

## StoryCorps Interview at the Yiddish Book Center

Amy Klein and Christa Whitney

Amy Klein: He just loved being around all the young people, and he loved when it was really, really crowded here. And he just loved the action—he always wanted to be in the center of the action. We would go to all kinds of events together—klezmer music, movies that were showing, and talks. We were always here. And then when he wasn't able to walk as well, like during the week, if he didn't have much to do, I would say to him, "Dad, what'd you do today?" And he goes, "I went to the Yiddish Book Center parking lot, and I just sat in my car and read my book." He just loved being here, and he said, "When I'm here, I feel like I'm coming home."

Christa Whitney: Yeah, he said that in the interview that I did. Somehow the space of this building allowed that, you know, for him to feel at home.

AK: It's his history. He grew up with Yiddish being spoken in his family and it all was very comfortable for him.

Probably a month before he died, we went to try to go to the movies. My dad just couldn't get out of the car, and so we said well let's just go get a picnic dinner and we'll go to the Yiddish Book Center, to the parking lot. So we went over to Atkins and we got a delicious dinner. I think he had egg salad, which he always loved, and we came to the upper parking lot. It was a very beautiful night, and the fog was coming in over the mountains. And we just sat there, quiet, eating our dinner, and every once in a while we would talk. And we were talking about how I would come to that spot to talk to him after he died. When I wanted to connect with him, that's where I would come. And we both agreed that that would be a great spot.

I think coming back here to work and to be close to Jewish identity and Jewish history was like closing the circle of my dad's life. He was so proud of this place and all the things that you guys have done. He used to tell me all the time about the heating system in the floors and the mountain where the books are stored, over and over. He was so proud. And I really do think that it helped him to have closure on his life.