EI-316
MAYOR ABRAHAM D. BEAME (BIRNBAUM)
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INTERVIEWER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.
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TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 4/1994
TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR., 5/1994

ENGLAND, 1906
AGE AT IMMIGRATION: 6 MONTHS
RESIDENCES: LONDON, ENGLAND
US: NYC, LOWER EAST SIDE

Oral Historian's Note: Mayor Beame was interviewed at his office in midtown Manhattan. Street noise and sirens can be heard throughout the recording. Mayor Beame occasionally refers to various photographs hanging behind his desk in the office. Paul E. Sigrist, Jr., Director of the Oral History Project, 5/10/1994.

SIGRIST: Good afternoon. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Monday, May 17, 1993. It is my pleasure to be in the office of Mayor Abraham D. Beame, who was mayor of New York City from January of 1974 to December of 1977. Mr. Beame also has the distinction of being an Ellis Island immigrant. He came from England in 1906 when he was three months old. Good afternoon, Mayor Beame. Can we begin by you giving me your birth date.

BEAME: March 20, 1906.

SIGRIST: And can you tell me, what was your father's name?

BEAME: Philip.

SIGRIST: And what did he do in London?

BEAME: He wasn't in London.

SIGRIST: Okay.

BEAME: This is a story which was told to me by him. My father and mother were born in Russia. Warsaw, I think, was the city in which they lived. He was a Socialist, that is, what we considered to be a very liberal person who fought against any kind of oppression or anything of that order. He was opposed to the czar and his rules, ruling of the empire the way he did. And he was involved with some kind of a group which was opposed to the czar and the Cossacks and so on. Well, one day, and I'm leading to the reason why I was born in London, one day he apparently got word of the fact that he was under surveillance and the police were going to arrest him. So he packed up and took my two brothers with him, they were two

older brothers, to go to America and told my mother, who was pregnant with me, to go to her sister in London, and that when he got to America he would send for her. That's how I was born in London.

SIGRIST: What was your mom's name?

BEAME: Esther.

SIGRIST: What was her maiden name?

BEAME: Esther Goldfarb.

SIGRIST: G-O-L-D . . .

BEAME: F-A-R-B.

SIGRIST: Do you know how your parents met?

BEAME: No.

SIGRIST: But they were both from the same town?

BEAME: Yes.

SIGRIST: I see. Do you know how her sister ended up in London?

BEAME: No, but her sister came to America with her and we lived very close, as a matter of fact on the same street in the City of New York when they came.

SIGRIST: But you don't know how the sister went from Russia to England and why.

BEAME: I don't know whether the sister Etel was in Russia. I have no idea.

SIGRIST: What did your father do when he came to America?

BEAME: Uh, as I recall at one time he had a restaurant that he operated with, I think, his brother on the Lower East Side. And then there was another occasion where he had a restaurant which, put it this way, that restaurant he closed eventually, opened another one years later. But I was just trying to think about when, but maybe from the time I was about twelve or thirteen years old he was a paper cutter in a factory which cut stationery paper, the three by five index papers and other things of that nature, and also manufactured different kinds of stationery and so on.

SIGRIST: Did he have a trade in Russia before he left that you know of?

BEAME: I wouldn't know offhand.

SIGRIST: How long was your mother in England before she came to

America?

BEAME: My assumption would be that, let's see. If I were three months old when I came here, she may have been there maybe five or six months, I don't know. Several months, anyway.

SIGRIST: Did she ever talk about any stories associated with your birth or anything like that?

BEAME: No. As a matter of fact, my mother passed away when I was six years old.

SIGRIST: I see. So you came to America in what month of 1906?

BEAME: Well, if I was three months old that would be perhaps June or July.

SIGRIST: And your mother's sister came with her?

BEAME: I honestly don't know. But it wouldn't have been much of a difference in time because, as I say, they lived on the same street.

SIGRIST: What's your earliest recollection? What's the earliest memory that you have of being a little boy in New York?

