band that plays together, stays together." The following week, I opened as a solo artist at that place. All my thoughts were out of the window and I became a solo artist from that point on.

KYN: And was it the money that made you changed your mind?

MK: No. I just want - I always wanted to be a solo artist. I was on my way to being a Danny Kaye and I was me being - probably the fellowman who implanted my mind was the fact that that's the way I could do it is by being a solo artist.

KYN: And how did you, in those early days, maybe it's still applies later too, but how did you used to deal with pre-show nerves?

MK: I think we do - you can't be overconfident because you always have nerves. But the moment you open your mouth and there's an acceptance, the nerves dissipate.

KYN: Do you have any rituals?

MK: No. And I particularly didn't want. I mean people used to say, "I always have a little port or a little sherry before I go." I thought "No." That would be a danger. To rely on something that has nothing to do with you really, the fact that you worry, feels like taking drugs I suppose. So "I only feel good if I have a shot of heroin in my arm or I smoke a joint or something". And that's rubbish. That's a rubbish. You are responsible for what you do.

So your mind has got to be clear. So I feel even to this day, I feel apprehensive. Particularly, if I'm on a new thing. Nobody was more nervous than me when - after retiring. I mean I'm skipping now, for 14 years after they selling, because we had our own theatre here for 25 years, and after retiring, when I was offered to do - I did this thing at the concert hall, it was called the Best of British, I was persuaded because the guy didn't have a lot of money and he said he might lose and I would guarantee the thing and I hadn't seen the thing and I've not appeared for 14 years as a personal appearance anywhere. And I walked out and I said - he announces my name, and I got a standing ovation. It's like "What? Excuse me?" Well, they brought me out and everything, any nervous you have disappeared entirely. So that was wonderful.

But then after that, they came to me from Mandurah, the Mandurah Centre of Performing Arts, and said "Would you like to do a show an evening with Max Kay? Because all your fans are out here, they love you. They listen to your radio show. Et cetera." And I said "What is it you want?" He said "An hour each half." I said, "Two-hour show. You'll have to give me some weeks to think about this." So I thought about it and I thought I could probably could do this. And I wrote something. And I wrote it and I came back and I said "Yes, I could do it."

The staff that advertising, within two days, the first show was sold out. Then they came back and said "Would you do another one?" I said yeah. And the second one was sold out. And when I walked on to that, I was so nervous because I hadn't been doing it for 14 years and it was a new show and it was a new thing and a new - I had to get the moves right. I was shitting for part of the table, I was reading a story, the life story and it was doing things and I was singing all the songs relevant to their career, et cetera. And doing all the jokes and I had to remember all the jokes and it was two hours something, a long time to remember. And it was just - so I was so nervous until I got on and realised they were loving everything. And then you just - it all dissipates and you just - you become natural. And I've always been natural. I've never been a natural performer. What you're seeing now, that was what I do on stage. I speak like that because that's the way I speak. If you time - put another persona across, it's too much of a hassle to do it you know. They're not seeing you. People have got to - they either like you as you are or they don't like you. And that's the one thing that I see about Billy Connolly. He is doing him. He is playing him. And that's what you've got to do. And that's what I do on radio. And that is why that is so successful. Our radio, we've got 200,000 listeners on Curtin FM with Jenny and I. And it's because I'm chatting to you as we are chatting now. And that's

what people want to do. They don't want "On the top of the hour and it will be.." and all that, very, very Americanised guff you know. It's nothing really.

People want to hear you because that's the only way they can get a picture of you on radio is from what you're saying you know. I mean they might know what I look like of course but they want to feel that thing that you are with them. You are just talking to them just like a normal person. You are not putting anything on. There are no airs and graces.

KYN: Were your parents supportive when you started-?

MK: My father wasn't. My mother was. My mother loved the idea. My father wasn't. He said "You can never make a living like that. You will never ever make a living." And the truth of the matter is apart from a shock period in my career, I never ever didn't make a living.

KYN: So what did he want you to do?

MK: He wanted me to get a job, come into his business and do something there. And that would be the last thing in the world I ever wanted to do. I didn't want to do it. I didn't want to be any part of that. And I always remember my grandmother - bless her heart - saying to me "You find a job that you love and you'll never ever have to work a day in your life." And she was right, absolutely right.

