

Tape 1
Side 1
Interview 1

- Q. This is Tina Isaacs interviewing Mr. Reuben Goldman. It is Wednesday, June the 23rd. This is Tape 1, Side A. Mr. Goldman, could you please tell me something about your background.
- A. My father, who came here in 1886, was the head of several Jewish organizations. He was responsible for building of one of the finest Orthodox synagogues, which was built 1911. That synagogue with fifteen or more, were all purchased by the Federal or State for a housing development. It was in what was known as the old Jewish section just about a block from Joseph Avenue. My father's main interest was Jewish education. During the First World War, his interest for the health of Jews in Europe who lived in the countries where they were in living in the area where the Second . . . First World War took place. He also was interested in and was the founder of a free-loan society, which is something . . . but, only Jewish have to know about. In fact, there is a statement perhaps in the Talmud which says that that kind of help is greater than charity. He had made two trips to Palestine . . . 1921 and 1924, and in 1926, after living here for forty years, he decided that's where he wants to live. So, he and my mother and youngest brother, who is one of nine, the youngest of nine, moved to Palestine. Both my father and mother have passed away and are buried on the Mount of Olives, which is one of the most sacred places in Jerusalem. I was with them, together with three more of my brothers, in 1924 for a trip. And, my interests . . . my priorities in Jewish life have been for Jewish education and Israel. Although, for a few years after he left, I was president of the free-loan society which he organized. I have been president of the Rochester Zionist District many years ago, of the Western New York Region of

A. (Continued) the Zionist Organization, and I was on the National Board of the Zionist Organization. I have been a vice-president of the United Synagogue of America, and on its board for many years. I've been on the board of overseers of the Jewish Theological Seminary. I was locally the president of the Bureau of Jewish Education. And, I did at one time, perhaps for two years, take an interest in the local Chamber of Commerce.

Q. Where was your father from?

A. My father was from Poland.

Q. And when did he immigrate over here?

A. 1886.

Q. He came directly to Rochester?

A. I think so.

Q. Did he have family here?

A. My mother's family were here, and that's why they came here.

Q. I see. They were married then, at the time?

A. They were married in Europe.

Q. Is your mother also of Polish background?

A. Yes.

Q. Where did they move . . . where did they settle in in Rochester when they moved here?

A. They lived in two or three streets that were off of Joseph Avenue, and in 1912 moved over to what is called Gorham Street, which was probably a ten-minute walk from the Joseph Avenue area. My father was a very religious person who wouldn't ride on the Sabbath, wouldn't conduct business on . . . wouldn't even use the telephone on the Sabbath. And yet, he was . . . he was first a retail grocer, then he became a wholesale grocer, and eventually purchased real estate for investments and was the first Jewish person to buy property on Main Street, which was about 1910.

Q. Was all the real estate in which he invested on Main Street?

A. No. Originally he owned property, a different type of property, of course, mostly residential, but by 1910, he preferred to confine himself to the downtown area and mostly Main Street.

Q. I see. He generally . . . he owned real estate on which businesses were renting then?

A. Yes. He owned the building right across the street on the corner which together with another building next door had been demolished to put up that new building there.

Q. When did he sell the property that he was using for residential? What I'm saying is, when he was renting out a place of people to live, what sorts of people were living in his . . . on his land?

A. Well, some of it . . . I think of one situation where they were medium to lower income. Pardon me. Families who were his tenants. He also owned some residential real estate in, I'd call it the Park Avenue section, Harvard Street.

Q. Did he mostly . . . were his tenants mostly Jewish?

A. No.

Q. No.

A. The Jews didn't live in those areas back in 1910. There may be a few here and there, but . . .

Q. Well, I guess that's why I asked you when he sold it, because there were Jews in that area later on.

A. Oh, yes. Yes.

Q. But he had . . . he no longer owned the land when those neighborhoods were Jewish neighborhoods.

A. No.

Q. What sort of education did your father have?

- A. Just what I'd call a Talmudical. He has been known to be a scholar of the Talmud. And yet, he was modern enough so that he was welcomed by non-Jews with whom he did business, the bank presidents that I have known when I got out of law school. They told me what high regard they had for him, what his word meant to them.
- Q. What about your mother?
- A. Well, she was a . . . she wasn't a strong woman. She wasn't a big woman, yet she had twelve children, nine of whom have lived ever since I knew them. I didn't know the other three, I think they probably passed away before I was born. But we were nine boys.
- Q. Nine boys! Oh! (Laughter)
- A. Well, who wanted the girls?
- Q. You're right. Nobody did want girls then. (Laughter)
- A. I must tell you this. I'm not so sure that it's necessary it's on tape, but when a Jew was told that we were nine boys, he says, "You have your own minion." (spelling) With my father we were ten. But, when you told it to a non-Jew, he says, "You have your own baseball team."
- Q. (Laughter) That's great. Well, I guess I won't ask you if your mother educated your sisters the same way that she educated your brothers. That's obviously irrelevant. Did all of your brothers go to college also?
- A. No. Two went, and I don't think either one finished. They went to New York University. One, while he was at the New York University, the First World War broke out. Eventually he got overseas. When he came back, he didn't go back to school. The second one went probably around 1920, '21, in through there. And, he didn't finish. I was the only other one who went. And, it wasn't . . . it couldn't have been a question of finances. Whether they just didn't feel like going. I'm sure he would have preferred that they go. I

A. (Continued) was the next one to go in. My youngest, who is a rabbi in Jerusalem but never practiced as a rabbi, he lived in New York in the, oh, I'd say around 1922, '23, and he went to the Yeshiva and to the New York University. When my folks decided to move to Palestine in 1926, he went along with them and continued his study there, and got the ordination, which we call Snika (spelling) from a prominent rabbi in Jerusalem, and I don't remember now who it was. And, if you were to interview him, you could get stories that you couldn't get from anybody else for this reason: He was . . . because he was a rabbi, he was a chaplain in the British army during the Second World War. And being a chaplain, when . . . before the establishment of the state, the members of the Jewish agency, if you're familiar with that, more or less controlled the . . . under the British . . . the operation, you might say, of Palestine. He was the only one that had contact with members of the Jewish agency who were all imprisoned for a time, I don't know for how long. And, he had direct contact daily with them.