BEAME: Well, I would say about six, something like that, six, five or six years old. I went to school when I was about that age, six years, in those days.

SIGRIST: Were you living in the Lower East Side?

BEAME: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you describe the neighborhood for me?

BEAME: Yeah. Well, I don't know if you know the Lower East Side but there's a park called Hamilton Fish Park which is on Stanton Street and Rivington Street and Houston Street. We lived directly across the street from the park. And I went to school in a school which was on the other side of the park, which is about, meant my having to walk maybe a block or two to go around the park. That was Public School, I think, 2. Now, I could wander and tell you a story which, uh, that brought, brings to my mind. In that school, you graduated in the 3B. That's the third grade. That's as high as it went. Then you had to choose a school to finish the eight years of elementary school. You either had to go further towards the East River, and we lived not too far, considering the area. Or you had to go to a school further north. I chose to go to

a school on Rivington and Suffolk Street called Public School 160. And now let me come up to date for a moment. When I was mayor, the Friars Club, which incidentally I'm chairman of their, I'm now chairman of their foundation, The Friars Foundation. The Friars Club invited me to make a presentation to Walter Matthau and George Burns, who had just completed their picture The Sunshine Boys. And I sat in between both. And, of course, the conversation, speaking to Walter Matthau, he went to P.S. 22. I said 2, I meant 22 before, the school that I had gone up to the grade three. And then the discussions with George Burns, he went to 160, the other school that I graduated from. But it turns out he never graduated because I read a year later, or two years later, that the principal of that school sent him an honorary diploma. (he laughs) So I kind of heard he didn't graduate. Anyway, I thought I'd mention that because it brings to my mind that story.

SIGRIST: Were your parents educated people?

BEAME: My father was a learned, was very well-learned. He was, you always find that among the old Socialist party people here in this country. They were very

well-read. They were up-to-date, they were very progressive. And by and large he was in that category.

SIGRIST: What about your mom?

BEAME: I remember very little about her. She was just a housewife, as you know. And certainly in those days the women were not career women.

SIGRIST: Right. You said you have two brothers.

BEAME: Yes.

SIGRIST: What were their names?

BEAME: One was, the one came after me was, rather before me was Joseph, and the one before him was Isadore.

SIGRIST: And then were there any other children?

BEAME: I had a sister, too. Her name was Rose.

SIGRIST: She was born here?

BEAME: (he pauses) No. Not to my recollection.

SIGRIST: Can you describe the apartment?

BEAME: Wait a minute, I'm wrong. I was older than she was.

Therefore, she had to be born here.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Can you describe the apartment that you lived in, or did you live in several apartments?

BEAME: We lived all over the East Side. Sometimes I say in jest my father never paid rent. (he laughs) But we moved all, we were in many locations on the East Side. We lived on, well, you don't want to know the streets.

SIGRIST: Well, if you remember them.

BEAME: Huh?

SIGRIST: If you remember them, sure.

BEAME: Well, we lived on Pitt Street, we lived on Essex Street, on Orchard Street, on Rivington Street, on Delancey Street. We lived all over the East Side.

SIGRIST: Can you give me an idea of what the flavor of the Lower East Side was like? What was the neighborhood like in those days?

BEAME: Well, you've undoubtedly seen old pictures of then. There were hustling and bustling areas and very, it was always a very warm feeling among the people. Most

of them were, most all of them were immigrants, at the time. And they all, a lot of them came from the same area, or very close to the same area. There were a lot of associations. For example, they would form a, what they call an, I forgot the name for them, but where people could borrow money, you know. There's a Yiddish expression.

SIGRIST: A credit union, sort of.

BEAME: Yeah. A noxia, they call it, a credit union, somewhat like a credit union. Borrowed money without interest, and where the associations were very important.

SIGRIST: Was this primarily a Jewish neighborhood?

BEAME: Oh, yes, yeah. And in those days I remember going on a vacation trip to Goldberg's farm. That was in Brooklyn. (he laughs) We lived on the Lower East Side.

SIGRIST: What would you do on the farm? What was there to do on the farm?