And everything I've done in my life has been geared round - I don't say, for instance, being president of the National Trust is like that, but the communication skills are the same. For whatever you do, whatever kind of job, if you have good communication skills and you're good with people then that's really what matters. And the rest of it is just learning about - doing your brief and learning about what you've got. Everything else is still, it's still you. You have to impress regardless what the thing, and the other thing is only details that you can read over and learn the agendas and that's it.

KYN: So did - was there a sense of animosity, like was it acrimonious or just a couple of words here and there?

MK: No, no. It wasn't acrimonious. It wasn't acrimonious. It was - what was acrimonious for my father was when I married out of my religion. That was really - that was terrible. That was awful, awful, awful. That's hard to remember. That was a difficult point.

But no, he didn't want me to do it. He just said "There is nothing in it. You can never make a living from it." And I said to him "I'm different from you. I am different. I've always been different. This is what I love. This is what I do and I will do it." You know and except for a very small period of my life when it was a bit difficult and I've done a big, big summer season and then there was nothing for several months. And then I was sent up to Inverness to start - to be in a show with Andy Stewart. Do you remember Andy Stewart? The Scottish entertainer? He was only small but we became firm friends. I became his manager and it just blossomed into the most remarkable success story.

We owned a tour, the Canadian-American tour. We used to take artists out from Canada all through Canada, all down to the West Coast to America, Los Angeles and back up. I played at Carnegie Hall three times. And that was just a remarkable life. Sad because I was away a lot and I had family, my wife and two children, god love her and it was hard for her but - and then we came to New Zealand and Australia which is why I'm here actually, if I have not seen Perth, we'd played here three times when we came from Perth right through - go through right all through the big main capital cities and then through to New Zealand to play in all the big cities and all the big places there and some of the smaller places. So I was away a lot. The year before I came here, I was away seven months of that year from Glasgow at different times, not all - but it was still seven months. And I thought "This can't go on. We can't do that. We got two young children. I just couldn't do that."

KYN: So tell me quickly, before we got there, about conscriptions, how did it feel when you got the papers?

MK: Well, I knew that we had to do it. You had to do your bit. It was two years. And it was awful because I was just starting from a rock and roll and whatnot and it was all happening and I thought "That's a bit sad". But I went in there. And I continued the entertaining thing. I used to run dances for them and do things. So I even had a special - like a special relationship when I did my army thing. Not all great. It wasn't all wonderful. But I think I was a fairly good soldier. But I also did a lot of the entertaining stuff and you know because there's another side, a social side. And they used to put me in charge of things. And I would run dances and whatnot when we were there. And then I was pushed to Cyprus when all the problems were there, the riots and whatnot. And my father had to go into the hospital, and there was nobody to look after him. My mother was ill. And on compassionate leave, they allowed me to stay, not to go there, to Cyprus, and they brought me here. They brought me a Dregghorn Barracks in Edinburgh, where I could travel back and forth and drive, which I did. And then eventually, they said "You'd have to go back again." But it didn't evenutate, I didn't go.

KYN: So you never actually were on the ground?

MK: I was on the ground but never on active duty. I was never on a battlefield. I knew all the things about battlefields. Now strangely enough, never on a battlefield. When I came here in 1970, '70 was it? Yes. They asked me, would I go to Vietnam and entertain the American and Australian troops? And this came through the government, not through the - yeah, I can do that. I'll do that. And I said to Norma, Norma said "I don't want you to go." Because there were cases of people and entertainers being killed, I thought but this is through the government. This is not some agent doing it. The government are doing this so you're conscripted. You get all your dog tags and you can only jags and everything you get is like going into the army again.

So I said I thought that would be great. You got nothing from it really. But you're doing your duty for your country. And since this was my country, I thought we're gonna do it. And we went there and I had to audition in front of brigadiers and generals and I did my act and they

said - and after they are all "Very, very, very...Oh, Mr. Kay, that was absolutely super but perhaps a little too riskee for our army." That's exactly what the guy said to me. I said "Oh really? What army is that? Is that the Salvation Army?" He went into fits of laughter. And I used that in my guide but I think, is that in the Salvation Army?"

And I said, "Look, if it's too riské," I said "I'm certainly not the army that I was in because I've done national service." I say, "But it will obviously be cut and pasted and cut to shoot if I see there are people there who don't want anything even remotely smutty then it wouldn't be there."