Q. That's very interesting. Did you know that brother very well?

A. Well, particularly up to the time that he left. I was the second youngest, and he was the youngest. Probably a difference of three years between.

Q. Did any of your brothers go into business with your father?

A. No. My father who built up a pretty good wholesale grocery business, and when he got into real estate, he turned it over to the oldest brother who, I don't know how long he conducted that business, but it was apparently unsuccessful, sort of bad business. Wound up.

Q. Okay.

A. Now there's one other thing I want to tell you about myself . . .

Q. Sure.

A. . . . because that, to me, is very important. Together with a half a dozen or more people, 1948, I was one of the founders of the Hillel Day School, which

A. (Continued) you must have heard about in Rochester.

Q. What I'm doing is, I'm just noting all these things down, and then I'll ask you questions about all your community activities.

A. And, I regret to say that so many of our people, including leaders in one field or another, or in one organization or another were so opposed to a Jewish Day School.

Q. Why?

A. Well, they would say, you're gonna do the same thing the Catholics are doing. They didn't know the difference between what a Jewish Day School was and the Catholic Parochial Schools. They . . . a parochial school, Catholic Parochial School is really run by the priests in the area, I forget what they call it. In the diocese whereas here, there was a local board. And, we had one devil of a time with some of our leaders. I used to come home from meetings and couldn't fall asleep, because I had to fight with people I've known all my life. They were so opposed to it. And, today, it's interesting . . . today, of course, they used to say, "It's only the Orthodox that want it." But, the Conservative were opposed to before them without any questions. Today I forget how many Conservative Temples have day schools throughout the country, and they get to realize that if they really want to give a Jewish child a good education that's the only place he can get it. There are . . . I'm told there's one Reformed Temple in New York, I can't think of the name right now, that has a day school and others, I think, there are a few more that either have started or are going to.

Q. What kind of a Hebrew education did you have?

A. Well, I had the kind where I went for two hours every day, but it's five days a week and then on Sundays. And, I really did more with my education after I got to law school.

Q. Oh, I see.

- A. And, I've continued to this very day. Those are some of the books that my son had to take out of the bookcase. We spend the winters in Florida, and I've got to find some sort of a bookcase that I can put in there without very little . . . I don't really practice. I come here to kill time.
- Q. (Laughter)
- A. Don't put that in.
- Q. Okay.
- A. My clients may not like it. And, I'll tell you what I'm so happy about with regard to the day school, which was awful, awful lot of headaches for me. I was . . . I'm (unknown). Do you know what (unknown) is? My daughter is married to the son of a man who just passed away a few months ago. He and I were the real founders of this day school. I have, I should say 'thank God', ten grandchildren. I think there's one that I'd like him to meet you. Eight of the ten are graduates of Hillel. Two are young enough that they're still there. They've got another two or three years. I know the difference between what they have gotten out of the day school, as compared to the education that I had, which was supposed to be pretty good at that time. I would like to just . . . I think I have in my coat something that a ten year old granddaughter wrote. I'd like you to read it.
- Q. That's . . . were all your brothers given Hebrew education also?
- A. Yes. Yes.
- Q. Now, you said that your father was extremely interested in Hebrew education, Jewish education, what sorts of forms did that interest take? What did he do?
- A. Well, of course, he supported it in every way possible, and in this synagogue, beautiful synagogue, I pictured the inside . . . it didn't have a rabbi, never had a rabbi, because if they had wanted to elect a rabbi, it could have split

- A. (Continued) the congregation. Rather than split the congregation, they managed to get along without a rabbi. On many of the holidays, he would speak. And, most of the time his sermons, if you'd call them that, would be devoted to the importance of Jewish education for children.
- Q. Do you think that it was his influence that gave you your great love for education?
- A. There isn't any question about it. But, if I had a father like many of my friends did who, let's say, would come to the synagogue Saturday morning, but then go to their business, and their children didn't follow because, apparently, apparently I say, they felt the father was . . . wasn't sincere, he wasn't honest, he was in some . . . used to say a hypocrite. I don't why they did it. I know that some of them didn't have to from the standpoint of their economic situation, but with my father it was all sincere. And yet, I don't ever recall where he had to use the whip or anything else on us. Probably because we saw the sincerity and we, not all of us, not all of us . . . I never went to work on a Saturday, never kept my office open. I don't drive, and I don't say that I'm a better Jew than somebody else, because . . . I feel that the . . . I had some discipline that I can make the Sabbath a different day than the rest. Sometimes I say, I wish I could control my appetite more than I do.
- Q. Do you think that keeping these traditional observances, then, in the home, is something that makes a person feel more akin to his or her religion?
- A. I don't think there's any question about it. You know, we celebrated our fiftieth wedding anniversary just a short time ago, and . . .
- Q. Mazel tov!
- A. Thank you. And, our children took . . . our anniversary's in February, but we were in Florida (unintelligible), and we had a party. We confined it,