BEAME: Well, you know, as a young kid I guess you just ran around. But at least it was a, it wasn't done for our sake, it was done for my parents' sake, so they could

take, they'd get a rest, you know.

SIGRIST: What did you do growing up for fun as a child? What kind of entertainment was there available for you?

BEAME: Well, there were a lot of things involved in those days. In the first place, I remember we used to, (he laughs) not answering your question directly, I remember we used to have what we'd call block fights. A block, just one street away, would fight with another block. And they'd use bottles. They'd throw bottles from the roof. They'd throw cans, milk cans, from the roof. And I remember, not that I remember, but in those days I was involved in these things as well as everybody else in the Lower East Side, and I slipped and hit my head against a curb. And do you see this? (he gestures to his head) I had to be stitched. And I didn't go to the hospital. But on that corner of the street I lived on Stanton and Rivington Street there was a drugstore called Kohler's Drugstore. And I remember standing on a chair while the pharmacist, this drugstore owner, stitched this. (he laughs) It wasn't done in a hospital. It probably wouldn't have been as clear or evident as it is now. And there are a lot of activities in those

days. We used to play pushy cat, if you know. You know, hitting a piece of wood and running around the bases. That was like baseball, you know. Johnny-Onny-Putt, you used to have those things. But the important thing was that there was an opportunity in those days where you get together as a group, a club, where you form a club. And the purpose of the club was social, athletic, and so on. And we joined the University Settlement on the Lower East Side. That's the oldest settlement in the country. It celebrated it's hundredth anniversary about half a dozen years ago, and Attorney General Louie Lefkowitz and I were honored at that hundredth anniversary. And that club was a long distance from where we lived. Eventually, I moved to a street which was only a block or two away from there, but the University Club was on Eldridge and Rivington Street. And that club is where I met my wife. Several of my friends met their wives there. And to this day we see each other, that is, not the wife, but we see our friends.

SIGRIST: What kind of activities did the settlement houses offer?

BEAME: A lot of social activities, dramatic acts, dramatics,

athletics. We used to play basketball there. And then you'd have, they would put on shows. And you always had to have a director, an adult who would be the director of the club, and who we would really be in charge and give the orders as to what to do and where to meet and so on. And I learned, and in those days I was pretty good at recitation, and I recited there, I won some prizes, and I said poems like Gunga Din, Billy The Kid, and an interesting thing happened. There was what's known as Boy's Week. They probably still have it around the city. And I was asked, because I had won the dramatic contest, you know, for making a, rather reciting the poems. I was asked to go to Newark, Bamberger's in Newark. And radio was in its infancy. And to recite over radio one or two of the recitations which I had won a prize at the University Settlement. Very, you know, when you think back there's so many different things. You used to try to show your prowess, you know, in those days. I remember, I don't think I was more than, I weighed much more than I do now. I used to, when I went to school I was on the hundred pound relay team, so I must have weighed maybe a hundred and ten, something like that. And I remember those days, to show your

prowess, I, we hired bicycles and rode them, you know. You would ride around, and I took a friend of mine, one of our club members on the handlebar. (the sound of sirens is heard in the background) He was heavier than I was, and I rode from the Lower East Side to Times Square and back. And he was on the handlebars. (he laughs) I couldn't do that in a million years.

SIGRIST: Did the settlement houses offer activities for the adults, too?

BEAME: Uh, not really, except that they would have an event, not activities, but an event. They might have a adult's down for some reason. Eleanor Roosevelt was involved with that settlement at one time or another.

SIGRIST: Was the purpose of the settlement houses to sort of keep the kids off the streets?

BEAME: Oh, yes. It was the difference between you becoming a rowdy and going up in the wrong direction, as a criminal, or becoming a good citizen.

SIGRIST: And it sounds from your description of that sort of gang warfare, you know, throwing things off the buildings, that there was a lot of rowdiness in the

streets at that time.