And on the very first night, I in Saigon, I played with NCOs Club, packed it was. And I'm - I was petrified because he used me in a kilt. And I thought, soldiers, what do they want to see me for? Why would they want - they want girls. And there was an act before me and it was a girl in than that and I was in the middle and I walked out. And I started and they went absolutely berserk. They went mad. They were screaming, laughing, shouting to me, sending up beers. And when I left the stage, I swear to God this is true, they came backstage with me. And there was nobody in the audience. They were all backstage pushing me. "Down, down! Skull, skull!" I even had to down a can of beer, several cans of beer. And it was incredible. And that's what it was for the rest of the tour. Whenever I went, it was amazing. But I went to a fire support base right at the very front and everyone was quiet and I could see the SAS crawling and then and you know faces all covered and they were all there because they are surreptitiously - you're not allowed to know where they are or where they're going. And I was doing very well and there was laughing. The act was good. And singing and doing all the things to get them there. And they started shelling me. Shells started to come over. I said "Jesus! I knew my act was bad. I didn't think it was this bloody bad." [Laughter] So as I was doing this, we still continued with the show. And I said "Can you believe that?" I said "OK, they don't like Scotsmen. They don't like Scotsmen. And I can understand that. That's sending shells over. I just say "Don't like me." That's all. Boo me. [Laughter] Do something. Don't send shells over."

And the next thing, number two squad went and they took the whole side out of the hill. They bombed them right through and took the whole bloody thing and then was silence. I said "See? Nobody messes with me." And it was just - it was fantastic night, an unbelievable night. And they were screaming. It was just a wonderful, wonderful show.

And I played for the American troops there. We went to this place Swan Lok. We went into this thing and people were walking about like zombies because they were on the weed and everything down there. So it was the American base and we were being shot out on the road down we had to go out the carriers and take cover because they were shooting at us in the road. And we eventually get to Swan Lok. We're going to this compound. It was a big compound. There was a guy sleeping on a bench where the audience will be. There's a stage and there's a big but there's no walls, so just open.

And we go set up and think "Oh, they'll come eventually." Nobody came. So the first act went on. The second act went on. Then I went

on. And when I went on, this guy got up while I was singing and walked out. So he was sleeping on the bench and then got up, saw me and walked out. Then I go "There's nobody here. We'll just stop. What will we do?" And the next thing, there's a crowd and crowd, a crowd of Americans with cameras taking photographs of me in the full kilt. And then they sat down. I did my act. And they're laughing and clapping and applauding and whatnot. I walked off and they walked out. So my vision that they only want women, scantily-clad women was totally wrong. They wanted men in skirts, not girls in skirts. It was incredible. It was just incredible. Anyway, as a result, we played Happy Valley where Bob Hope lead and find out things about Bob Hope. Anyway, that's another part of the story. And we received - I received a medal, the Vietnam Logistical Support Medal, some years later, which is really valuable. It's a great medal. And a citation from General Abrahams, the Commander of the American troops in Vietnam for services. And I'm very proud of it, really proud.

KYN: So [Side comments] once you finished the army.

MK: So I did that then that was in the '70s. In the '70s, later in the '70s, I was doing - I was going over to Sydney doing shows in RSL clubs and the big casino places and playing the Mandarin Club and playing all these places, very successful. It was huge. But I had always promised that I didn't want to go away for any length of time. I said to my wife I would not go away for all that time.

And we - I was doing - I got the opportunity to put on show in a local hotel here in town, the King's, it's used to be the King's Ambassador. And we put on a show. It was the kind of show that was forerunner, the five past nine shows that I used to put on the Civic Theatre and we put it on the town. It was hugely successful but it's not financially successful for me but it was for the people who put it on. But it was good and it was the format that was great. And this led to - the show was so successful that the people were happy about it. It was lovely. That I was asked to put on a show in Inglewood, where the clock is. Do you know Inglewood? Where the clock is, that used to be the Civic Theatre.

And I said I can't do it because the previous owner had put in a swimming pool in the middle of the floor and it would be called the Mexican Fiesta and it was just not that. And they didn't have a cross arch to play the kind of things I was going to do. I need a proper stage and process. And I said to him "I can't do it, there. Will you do it?" And the guy said to me, Peter Harris was his name, he said "Well, I'm just going to send it to auction." And this was '75. And I said "Really? What would you want for it? What would you expect?" And he gave me a figure." And I said "No, really." And on impulse, I said "I'll take it." I had no idea now about catering, no idea about bar, nothing at all because I only knew the stage side and I knew how to do and how to produce, et cetera. But I had no idea how to do the other.