A. (Continued) really, to the family. We had, I think, about forty people. There's a fella here, you might know him, because I think he went to the University of Rochester. He plays the accordian. And, he makes some money by playing at different parties and so on. He said something to us, he says, "This is the first family affair that I've been to where the kids . . . everybody could sing Hebrew songs and dance", and so on. And, I attribute it to the kind of life we lived. It wasn't a question that we had . . . we said, "You gotta do this", and so on. They . . . One daughter and her husband do not . . . they keep the Sabbath, almost I would say, the way we do. Their home is kosher, as well as the other two, but the other two moved a distance from the temple. So, they drive to temple, and there's a difference in their observance than the older daughter. But yet, if any one of them had said, "We don't think we want our children to go to Hillel School", I'd feel bad, but I wouldn't insist that they've got to go, and . . .

Q. Now, you said that you've been married for fifty years. When you and your wife first got married, where did you live?

A. We lived on Werner Park off of Monroe Avenue. It was already a pretty good Jewish section.

Q. I was just gonna say. What was the neighborhood like? It was mostly Jewish?

A. I wouldn't say mostly, but well, Temple Beth El was out there. There were a couple of Orthodox, smaller synagogues. We first were members of an Orthodox Synagogue, and I think it was 1936 when I decided to join Temple Beth El.

Q. Why . . .

A. Because, I felt that I might have a tougher job getting my children to go to synagogue on Saturday, because the Orthodox Synagogues, particularly at that time, I don't think would hold them. They wouldn't get enough out of it. Sometimes for myself I think I made a mistake. I'm not so sure, but they attend quite regularly. In fact, many of the people who have come to Beth El say,

A. (Continued) "When you go to Florida some how or other, the children aren't always there, but they're there most of the time. But, we miss you. We miss seeing the whole family together."

Q. Now, how many children do you have?

A. Three.

Q. Three.

A. A son and two daughters. All live here.

Q. Oh, they all live in Rochester. That must be very nice for you.

A. And only the . . . one married an out-of-town spouse. She's a very, very lovely, lovely girl.

Q. Is your wife college educated?

A. My wife was a librarian when I went to Albany in 1922. You ever in Albany?

Q. No.

A. Well, there's a State Education Building, in fact, there's a great deal about it in the New York Times in the last few days. This library and a museum that they had there is being moved over to the new, extravagant building. But, I met her, I would say, the first few days that I was in Albany.

Q. Was that during your undergraduate work or your law school?

A. Unfortunately, I went from high school right into law school. And, you could do that.

Q. Wow.

A. I think I made a terrible mistake in not having the undergraduate work. And, I was introduced to her in the library, 'cause the law library we'd go there to study in the afternoon. We'd do our homework, and so on. And, you know, you sit for an hour or so, and you start walking around. There was . . . she was in the main reading room, and I used to work in the law library which was a separate room. And, I used to go over to the periodical library to get . . .

- A. (Continued) read the Rochester papers. Started to get into the habit of reading the New York Times, which to this very day, I don't miss. Somehow or another when I . . . it was love at first sight.
- Q. Did your daughters go to college? And your son? I guess . . .
- A. Yeah. My oldest daughter went to the University of Rochester. I think she was . . . must've been eighteen, I think, when she first met her husband. He had just come home from the service, and she was young . . . at high school. I think she was graduating that year. She was already looking around, going to college. Didn't intend to go to the University of Rochester. I remember we went to one of the schools in Jersey, (unintelligible).
- Q. Douglas? Douglas?
- A. No.
- Q. Princeton?
- A. No. I think it was a ladies' . . . a girls' school.
- Q. Oh, that was New Jersey College for Women. It's Douglas now.
- A. I see. Then there was another one up in Massachusetts, but I don't recall. And, she was pretty sure she was gonna go to the one in Jersey, but he came home from the near . . . not near east, from the . . . oh, what was that war? The Second World War and Japan, and in through there. He saw some real action. And, I knew his parents ever since I could remember. And, they made a big party for him, you know, and invited their friends. And, his mother had asked my wife to bring Divore, who was then eighteen, I think, in high school. And, he met her. After a half hour, we learned that they went down stairs to play ping pong. From that time on, she decided she was gonna stay here at the University of Rochester. And, after two years at the university, they were married. And, I was afraid that after that, she probably wouldn't do so well. She did better the second two years she was married than she did the first two years. They have four boys. One who is going into his third year at the Albany

A. (Continued) Law School. The second one's who's at the New School for Social Research in New York. He took his undergraduate at Cincinnati and one year at the Hebrew University.

Q. In Jerusalem.

A. And your other daughter and son.

Q. My other daughter is married to a lawyer who's father is a lawyer. And her husband's sister was admitted to the bar, but she's not practicing law. She's doing other work here. My son took his undergraduate work at Cornell and is a Harvard Law School graduate. His wife graduated Smith.

Q. Do you think that part of the motivation for changing from an Orthodox Shul to Beth El could have been the difference in the way the Orthodox Synagogue treats women? Did that have anything to do with your . . .