BEAME: Oh, yes. You know, listen, there was, you had to be careful in those days. If you were Jewish and you walked into a non-Jewish area, you might have been attacked. You might have been met by others and hurt, and vice versa, you know. There was, you always had that kind of situation and in the long run, of course, let me put it this way. Racial situations didn't begin in New York here in the last ten or twenty years. They always existed to some extent. So we'd have what you call block fights, and you had to be careful sometimes in where you went and when you went. You went with more than yourself, you went with others.

SIGRIST: Growing up in the Lower East Side, you moved a number of times, did you move to tenements? Is this all tenement living?

BEAME: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: Can you describe what tenement living was all about? What was it like to live in one of these places?

BEAME: Well, usually they were known as what you'd call

railroad flats. You had a living room, a kitchen and one or two bedrooms. They were all in one line. I remember we used to sleep three in the bed. I slept with my two brothers in a bed. And . . .

SIGRIST: Did they have running water? (sirens are heard)

BEAME: And in those days the toilets were on the floor, meaning that it would be used not only by your apartment but by maybe one or two other apartments. You might have had one or two toilets. And I remember one time, one place that I lived that the outhouse was in the yard.

SIGRIST: How were these tenements heated?

BEAME: Coal. You had to buy your own coal in those days. And some of you had to buy your own ice to put in the icebox.

SIGRIST: Was that something that was delivered to the tenement, or was that something you had to go to?

BEAME: Somebody would come around, you know.

SIGRIST: What about lighting? How were these apartments lit?

BEAME: Well, for a time you had to put a quarter in the

meter, buy gas.

SIGRIST: I see. Did your parents like America, or your father?

BEAME: No doubt about it. It was certainly quite a change from what they went through in Europe.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me a little bit about their religious life, if they had one?

BEAME: My father was very well-learned in the Hebrew and Jewish tradition, but he was very liberal and he was no orthodox at all, and I was never brought up to be that way.

SIGRIST: So religion . . .

BEAME: That is to be Orthodox.

SIGRIST: But was religion part of your life growing up, particularly, or not really?

BEAME: Not really. It was just incidental.

SIGRIST: What was the political climate of New York like at that time?

BEAME: Well, when used the expression "that time . . ."

SIGRIST: Say when you were in your teens, a young man in your teens.

SIGRIST: Well, in New York, of course, the Irish were in control of all the political, important political positions. And they were very attentive to all of the, their constituents, and that is in the Jewish groups were an important part of the Lower East Side.

SIGRIST: Was your father involved in politics at all?

BEAME: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: Can you talk a little bit about that?

BEAME: As a matter of fact, my father, as I said, was a very active Socialist. He used to take me, when I was a kid, to the Forward Building, The Daily Forward, on East Broadway. He was a member of what you'd call the Workman's Circle. In Yiddish, they called it the Arbeiter Ring, the Workman's Circle. And they would meet in that building and they would have Socialist politicians come in, Eugene Debbs. That name mean anything to you, president of the Socialist party? Myer London, who was a congressman on the Lower East Side, also Socialist. And Hillquit, a Socialist. I

remember those names. I think he once ran for mayor. And that's when I sort of got to, you know, a little interest, if not too much. But my father later, after he was a member of the Socialist party, the American Labor Party was formed when Franklin Roosevelt was president and Jim Farley, who was his campaign manager when he ran and became Postmaster General, Jim Farley helped form, or rather was one of the brains behind, forming the American Labor Party. My father became a member of that. It was considered to be Socialist. Some called it "left wing," but it really was a Socialist. They were interested in the well-being and all the social programs which were so needed, especially on the Lower East Side.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

BEAME: Subsequently, because the American Labor Party was beginning to be associated with Communism, a group broke away and formed the Liberal Party, which is still in existence. Alex Rose was the person who was the key person in the Liberal Party and until his death was the head of the Liberal Party. My father joined the group that broke away and became part of

the Liberal Party. And until his death he was, what, a Liberal Party captain in Coney Island where he lived at that time. Now, you know what a captain is? The Liberal Party, whether it's a Democratic Party captain or Republican Party, you have a district where you're the leader of that district. And he was, in essence, a captain in the Liberal Party until his death. And all this time, you know, the idea of politics sort of rubbed off on me.