Anyway, we shook hands on it. We did it. I had already - the reason I came out here was I put money into a building business, doing building panels here with another fellow from the shule. That's what brought me out here in 19 - when I first came. So I had some experience of building and I knew that I could renovate this place

there. When I came home to my wife, she nearly died; "What? You can't do that. You don't know anything about it." And I said "But we've got to do it."

To cut the long story short we did it after a lot of things. We actually got it. We had a building license and I got people to do the job and they brought the theatre back to a proper theatre with a stage and a down stage as well, with that pull-out stage as well at the bottom with the steps down so you could get down to the audience. And did the dressing rooms as best we could within the confines of the shape of the building, within the footprint. Get up the theatre, got it going and we opened the theatre. And the first year, we made a small profit. And then I put on a pantomime at the end of the year for children and I lost all the profit.

KYN:

Why?

MK:

Well, it was Cinderella and they don't know the concept of pantomime here. You know pantomime in Britain was every - we have family, all the family went. Here, they left. It's like a babysitting service. They just bring their children and they came back and got them afterwards. So it was wrong. The whole thing was wrong. But it was still a good show. We did Cinderella and I was Buttons. And we did a good show and it was great.

Anyway, the following year, it was really good too. It was a really good year. Thank God. Otherwise, I'd probably going to go bankrupt again. And it became very - it was a great place but I felt I had to - I had problems with the landlord and whatnot. It went on fire twice. The place went on fire because of the electrics. And I had to get out. And eventually, we built - just cutting this short, we built a new theatre. We ran there since - from 1976, we ran in the old theatre, the old until 1980, '81. I'm telling a lie. And then on May 1981 we opened a brand new theatre which we built in Beaufort Street down towards Highgate. And we built it swish. It was really swish. We got 300-seater upstairs and that's a whole story on its own with a Jewish content in it as well. I mean it's unbelievable. I've never been ever to an auction in my life. I didn't know what it was, an auction. I've never - I just never needed to go. And they were auctioning in this building and I had seen it. And I had seen this building and I thought "This is great."

And I talked to my architect who was a Jewish man, John Silbert, from here, very skilled architect. And I said to him the night before "What would happen if I decided to keep this building but build it - but I have to see what's in the top and what it looks like? How can I look and see what it looks like inside from the top?" Because it was gantries, it was an old meat factory. So there was gantries and cool rooms and God knows what. He said "You'd have to pay an engineer to go in, to look at it. He'll do a plan quickly and show you what it looks like and you can see if you can save the building." He said "But it will cost you." He said "It will cost you way you get it. Remember you're going to pay \$5,000, \$6,000 and it was a lot of money, and whether you get the building or not." I said "Let's do it."

We got in there and then I went to the auction. Once he said "Yes you can do that and you can get - it would be much bigger than you

want but it will be a good place". We wanted a 300-seater. He said "You'll finish up with that 400 or maybe more." And a big function room upstairs. I thought "That's a good idea to have." So I went to the auction. Woolworths were there bidding for this building and it was a big people building. It was a non-conforming meat works so it was - they have been slaughtering and whatnot there and whatnot so it was pretty grotty.

Anyway, this guy cycles in in his bicycle and I said to John Silbert "Who is that?" And he starts bidding, this guy. He said "That's Finkelstein." He said "Finkelstein is one of the most prolific litigant's here." He's the shrewdest of the shrew. He used to sleep in the shule at night. He was loaded. You know how people say he's loaded but he was a tramp. He would go to a bar mitzvah and take a handfuls of chopped herring and put it in his pocket. And it was horrible, a terrible man, an awful man. And he used to take the shule to court and whatnot because he didn't receive - he had his rights. Anyway, he comes in and he starts bidding. And I said "Excuse me a minute. This is not right." I said to John Silbert because he was standing next to me, I said "John, this guy, we don't know - what is he bidding for?" He said, "He must want the building." "What for?" I said. "I don't know what he wants it for."