A. It did me. And, it's interesting. Our life . . . we've been through Israel seven times. And, she said she doesn't find anything wrong in the city for the women in the synagogue, particularly, in Israel. I don't know if you've been there, but some of the smaller synagogues, particularly, the space that they have for women is so limited, but generally, she has no objections to that. No. I think my only reason, my main reason at the time was that I was afraid that my children would lose interest in the Orthodox service, and the way the Orthodox conducted their service. And, I don't know whether it would be any different if I had continued to remained in an Orthodox thing. I wasn't happy with the Orthodox Synagogue that we've had. I've been to New York and know many, many rabbis, Orthodox. There are a few synagogues in New York. I don't know whether you're familiar with them, but there's one on Eighty-sixth Street with Rabbi Leo Young, who is one of the well-known, outstanding Orthodox Rabbis in America. I was at their service a few times. I think if I lived in New York, I'd probably would have remained a member of an Orthodox Synagogue. There

- A. (Continued) is . . . there are a few in New York City that I think that both my wife and I would be happy. And yet, I don't say that I think it's a mistake that . . . well, maybe because I just feel that my children may not have wanted to go and . . . when you get out of the habit of not going to synagogue, you don't have quite the same interest. And, I'm not preaching.
- Q. No. I . . . Do you . . . did you try to raise your children the way you yourself were raised? I mean, did you try to instill the same values?
- A. The values, yes. I knew that I couldn't expect them to follow exactly the way I was brought up.
- Q. Do you think that they're raising their children with the same values?
- A. Yes. But, I think, well, there's too much permissiveness.
- Q. Could you elaborate on that? Do you think that the younger generation is less religious?
- A. Yes and no. Of course, you know, I've had people who've said to me off and on over the years, "How is it that you call so and so a religious person? He goes to shul every Saturday, but in his business this, and he does this, and so on?" I say, I don't call him a religious person. I think he's kidding himself. I don't think he's a religious person because he comes to shul. If he does the things that you tell. I know that they're good people, I thought. In fact, I don't know if you're familiar with this: we're told that Yom Kippur, the day on which we're forgiven for our sins, that if you have committed sin against God, God will forgive you on Yom Kippur. But if you've committed a sin against your fellow man, God will not forgive you until you have been forgiven by your fellow man. To show that the relationship of man to man is even more important than the relationship of man to God.
- Q. So that would be the yes part of your answer; that the younger generation is kinder, do you think, or more aware of their relationship of man to man?

A. I don't know if I could answer that.

Q. Would you tell me something about your children's participation in the Hillel School?

A. Well, I don't know what I could say about participation.

Q. Well, they've been on . . .

A. Well, yes. My son, as I've said, was president. My oldest daughter . . . and I'm sure my youngest daughter is on the board now. I attended a meeting when I came back from Florida and she was there. My daughter-in-law, she's on the board of the Jewish Education Association. I'm not sure, but I think, she's also been on the board of (Unintelligible).

Q. Do you think that your children are atypical in this interest in Jewish education? I mean, do you think that's a usual experience?

A. I probably should wait for another five years or so, but I don't think at the present time that I could honestly say that they're as interested as I think they should be from the kind of education that they've had.

Q. Is the the Rochester community in general interested in Jewish education, the Rochester Jewish Community?

A. In general, I would say, I don't think so. They're . . . I shouldn't be so quick to answer because, I think, this one and that one. For example, there are people who are members of Orthodox Synagogues, there's one man in particular that I think about, who teaches at the university. I don't think it would be wrong of me to tell you his name, Dr. Braun. Braun or Brown.

Q. I don't know him.

A. Well, Dr. Braun . . . When I go to temple Saturday morning, he's on the other side of the street with two of his little kids going to an Orthodox Shul. Now, he married a woman who converted to Judaism. She is much more religious and sincerely so than ninety-eight percent of our Jewish (unknown).

A. (Continued) She won't ride on Saturday. She's stricter . . . I think she's even stricter than my wife and my children. When we go to an affair where they will have the blessing after the meal, she reads the Hebrew. She takes an active interest in the Hillel School. And there are a number of young women, and I know them more because of my oldest daughter who is at home with them. They're extremely religious. I don't think we had as many when I was a child.

Q. So you think the community has, maybe, become more interested in Jewish education over the years?

A: I don't feel that they've been as interested . . . I don't think our leadership, generally, has been as interested. They . . . oh, there's a lot of talk about improving and so on. But, let me give you an actual example. The Hillel School had a building on East Avenue, I don't know whether you knew that. The grounds were lovely and everything else, but it got to a point where it wasn't quite big enough. And, we were fortunate enough to be able to sell it and get a good price for it. But, we had to have a place to go. So, we thought, well, the most logical place would be Temple Beth El. I would say that most of the members of the board of Temple Beth El did not want Hillel School to use the facilities. So, they made a proposition. And, I think it was done . . . they had some ulterior motives. They said, "We'll take you for two years." And, of course, we were gonna pay a good rental. "We'll take you for two years if you can assure us that Temple B'rith Kodesh", the Reformed Temple where we thought we had no chance at all, "will take you after the two years." Much to our surprise, Temple B'rith Kodesh supported Temple Beth El, of which I've been a member for forty years were stuck, I think, and they had to take us. But . . .