SIGRIST: When he would bring you to the meetings when you were a young man, what kinds of things were discussed at the meetings? What did the party hope to do? What was the goal?

BEAME: Well it wasn't, I couldn't give you an answer to that. You know, you were there, you just listened. But it didn't mean anything to me at that age. It was mainly to the adults.

SIGRIST: Can you talk a little bit about New York during the time of World War I and what recollections you might have of the war? Because you were, you know, a young man at that time. Did the war affect your life at all?

BEAME: Nothing more unusual than any others. It can't, I don't recall anything special.

SIGRIST: Perhaps food shortages of some sort, or . . .

BEAME: Pardon?

SIGRIST: Food shortages of some sort, or maybe witnessing a parade, maybe, of soldiers or something that might stick out in your mind?

BEAME: Well, World War I, I was only about twelve years old at that time. And, you know, you just went to school. You had no, you had no relationship with any activity that was involved in that. And no one in my family was involved in the war because of age or otherwise.

SIGRIST: I see. Well, why don't we talk about your interest in politics and when you started getting serious about that. Your father brought you to meetings.

BEAME: Yeah. Well, that's, that, actually my interest became great, heavy, during the time that I, I was a teacher in the high school system of New York. I taught at Richmond (?) High School for about fourteen years and one year at Tilden High School. And during that time I had, at one time accompanied a friend to go to the

downtown Tammany Club. And I was sort of enthralled by how they, how the leader would call up somebody who came to visit them to find out what bothered them and try to help them. And so I joined a club in Brooklyn, because I should have indicated I had moved to Brooklyn after I was married. And I joined the Madison Club, the leader of which was a person by the name of Irwin Steingut. He was the minority leader of the New York State Assembly. And, as I say, I got interested. And while I was a teacher, I became part of the, well, let me, I was a, I'm trying to recall exactly, but it's a little, not always too easy. I was active in the group that went to Albany to try to get legislation that would be beneficial to teachers. It was the High School Teacher's Association. And then the most important overall group was the Joint Committee of Teacher Organizations. And I became one of three representatives of the teachers of New York City. (sirens outside) I went to Albany to try to get or protect the teachers' interests. And I was able to get, be effective because of my relationship with the leader of that club, Irwin Steingut, who was a minority leader of the Assembly.

SIGRIST: How old were you at this time?

BEAME: I joined that club in 1930. I was, I lived on the Lower East Side until 1928 when I married. Then I moved to Brooklyn.

SIGRIST: This is the woman that you had met at the settlement house, correct?

BEAME: Pardon?

SIGRIST: This is the woman that you had met at the settlement house.

BEAME: That's right, yeah.

SIGRIST: What was her name?

BEAME: Mary Ingerman.

SIGRIST: Can you spell her maiden name for us, please?

BEAME: I-N-G-E-R-M-A-N. Her first name was Mary.

SIGRIST: So you moved to Brooklyn. You got involved in this. What did your wife think about your involvement?

BEAME: It, the beginning wasn't too bad, but after a while I got, I got into the habit of going to the club three

times, three nights a week. And, you know, she had a lot of things to do on her own, and didn't mind what I did. Nevertheless it was undoubtedly a little burden on her.

SIGRIST: Can you continue telling us about your political career, bring yourself to the present from there?