So I said, "I'm going to stop this auction." He said "You can't do that." "Nobody has asked this man. He is a tramp, who cycled in. And nobody is asking for any bona fides. We had to show everything and I'm sure everyone else had too." I said "Why doesn't he?" So I go up to the auctioneer and I said "I'm sorry but I'm not happy with this auction." I said "This guy is coming in and then he is putting bids in and nobody knows who he is and why he is doing it. And you have not got any bona fide from him." And so I said "You'll have to stop the auction."

So he stops the auction. And he said "This is most unusual. Let's stop the auction." And we go inside. And his house was on the property. And he said, "This gentleman has been bidding and he is not happy with you having come in." He said "I want the property." The guy said, he said "Yes," he said "But we haven't seen your bona fides. We don't know if you can afford to buy this property. So we have to do something about you." And he kicks out from his pocket an offer of acceptance, which has been signed for his property for three and a half million dollars in Bibra Lakes. I said "Oh, well."

So he said "I always wanted this property in Bulwer Street." I said "This isn't Bulwer Street, this is Beaufort Street". He said "No, I don't want this property. I want the one on Bulwer Street." I said "No, that was earlier this morning that one." He said, "Oh! Is that so?" And he jumped on the bike and cycled away. Could you believe it? Only Jews could have a chutzpah to do such a thing. He was completely oblivious to the fact there. And he was gone. He was gone. And we did it. And I actually got it.

The long, long story, I eventually got the building and we built it and we built this and we had a swish opening. The premier of Western Australia Sir Charles Court opened it and it was just fantastic and it was a huge success for 25 years.

KYN: And what did you call the theatre?

MK: It was called The Civic Theatre. It was called Max Kay's Civic Theatre. And it was a 450-seater, beautiful. Because they made a mistake with heights, we had to dig out the floor so there was a lower level and a higher level, just like Vegas, just like Las Vegas. Where you have these various levels so that we can get the height and the cross arch right so they were all relevant. And it was just a beautiful theatre and it went very well. We played to 1.75 million people over the years there. That's a lot of people and a lot of meals. A lot of - 1.75 meals as well and cups of coffee. So it was unbelievably huge.

But the people that played there, Ronnie Corbett played there, Phyllis Diller played there, Rolf Harris, I shouldn't mention him, and some - maybe not mention him. [Laughter] Delete that one. And big stars played there as well as our show which was by far the most popular of all the shows. The five past nine series of shows were just packed. They were just unbelievable and our Christmas seasons were incredible. Incredible. But it wasn't - I'm painting a much more generous picture but it wasn't as easy as that at the beginning. I had overrun budget and whatnot and I had a terrible first year, wondering if I would be able to pay the bills but I was and it was just so big in the past year and I manage to pay all the bills and pay everybody off and do everything there and I was like half the size we are now because I kept throwing up after every meal. It was so serious.

So - and that was the success story.

KYN: And how - what caused you to - it feels like it was a little bit impulsive like this part of the chapter.

MK: I am kind of impulsive with these things. But I just - when I feel something and it's like that - when I feel it in my gut that it's right, I need to jump into it. I'm still like that. I'm still - if I feel something is right then I want to do it. I do it. I've got to do it. And I'm not a gambler. I would be anything but a gambler. But I mean some people will say "You're the biggest gambler in the world for doing that." And I was. But I have confidence in what I do, certainly in one side of what I do. I knew nothing about bars and restaurants but that's all stuff that you can learn. And you find out even to your own detriment, you find out. Like hiring, buying the very first place that we bought and then having to move out. One Saturday I tasted soup. And I said to the chef, I said "That soup is bloody awful." He said "What do you mean?" I said "Well, it's just tasteless. Taste it." And he tasted it. And instead of saying "Oh yeah, I'll put some bits in," he took his apron and walked out. Fortunately, about two weeks before, because these were huge, huge pots I had said "So how many onions would you put on this thing?" He said "I need about seven onions, big onions in that kind of thing and carrots." And I'd actually got it. And I don't know why I asked the question. I just thought - my wife makes some fantastic soups and I just thought how much more you would need in a soup like that? However, my wife and I had to cook for three weeks and the food was never better because she cooked it and she be like real haimischer cooking and she made soup like we made soup and she made roast beef like you

made roast beef. It was just fantastic. And people loved it. We did it for three week because this guy walked out.

And I learned a very valuable lesson. Be very careful what you say to a chef particularly on a Saturday night.