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- A. And, B'rith Kodesh was ready to welcome us. Temple Beth El, who were getting \$15,000.00 a year from Hillel School, wanted us to stay there. We felt we had made a commitment to B'rith Kodesh, and actually the facilities were better. And we'd been at Temple B'rith Kodesh for three years, they wanted us to stay there. If we thought we could go out and raise necessary funds at the present time, we would prefer to have a building of our own. But, there is Temple Beth El, who really didn't want us, where we thought we at least had a better chance, although we knew that many of their leaders did not want to have Hillel School there.
- Q. Why do you think they didn't want the school there? Just lack of interest?
- A. No. I think they were the people who right from the start of the Hillel School in their own place, were against day school. And, many of them didn't know what it was all about really. Just that it's a day school . . . it's a parochial school. They didn't call it day school. (Unintelligible).
- Q. To your knowledge, have there ever been any kind of friction between the Reformed, the Conservative, and the Orthodox communities in Rochester?
- A. I don't know if I'd call it friction. I think there wasn't always the best of feelings between . . . There's something else you might find interesting. If you don't, you can forget about it. I told you of the fifteen or sixteen synagogues in the Jewish . . . Here they were. They knew that the city was gonna buy, and at probably a half a million dollars. Well, let's get together and see what we could do. And, I was still a member of the largest Orthodox Synagogue, even though I was a member of Beth El. Just couldn't get them together. They all had their own ideas and so on, and they didn't know what they were gonna do. Some woman who knew a rabbi who is rabbi of the Fifth

A. (Continued) Avenue Synagogue, Rabbi Manuel Racman, who at that time was rabbi in one of the towns in Long Island, Rockaway . . . Far Rockaway. And, I knew him from when I went to law school in Albany. This woman from Rochester told Rabbi Racman about what's going on in Rochester, the Orthodox Synagogues are coming down, and they don't get together. He says, "When you get back to Rochester, you ask Reuben Goldman to call me." So, I called him in her presence. He says, "If you would call a meeting of the officers, the presidents, and one other of each synagogue, I will come down . . .", he was then president of the Orthodox Rabbi's, ". . . I will bring you the president of the Union of Orthodox Congregations, a layman, a very fine person from Boston, and somebody from the Yeshiva University. We will be glad to come down, make recommendations. They don't have to follow us. It won't cost anybody a penny." I says, "All right. I'll arrange for a meeting. Give me a couple of dates that you can come." And so, we had a meeting at our home. After a beautiful presentation, the three men, as to what they would do, they've done it in other communities, survey like you're doing now, and they'll make recommendations, they don't have to accept it, and so on. Number one gets up and he says, "Our synagogue has a constitution that says the name of it must always be . . ." so on and so forth. The second one is . . . represents the synagogue that had a different way of conducting their service, and their constitution says it's got to be that, even though they were a small synagogue. And, I think, all of the others had a different type, they were all the same. So, I said to them, I said, "You know, my father was responsible for the building of the biggest shul. And, I think, I got 210,000 or \$220,000.00 for him. And, I didn't get as much as you spent for lunch today, but I was glad to do it." With the result that nothing was agreed upon, and I think, actually, what they've done is they threw about a half a million dollars down the drain. And, they haven't

- A. (Continued) improved the situation. I said, "Either merge, if it's necessary to have two synagogues because one is out the north end, one is out the south end, why don't you discuss that." Let's see, now, each one did it's . . . went it's own way, and the things they did.
- Q. Now, do you think this is still true? I mean, do you think still, sort of, differences amongst the congregations in Rochester?
- A. You mean among the Orthodox congregations?
- Q. Yeah. Or between the Orthodox and the Conservative, and the Conservative and the Reformed?
- A. Well, I hear from time to time that one talks about the other, but it's from members, so I can't say that it's anything that is official by a congregation. I don't think Rochester is, Jewishly, even though we have a day school that's twenty-eight years old, I don't feel that we're as good a Jewish Community as we were. And, I think, comparisons . . . with what I see in Miami Beach, which of course, is the closest thing to Israel to anyone who wants to really enjoy an intensive Jewish life.
- Q. You said that you don't think that Rochester's as good a Jewish Community as it was, can you think of any changes that have happened over the years? You know, why . . . what is different now?
- A. Well, probably, I think, religion in general. It's the conditioning in the world. I think, just as the world hasn't any real leadership, we don't have a Churchill, we don't have a Roosevelt, a Lloyd George in England, and so on. In the Jewish world, I don't know whether these names mean anything to you, but Rabbi Speffinweiss, Rabbi Abbesilver (spelling?). I have letters from them. I knew them. They were giants compared to the people that are in leadership in the country. And, the same thing holds true of communities.
- Q. What did you think . . . do you think of Rabbi Bernstein?

A. I have always had a high regard for him. He was opposed to the day school. I don't think he is today. He actually, I know this to be a fact, when we went out to raise the funds, and one of his members would have gladly given us \$3,000,00, he said, "I want to call Rabbi Bernstein." And Rabbi Bernstein told him not to give. He didn't give. But, with all of that, when I say to some of my friends that Rabbi Bernstein is a good Jew . . . He can't be my rabbi, because of what he stands for. But, the man has devoted himself to Israel, he's done a lot of good. There's no question about it. But, I don't think his idea of Jewish education . . . I think I question our survival if we went along with what Reformed Judaism has been satisfied with. There's some change there, too, you know.

Q. Yes. They're becoming more traditional.

A. I recall. I recall when they had Sunday School. Today, many of their kids go, I think, two or three times a week. And, they're learning Hebrew. I think their new prayer book has much more Hebrew. I saw it in Florida, I didn't see it here. And, I don't know, they may have it here.

Q. How has Beth El changed over the years? Do you think that there have been changes in attitudes from rabbi to rabbi?

A. That's a hard thing to say.

Q. As far as . . . Do you remember any, I'm gonna use the word friction again, any problems, maybe, between the decedents of the German-Jewish Community here in Rochester and the immigrants at the turn of the century or their decedents?