BEAME: Well, I say I became very friendly with Irwin Steingut. He became speaker for one year of the New York State Assembly in 1935, and I might say, and I just want to skip a little, he passed away and I was very, I was active in the club as a democratic captain. I had a district. And I was considered to be a pretty good captain. And I got to be very close with him and his family. So when he passed away, his son succeeded him in the assembly, and I helped to do that. His father became, was my mentor. I'll indicate that in a little while. So that when his son became the assemblyman and also the leader of the district, I became his mentor in future years. Eventually he became Speaker of the Assembly. I don't know if the name meant anything to you, Stanley Steingut. When Bill O'Dwyer, William O'Dwyer from Brooklyn, became Mayor of New York City in 1946,

succeeding LaGuardia, Irwin Steingut helped me get, become Assistant Director of the Budget. I served in that capacity for about five or six years, and when, Impellitieri became Mayor after O'Dwyer resigned to become Ambassador to Mexico, Irwin Steingut helped me become Budget Director of the City of New York. I served as Budget Director until 1961. In that interim period, Bob Wagner became the mayor and I continued to be Budget Director and in 1961 Bob Wagner broke with the Democratic leadership of Carmine Dessapio and who, by the way, who had put Arthur Levitt, who was the State Controller at that time, up as a candidate to run against Bob Wagner for mayor, and Bob Wagner would be running for re-election. Wagner asked me to joint the ticket as Controller, which I eventually did. And so that picture up there on top is, shows to the left Scravain, who was the candidate for the City Council, Bob Wagner, John Kennedy and myself. During that year that we were running, John Kennedy came, was in New York. He was invited to the mansion. We took a picture. So that I became controller in 1962. I stayed, in 1965 I ran for mayor. I won the primary, but I lost in the election to Lindsay, John Lindsay. I then retired and joined a friend of mine who was

the, one of the owners of the American Bank and Trust Company. I became the member of the board, but in charge of the Finance Committee. In 1960, uh, I stayed there until 1969. I sort of felt there was no challenge coming into a bank. (he laughs) And I therefore decided to run again for Controller. And I was elected in '69, and then in 1973 I ran for mayor and was elected mayor. That's an interesting thing. You see that, uh, Daily News?

SIGRIST: Oh, yes. "Beame Swamps Them All?"

BEAME: It's not up there to brag, but the reason it's up there is that the election took place Tuesday, November 1973. I was elected. On Wednesday morning the newspapers would show it. So the news had that front page printed. But they went on strike, so that front page, the paper never appeared on the newsstand on Wednesday. So they framed it and sent it to me. (he laughs) And that's why it's up there.

SIGRIST: It's a great souvenir to have.

BEAME: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What was your proudest moment as Mayor of New York?

BEAME: My proudest year was 1976, the Bicentennial year. I might say the one proudest moment I had, and I want to go back, also happened in 1976. One of the reasons I lost, I should have said this. In 1977 my term ended, the end of '77. I ran for re-election, but there were six candidates in there, Koch, Cuomo and so on. It's a long story, but I'm not going to get into that. And I, Koch got twenty percent of the vote, Cuomo nineteen and I got eighteen. So I lost the primary. But I lost the primary probably, undoubtedly because of the fact that the SEC, the Securities Exchange Commission, had issued a report criticizing me for, among other things, stating that New York City bonds were good and a safe investment. And I felt they were. But during that period, and it's, as I say, a very long story, there was this fiscal crisis. And in connection with the fiscal crisis, one of the things I tried to get was the federal government to guarantee the bonds of New York City. And Ford, Gerald Ford was president. And he didn't want to help New York City. But he finally agreed to do so, and not that I made the deal with him, but Carey, Governor Carey went around me and got him, and he agreed provided, he said he wanted everybody to suffer, provided that there was a

moratorium on the redemption of an issue of New York City bonds. About a billion dollars was coming due. Now, I was not involved in that, but without discussing with me, Carey had a bill introduced in Albany in which he got the moratorium. And all the while I'd been arguing New York City never went into default, was a good investment, and should be bought. And, as I say, the SEC came out with that report prior to that time, blasting me for doing that, and that hurt me in the election. As I said, the percentage was so narrow. Anyway, that same year, '76, I was asked to head a delegation of mayors who were invited, I was asked by the Israeli government to head a delegation of mayors to come to Israel, which I did. I've got some pictures there to show it, but that's incidental. And while I was in Israel, among the other things, among other events I was involved in I went to the Wailing Wall. You know what that is? The Western Wall. And there is a custom, when you go there you usually stick some piece of paper. You write something and put it into the niche, you know. So I wrote the word, "Help." This was during the fiscal crisis and after, after the moratorium had gone into effect. I'm telling you this story because I'm