## **END INTERVIEW ONE**

7 Dumbarton Crescent, Menora. 15 August 2018.

Know Your Nation: OK. Just start by you saying your full name again but not your date of birth.

Max Kay: Max Kay.

KYN: Done.

MK: Older gentleman.

KYN: [Laughter] So I want to – OK. Let’s just – I know that there’s probably loads of things to say about this.

MK: Oh, there’s so much.

KYN: But just tell me why you ended it.

MK: I’d been offered a series, several times seats to run for Parliament. And I’m a really politically-motivated person. I’m interested in politics, very interested. And had I not been doing what I’m doing, I would probably – my next thing would have been a barrister or a lawyer, a barrister, a lawyer, that’s what I wanted to do.

But I thought “Well. This would be the time. 25 years I thought in the one place, how long can that go on for being successful?” And the truth of the matter is the last year was equally as successful as the first year of the new theatre, which was hugely successful. And it just went on. There was – on the last show we were doing and the new we were doing and we go, “And now, it’s time for us to part da da da da keep smiling da da. That’s what friends are for.”

Sobbing. People – my cast were sobbing. The staff was sobbing but the people in the audience were sobbing. They couldn’t believe that

this place that they know so well, it was – people – waitresses were hugging each other and crying in the middle of the floor. It was – it's just incredible.

And for the first week or so when I was singing this goodbye song, That's What Friends Are For, as a finale piece, I could hardly get through the song you know. It was because 25 years. And all these people, these wonderful people there and it was just – it was awash – the place was awash with tears. It was just incredible. I can't believe any other business would have had the same kind of thing. It was like a wake. It was like a wake or a wedding. It was just unbelievable.

But anyway "I thought 25 years is enough. You should always go just that bit before that is time to go. You should always just anticipate that." So I decided I'd go. And then I actually ran for the City of Perth Council. I thought there is my lesson. I'll learn my political lessons there and I would do that. And I did four years there, very successfully. And I ran for lord mayor and I said "I will only run for lord mayor" because by which time, I had a rich feeling of what Perth needed, what it required.

I used to work about 60 hours a week in council business. We got very little. There was no pay in those days, \$7,000 a year it was. In 2003, I started there. So I did that. And I ran for lord mayor. I wasn't successful unfortunately. But I hadn't – most people run for lord mayor and for Council. So if they don't get one, they get other. I didn't want to do the Council again. I thought I've got my ideas. I know what Perth needs. I know what it wants. I've already worked on it for the last four years. And we've got to – I mean I just have to – the Perth Fashion Festival, which is huge now, I started that. I actually went outside to get it because we were not doing a good job at it in Perth. I was the Chair of that committee. I was the Chair of every committee. You name it and I was the Chair of it. And I had very fixed ideas of what we needed to do to get – to become relevant. But unfortunately, I was beaten in the mayoral thing. So, I went away from it. And I was prepared. But I still had – when I was in Council, I had 22 boards and committees that I was on. I still have ten boards and some of them are the original ones that I was on there.

KYN: When you were on Council, was there a togetherness or were there lots of factions and agendas?

MK: There were factions. There is always a faction. Yeah.

KYN: Was it ...

MK: You had to walk with your back against the wall. And I was – it was difficult for me because I was already a persona. I was already a personality. So I was a danger you know because I don't think there was a day that I wasn't an Inside Cover for something whether it was – and every cartoon Alston used to do, there was me, eyebrows and a kilt. All they needed was eyebrows and a kilt and that was me at the background. That was the Counsellor Kay at the back. And he used to do it all the time. I've them all over the place. Even if it wasn't about me, it was somebody else, if Peter Natrass they were

having a go at, I was at the back in the kilt because it's the easiest cartoon in the world to do. So it was very funny. I mean I just used to laugh at that thought it was very funny.

KYN: Was there ever - were there polarising agendas in relation to wanting to move fast forward on one hand versus wanting to keep it in all its glory, looking back with rose coloured specs?

MK: Well, you never know what's in their mind and why they are doing it whether it's for political purposes. Like for instance, I said we should open markets in the town. There should be a market where there are stalls where they can do that. Because it was my understanding from Petticoat Lane for instance in London, the only time shops round about the markets did pretty good was when the market was opened.

So markets don't attract - because you can't buy everything at a market. If you put markets close to shop, they will go to that shop and they will buy at that shop because when people go to markets, then they want to buy. They might not see what the one in the market but they'll go to the shop and buy.