A. Yes. The fact is that back, I'll go back to, say . . . let's say 1915. There were two orphanages. One, the older one, by the German people who's children were mainly from Orthodox homes. And then, they were given a great thing to take care of, the Orthodox children. Although, they didn't observe (unknown)

A. (Continued) where, I'm sure, it's the parents that we talk about (unknown) that did observe. And then, there was organized the Orthodox, the general. They called it Orthodox, but they would have Sabbath services, kosher food, they went to Hebrew School, and finally, there was really no need for the, so called, German School . . . er, orphanage, and they merged. And, they . . . the trouble for some time before they completed the merger, was they didn't want to go along on insisting on kosher food, but they finally did.

Q. Can you think of any other, sort of, things that happened?

A. Those . . . there was once something that happened, and going through some of these things, I found it. In 1943, there was an attempt made to have an American-Jewish Conference, which would take . . . Are you familiar with that? Well, there were elections in every city. Rabbi Bernstein was one of the candidates, a fellow named Joe Goldstein who'd been active . . . a wonderful, wonderful guy, I was a candidate, Rabbi Fisher who was then rabbi of (unknown). And so, they had the election. There were four or five places in the city where you could vote. That caused a lot of ill feeling. For example, there was an outstanding woman who was a member of Rabbi Fisher's Temple Beth El, but she . . . a Rochester woman, and Phil Bernstein being a Rochester boy, she went out soliciting people to vote for Phillip Bernstein. And, Rabbi Fisher was terribly upset. Here's a member of her own congregation. Well, Rabbi Bernstein was number one, Joe Goldstein was number two, and then there were two alternates. I was one of the two alternates. I don't recall who the second alternate was, and I attended the two sessions they had in one year and the second year. And, it broke it mainly because the American-Jewish Committee, B'nai B'rith, and I think, the Jewish Labor Committee, did not want to go along on the resolution favoring the establishment of Palistine's (Unknown) the Jewish (Unintelligible). Well, the voting that took place in the community did

- A. (Continued) create a lot of bad feeling. But, I think, pardon me, they've gotten over that.
- Q. What do you think brought the community together?
- A. I think Israel. I think Israel has brought all the (unintelligible). Israel had done more for us than we've done for them. And, I liked to give you one example. Across the street from where I lived before, was a lawyer who was corporation council to the city, he was . . . I always referred to him as . . . and so do many lawyers, as a meshivener bachelor (spelling?), an army man. He was in the First World War; I don't know whether he was a colonel then, but then again, in the Second World War, he was a colonel. I don't think he loved Jews, but as neighbors, we got along. Well, he retired. I was walking off the porch to go to the office one morning. He said, "Reuben, I want to see you." He was sitting on his porch. He said, "You know, in the Second World War, when I was a Colonel, we were stationed in the Near East, the Middle East." He says, "I would never send a Jew to do a dangerous mission, because . . .", he says, "I always felt Jews were yellow bellies." He says, "I just got through reading Exodus. I changed my mind."
- Q. So, can you think of anything else that might have . . . I mean, Israel is a very big thing, and I think that you've hit upon, you know, the main thing that brought the community together, but do you think anything else, such as say, the JY or any of the other organizations, which were community wide, might have helped to . . .
- A. No. I'm sorry to say, and I don't know . . . I know that I'm not the only one. There isn't much that can be done about it. I am sure that the JY, the JCC, (unintelligible). Because, they have to be open to the public, non-Jews as well as Jews. I think it's gonna do Jewish Community more harm than good.
- Q. Why do you say that?

A. Because I think there'd be much more intermarriage than there already is.

Q. What are your opinions on intermarriage? What, I mean . . . well, well, I guess just in general since you don't have any experience . . . specific experience with it.

A. Yes. I do have experience in talking to parents who have had to go through it.

Q. What . . . how do you feel about it?

A. Rabbi Fisher once delivered a sermon on that, and he was one of the top sermonizers of the country. I used to say, I'd just as soon listen to Rabbi Fisher as I have heard Stephen Wiesner (unintelligible) the best of them at conferences and so on. In talking about intermarriage, he said, "The more two people have in common, the better chance that their marriage will be successful."

Q. Do you think that the Jewish person in intermarriage is lost to the Jewish Community?

A. I think in most cases.

Q. So then, you would see intermarriage as a potential fragmentation, a fragmentizer really, of . . .

A. I don't think there's any question about it. I don't it in terms of segregation. I have never felt towards colored people the way many people do. I don't have to be an intimate friend. I'm not intimate with all Jewish people. I couldn't be. But, I was never . . . I was never anti-black. I'm not anti-Christian. In fact, again, there's something in perhaps the Talmud, that says the righteous among non-Jews have a share in the world that comes the same as the Jew.

Q. What sorts of values do you think a Jewish family gives to his children? You know, the kinds of values that . . . might be lost, you know.

A. I would say the one who really leads the right kind of Jewish life would give the values to children that they wouldn't get anywhere else. They wouldn't

A. (Continued) get it in school, whether it's elementary school or it's college.

Q. So, you would say that you're not, then, in favor of Jewish neighborhoods?

You know, in a closed . . . or . . .