getting to the one thing that you said that I was most proud of. I got back, that was a Thursday. Friday night I get a call from New York, "You must come home. The moratorium was declared unconstitutional." Which, in essence, upheld my view that New York City bonds can never go into default because they're a first lien on all the revenue we get, and the Court of Appeals held not only that but they held that even if you had to levy a special tax you must pay off the bonds. So that was, as I say, the proudest moment, because it upheld something I'd been fighting for the whole time, and which cost me the election. Well, anyway, beyond that the proudest year I had was 1976. First because I was able to get the Democratic Convention to come to New York for the first time in fifty years. The last time it had been in New York was when Al Smith was nominated in 1928, and this was 1976, forty-eight years later. And not only that, it was the year that we elected, we nominated not only a candidate but a president, because that's when we nominated Carter. And I had a lot to do with his nomination and election. Second, it was the year of the Bicentennial when the heads of state from all over the country came here, and I would entertain them.

They would either come to City Hall or I'd have luncheons for them, or a dinner, or I'd visit them at their hotel. The only one I didn't do that for, the only person I wouldn't recognize was Sadat, who was President of Egypt. And the reason why was that same year when he came to this country he went to the U.N. at a meeting and he voted for the resolution equating Zionism with racism. And I therefore would not greet him or anything like that, and the State Department was a little upset. And I might say, parenthetically, that when Sadat eventually met with Begin and Carter in Albany and they had the Camp David accord I was invited by Carter to the ceremony and then at night I was invited to the dinner. And Mrs. Beame was with me, and we were at a table with Howard Baker and Kennedy, Ed Kennedy, and others. And Mrs. Beame said she'd like to see Sadat. She wants to congratulate him. So I went over with her to the table where Begin and Carter were, whom I knew very well, were there. And Sadat was sitting, and Mrs. Beame reached over and said to him, you know, praised him. She indicated how she admired his action and what he did coming to Jerusalem and looking for peace with Israel. And then I leaned over to him and I said, "Mr. Sadat, if I were

the mayor today, I'd roll out the red carpet for you." But at any rate that was, in '76 all of the, they call came.

SIGRIST: So that was a good year for you, '76.

BEAME: Terrific. As a matter of fact, the King and Queen of England were there, came in. I shouldn't say the King, Prince Philip and Queen Elizabeth. I have some pictures with her and so on, and my grandchild was there to give her a bouquet and whatnot. But she invited us on, for a luncheon on the Britannica, and there were only twelve of us on there. And after the luncheon she asked me to go, come into a room with her. And Philip, Prince Philip asked Mrs. Beame to come in. And they gave us these two pictures, autographed. And Hirohito came, and his wife. We had a luncheon at the mansion for them. (he laughs) And . . .

SIGRIST: It was quite a year. A lot of dignitaries here.

BEAME: And I've got to tell you about King Carlos and Queen Sophia of Spain. They're the most down-to-earth heads of state of all of them. Very warm. Grabbed me around, picked me up, you know. And I saw them some

years later. I was at a dinner and I was on the second tier, he was on the first tier. And he came over to me, he was very nice. We got to be very warm friends. We had a luncheon for them, too. And this is the interesting thing. When he left he asked the consul general of Spain to make me a member of the Order of Isabel. There it is up there. Not until some time after did it strike me that Isabel was the queen who issued the Inquisition order against the Jewish people, you know. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: Oh, dear.

BEAME: And here I am, a member of the Order of Isabel.

SIGRIST: Well, Mayor Beame, we need to end the interview now.

BEAME: Yeah.

SIGRIST: We're out of time, but I want to thank you very much for your time and . . .

BEAME: That's all right.

SIGRIST: Allowing us to come out here, it's been a great honor.

BEAME: My pleasure.

SIGRIST: This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Mayor Abe Beame on Monday, May 17, 1993.