So markets, this is for years, whatever the shops around a market, they are the ones that do - they benefit so well from the markets, even Melbourne. If you go to Victoria markets, all the shops are packed because of the markets.

And I wanted that to happen. I wanted for us not to do the Perth Fashion Festival ourselves. There was an outside company that did it. And I actually gave it to them and I managed to scrape it through. It was costing us about \$400,000 a year to do it. And they only wanted \$185,000. I said we should just give it to them and let's drive for them for a couple of years. And they got it. And they've got and they've had it. And the market has grown exponentially since that period of time and I gave it to them. And I managed that and I had to do a lot of lobbying to get that through. So it was one of the things that all the bars and things Peter Natrass who was the Lord Mayor went around and spoke to people. We wanted to open up all the laneways and do all the stuff there.

And I know, look, it's like one of these people. Colin Barnett had probably seen exactly the same. We put all these wonderful things in like the stadium and Elizabeth Quay and these things that people are enjoying. And now, their Labor government gets the benefit of it. And that's what happens. So I had a very clear vision for Perth.

KYN: Did you - were performing at the same time?

MK: No. No, I wasn't. In fact, from that period of time, from 2001, I didn't 14 years do that - I didn't perform until - I didn't actually perform from 2001 until 2015.

KYN: Did you miss it? Was it like a different you or ...?

MK: No, I was enjoying what I was doing and I was with the National Trust as I said. I was on the board of the Royal Perth Heritage Society and Royal Perth Hospital Heritage Society. I was in 20 odd boards. And I

don't want to board unless I feel I can actually contribute something. There's no point in it. I'm not what possibly just goes in with no ideas. I want - I want to get things moving. And I'm still like that - I don't mind putting time into it. I make it really worthwhile. And I'm still in some of these boards like the St. Bartholomew's for homeless, I'm still in that. Since 2003 I've been in that board.

Swan Bells Foundation, you know the big bell? I'm in that board. And I've been on these boards. I love - I'm on the Prostate Cancer Foundation board and been there for a number of years. Where I feel that I can do some good and I can add something and of course, I was doing radio so there is the other thing. That was given - that was probably the outlet that - and I'm doing that now with Curtin FM and I do it once a week and I won't do anymore. I used to do my own program there on a Sunday but that became very onerous. It's just having to get up on a Sunday and do it. So I do this program which is huge, a big, big, big, big following. And in fact, because of that program, this enables me to do my one-nightstands because everybody - I am still relevant. I haven't just stopped and gone into hibernation. I have at the moment for this.

KYN: So just to finish off, I want to try and cover - I want to hear about Yeshiva and I want to hear about Norma.

MK: Right. Norma is the rock of my life. She is the stable influence that I never had. She is the epitome of every man's dream of a wife and she has always been that. She has been supportive. She is good at almost everything she did. She sewed miles and miles of cut and she can do anything she tries to do, she puts her hand to, she's very, very good at. She is a magnificent cook. And she is seeing me through this difficult period at the moment. I mean I wouldn't want to be going through it without her.

KYN: How did you meet her?

MK: Pardon?

KYN: How did you meet?

MK: I met her - Norma was a dancer in the very first show that I did. And we fell in love. And from that point on, there was never anybody else for me. Even when I was then playing in Inverness, she was in Rothesay, which was down - Rothesay was right down you know Isle of Bute. I used to drive down from Inverness all the way down, go down to Gourrock or was it - yeah. And jump on a boat and go across to see her and be back up there for Monday night for the show. And everybody knew it and everybody knew it and we've been together for all these years. And she has been everything to me.

KYN: Do you feel comfortable talking to me about your - what was your dad's reaction?

MK: My whole family's reaction was terrible. It was awful. It was just awful. You know, the feeling that she will always hate you because you're a Jew, and I said "You know, that's not true. We're people. We're not defined necessarily by what house we're born in. I'm Jewish because I was born in that house where all Jews live. But if I

had been born next door, I would have been a Catholic or whatever. We're not all defined like that." And it so happened that Norma's mother used to work for Jewish people in Manchester, in the rag trade. And she was love - she was close to them. So she knew more about it. And she used to bring home Matzah at Pesach and Matzah ball soup and everything like that. So they knew that. Manchester is very difficult not to be Jewish because it's such a huge population there. So my wife is from Manchester. Norma is from Manchester. However, I never ever said - there was never ever a time in my life where I said to Norma "You have to change to suit me." She came and said to me when we were here "I want to become Jewish."