A. It can't be. It can't be.

Q. But . . .

A. And yet, I would prefer, not necessarily to live only among Jews, but I would prefer to have more Jews living near me. And, we've always had next door neighbors who weren't Jewish. I once lived on Lake Avenue, on both sides of us there weren't many Jews who lived on Lake Avenue then. There aren't today. Where ever we lived. Even now, on Winton Road. On one side of us, there's non-Jews. The other side, Jews. We never had any problem.

Q. So, you think that the best way to retain the Jewish identity amongst the Jews is to educate them at home?

A. We attended a conference in November in Israel. You're probably not familiar with this type of . . . they're a labor group. They do a good job in Israel. Golda Meir spoke. In fact, she prefers to answer questions. One of the American women from the delegates, after listening to her, said, "When we come back to America, what is the best thing we can do?" And her first thing that she said, "Give your children an intensive Jewish education so that they know why they're Jews, and what Jews are, and about our history." That was the most important thing to her.

Q. And yet, she is not overly religious in her observance. That's very interesting.

A. Ben Gurien was scholar. A real scholar of the Bible and the Talmud. But he wasn't religious from the standpoint of his observance. I call him a religious man, generally.

Q. I'm gonna shift past a little bit here. I'd like to talk about the Joseph Avenue area for awhile. What were your impressions of it? You know, when you were young?

- A. Well, when I was young, I loved it, and we used to walk over to Joseph Avenue Friday night after we had our dinner, and the street was dark. The few non-Jewish stores were the only ones that were open, but most of them were Jewish, so that you knew it was the Sabbath. There was something about it that you just liked. There was a . . . and during the rest of the week, there was a (unintelligible). Every store you walked into, you felt as if you were at home.
- Q. Did you ever go to Cohen's?
- A. Did I ever go to Cohen's? You ask Jack.
- Q. (Laughter) I think he mentioned you, in fact.
- A. Sure. Sure.
- Q. What was it like there?
- A. When you went in, you met everybody you knew.
- Q. Did you used to go often?
- A. Fairly often. Fairly often. The kids, of course, always loved it.
- Q. When did you . . . well, were you ever connected with the Bayden Street Settlement?
- A. No. What I was connected with was right near the Bayden Street Settlement was the Talma-Torah. It was not only the Talma-Torah, it was built by what was then known as the Associated Hebrew Charities. The work that is done by our Jewish Social Service Bureau, and so on. I went there as a student, and I became president of the Rochester Hebrew School. I went to some affairs at the settlement, but I didn't take an active interest in it.
- Q. What was your impression of it?
- A. Well, there were, I think, they were trying to do a good job, but Jewishly, of course, didn't enter into the picture. It wasn't . . . even though, I believe that most of the members of the board were members of the, so called, German-Jews. That's my recollection; I may be wrong on that. But, we didn't

- A. (Continued) go there, because . . . we just didn't feel at home.
- Q. Do you think it was because it was less Jewishly oriented?
- A. Yes. Yes.
- Q. When did you first start perceiving that the Joseph Avenue area was changing? When do you think that had started?
- A. I would say that in '26 when we were married, and we didn't think of moving into any other area but the, so called, Park Avenue, Monroe section. That was the year that my folks left for Palestine. And, at about that time, maybe another five years, or so. But, for many years after that, we'd go . . . where we'd buy our meats. We went to some of the vegetables stores. We preferred to shop there I'd say for some time after that.
- Q. Do you remember the Joseph Avenue area had a culture all it's own?
- A. It all depends what you mean by culture.
- Q. Well, just, you know, sort of, a community within a community?
- A. I would say so. There isn't such a thing today in Rochester.
- Q. I was just gonna ask you that. Do you think that that sort of thing, then, is lost?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Brighton hasn't picked it up at all?
- A. No. They . . . something here and something there. No. It isn't the same.
- Q. What were your reactions in '64 to the riots?
- A. Well, I was very discouraged about it. And, I, somewhere, have a letter from my brother who read about it in Israel. (Unintelligible). And, he couldn't get over the fact that . . . Rochester. Rochester . . . she had riots. The people got along beautifully, never anything like that. He just couldn't understand it. And, I didn't think it would ever happen in Rochester.
- Q. What do you think caused them?

A. Who knows? Well, it was . . . I'm sure it was somebody from the outside who got the colored people . . . we did it in Cleveland, we did it here, and we did it . . . We had a fine relationship here, the Jews and non-Jews.

Q. You think there was outside agitation then?

A. There must've been. I don't know definitely.

Q. Do you think that the riots were anti-semitic, or anti-white?

A. I think mainly anti-semitic, because most of the damage was done in Joseph Avenue.

Q. Of course, that was where the blacks were living.

A. And that's where the Jews were living.

Q. Right.

A. Why couldn't the blacks have gone anyplace in the city and done the same thing, if they were just anti-white?

Q. What do you think makes a black person into an anti-semite?

A. Maybe because it's easy to start with the Jews as the . . . oh, what's the term I want to use?

Q. Scapegoat?

A. Scapegoat, yeah. It's always been the scapegoat. You can read it in many, many books.

Q. Do you think that the blacks and Jews should be natural allies, as minorities?

A. They ought to be because they've gone through the same thing. We could be a great help to them, I think. And, I think, for quite a time, Jews had been great help. Out of proportion to the rest of the white people.

