

ORAL HISTORY: Turning my Interview into a Story

Interviewer: Micah BL

Interviewee: Ilan Brand

When Ilan was five or six years old, he moved from a rented house to an apartment in a small village. The moving “van” was actually a horse drawn cart that they put all their furniture in. The apartment was very small, two bedrooms, a kitchen and a bathroom. During the day, one of the bedrooms was transformed into a living room using a folding couch. They didn’t have a phone, a TV, or a refrigerator. Instead they had an icebox. Every week he would go down three flights of stairs, buy ice from the person selling it, and go back up.

Ilan came to the United States from Israel on a boat when he was 22. The boat arrived at Wilmington, California. He remembers seeing a small bridge. The bridge was huge compared to what he was used to, so he was amazed. When he got off the ship, his cousin picked him up in his corvette. He took Ilan to his first baseball game, and he thought it was very strange. Ilan started going to school in California. He was very studious. He never went to parties or drank. He finished engineering school in three years with honors. Ilan went on to become a pilot. There were some incidents where he was almost killed, but overall he really enjoyed flying and misses it today.

Ilan is still nostalgic about his life in Israel. He got into a lot of trouble as a kid, but he had lots of friends. Family was very important to everyone because the holocaust had happened about 10 years before. Ilan’s parents family, about 35 people, were all killed during the holocaust. Ilan is very grateful that he is healthy, and that his family is doing well. Ilan thinks family is very important, and is happy that Judaism is part of his life.