Now the fact - before that, she can cook Jewish food like you've never tasted. My mother taught her all the recipes, which were my grandma's recipes. She has got a recipe book here which she does in a leather bound book for all the kids, which she'll pass down to the children, to all my kids because we all love Jewish food. We all love the things that we love, you know. And she has got a recipe book, what she was down there. She has been a remarkable woman, a remarkable, talented woman. She is.

KYN: So did she do that before or after you had your own family?

MK: She converted before we - oh, we have two children. We have two children. But both of them - my son was circumcised. My daughter was not but she would. We still brought - I mean even though she was not Jewish, I was still very Jewish. We joined the shule when we came here. And then she converted. Without asking, she came. She converted. And it was lovely and she has been there so my kids. They all did bar mitzvahs and they all did - all of them have done - they've all got some sort of training you know. And I think that's important. Then they can decide what they want after that. If you don't like it, don't do it.

KYN: What was the Jewish - what was the reception of Jewish community here when you arrived?

MK: Very good. It was a good Jewish community. Very close. Very nice. There was a great deal animosity between Liberal and Orthodox. It's much closer now I think than it used to be. You would get children who would have parties and one of the kids would come from the school and would say "You can't come because you're Liberal." And it was very bad. It was a really, bad, nasty thing.

And one girl - the guy who we bought the business with was not Jewish and his daughter went to school, to Mount Lawley school where lots of Jewish kids went before - this was before Carmel, before the secondary school, et cetera. And she went to school and then she was invited to a party. She went there. And when she got to the door, her mother says "Sorry, you can't come in. You're not Jewish."

I went mad with them. I went mad. I said "If you want to know what causes anti-semitism, you've just demonstrated to me why Hitler wanted to kill Jews. You have done it. You are responsible for doing that. How dare you say that? At what harm could it have done you to allow that child in? Have you never had a gentile in this place? Never

ever had a gentile in your house? What does it do? Does it make a lesser person because a gentile walked into your house?"

And that was me. And I can't help it when I hear that because we are just people. That's all we are. And people can just go there. I don't believe we should be in a ghetto. I certainly do believe Jewish should be in a ghetto although this might have been a Menorah but might have been of a ghetto. But I do believe we should be in ghetto because it just makes us a target when you are in a ghetto. They know where to get you if they were to get you.

I'm always aware that there are certain sections of the community who don't like Jews. I'm always aware of that. But I think you'll impress with who you are and what you are rather than your religion. And the religion wouldn't impress anybody. People are past religions now. It shows in the census how little people worry about religions. But it's you as a person. It's how you portray yourself and how you react with the community.

To me, when something happens to the community, whether it would be a farmer drought relief or whether it would be the Telethon. They introduce our own wild charities. And to me, when that happens, the JNF pales into insignificance. And that is - when people say that to me "Oh, but that's Jewish." I said, "Well, so what?" And these people need it and you are living here. You are living in their country, in our country and you are part of that country so you have to do your bit and there's no use sending off to the JNF. Israel could be a richer country than we are. We don't know. It probably is. It probably is a lot richer than we are. It's certainly more innovative than we are.

KYN: So, is there anything else like any jazzy message that you want to end the tape with? Maybe a pithy message for your family?

MK: I think my message to everyone would be who you are. It's an accident of birth whether you are born into - whether you'd be Jewish, Catholic, whatever you are, it's an accident of birth you are born in there. It is better to be a good person because I'm sure if you found a person living in a cave who knew nothing about religion, but was a good person, if you think a good person will always - if you believe in the heaven or if you believe in doing good or whatever you happen to believe in, a good person is more important than a good religion.

There is no such thing as a good religion. There's only a good person, a good decent person who does the right thing by other people and does the right thing by his family. And I think that's very important. You just be yourself. I've always been myself. And I just think to be a persona, some people never make it on stage because they can't be who they are. They're always trying to be something else. And I think now people are beginning to realise on this stage. The more natural you are, the most successful you'll be. And I think that's - be a natural being I think. Do your thing. Be good. Be kind to one another.

**END OF INTERVIEW**