Q. Were you ever connected with the FIGHT Organization?

A. No.

Q. Do you have any impressions of it, or of Sol Lensky?

A. No. No. I think for a couple of years, I remember the ACP, is it?

Q. NAACP.

A. But when they started to show that they were anti-semitic, I just dropped out.

Q. So, you think that the National Association for Colored People is anti-semitic?

A. I'm not so sure today. I heard . . . I heard (unintelligible). He spoke at a convention, bi-annual convention of the United Synagogues in the Catskills, the Concord Hotel. When he got through, I said, "My gosh. He sounds like a prophet." He gave a talk . . . I wish he were available.

Q. To your knowledge, or have you personally experienced, any kind of anti-semitism in Rochester?

A. Not personally, but I know there has been.

Q. Can you think of any specific occurrence?

A. I wish I could remember some of the things.

Q. But . . .

A. But, I must tell you this: Another man and I who were partners in (unintelligible) real estate and built a park complex (unintelligible) apartments. We were having daily contact with the builder, the architect, oh, one or two others; they were all non-Jews. When the thing was completed, I said to my wife, "You know, I'd like to invite all of them over to spend an evening." Had a wonderful time. We had a wonderful time. And, each one, particularly the contractor, a very wealthy man, he says, "Reuben. We've got to get together more often." Now, the things completed, we've gotten to know each other, and so on. Did you ever hear from them again? We didn't. When we were together in a business proposition, and they were making money out of it, fine friends. And, we really thought it would be nice if we did get together, even once a year.

Q. Do you think that sort of thing still goes on?

A. I think so.

Q. Did you have any problems getting into law school because you were Jewish?

A. No. In fact, I probably wouldn't have told you this if you hadn't asked. When I wanted to go to law school, I wrote to half a dozen schools, and the only one that didn't have classes on Saturday was Albany Law. So, I chose Albany Law. At the end of the first semester, January or February, they posted the dates for examinations. And, one of the days was to be on Saturday for one of the exams. There was another fellow from Albany who's father was a (Unknown) who was very religious. He said, "What are we gonna do?" So, we went in to talk to the registrar. I says, "Your catalog shows that there'd be no school . . ." He said, "No, we don't have school." But, he says, "The term ends . . .", let's say on a Wednesday, the second term starts Monday. "We got to utilize the Saturday." He says, "Take it this once, and in the future we will try to avoid it." Said, we can't. He found the solution. He says, "The superintendent will come Sunday morning with the exam papers, you can take it Sunday morning." Some of our friends said, "Do you think they're gonna keep you here? They'll bust you at the end of the year." Well, both of us graduated. He's a lawyer in New York. But, a couple of the fellas, I don't attach any great importance to it, a couple of the fellas . . . two brothers in fact, they were both out at the end of that year, one went to Buffalo, one went to Brooklyn Law School. But, we . . . they didn't take it out on us.

Q. Were you aware that there was a Jewish quota system at the University of Rochester?

A. Oh, you couldn't help but know. In fact, you hear it every day. Did you ever hear of Rush Reeves?

Q. Oh, yes.

A. People would say, very often, Rush Reeves would turn over in his grave if he knew what was going on. You probably heard about Golda Meir's being here?

Q. No sir, I haven't.

A. We were in Florida and, of course, our children sent us some of literature and so on, and the program. And, hundreds of people, they said, that night . . . everyone said the same thing: If Rush Reeves were here.

Q. (Laughter) Did your daughter have trouble getting into the University of Rochester? But, there was a quota system still on at that time?

A. I think so. I think so. In fact, I think, now I'm not sure about this, but I think she was the first Jewish girl to be invited to the sorority.

Q. You were saying that your daughter was one of the first Jewish women to be invited . . . this was in a non-Jewish sorority.

A. Yeah. There wasn't a Jewish sorority.

Q. When did the University of Rochester start changing in it's attitudes? Do you think it was just the change in leadership that did it?

A. Could be. Could be. I really don't know.

Q. Um . . .

A. She'd probably be able to tell you more about that than I would.

Q. Now, have you ever belonged to any political organizations in Rochester?

A. No. Because I don't think too much of politics. I would like to have taken an interest in it, if I didn't know what was involved.

Q. Do you . . . can you remember any incident. . . well, do you think that any of the local political leaders either many years ago or now, were . . . there were differences in their relations to the Jewish Community? Do you think there were any, you know, people who were more or less friendly toward the Jewish Community?

A. Well, I don't think there's any question about it. I remember there was a congressman, I can't think of his name, who was known to be anti-semitic. He spoke before election one year in the Jewish neighborhood, and there was

A. (Continued) an assemblyman who was Jewish from that neighborhood. He was on the platform when this congressman spoke who made a rather nasty statement . . . I think . . . I think . . . I think he was very foolish to do it. I don't recall now what it was. And, all the people expected that this Jewish assemblyman would walk off the stage - he didn't. He lost the election that year. In his own area.

Q. Simply a reaction to someone else's statement. I mean, to the fact that he did not react to someone else's statement.

A. That's right.

Q. Do you think that the Jewish Community tends to react that way together? I mean, that they take, sort of, a political stance together?

A. No. But, it's interesting. You know, we established the forests in memory of (Unknown). In fact, I was the chairman of that. This is (Unknown). This is (Unintelligible) who was a former president of the United Jewish Welfare Fund. A very fine person. It's interesting that in Israel the several times that I've been there, and I would always go up to the office of the Jewish National Fund. And, this is before (Unknown) came to Israel as a (unintelligible). He said he came to Israel seven times, and every time he'd come in, he'd call the Jewish National Fund and say, "I'd like to go out and see the forest." Now, why I started to talk about that is, when we had this affair for (Unknown), we wanted to get . . . we wanted to get as many people to sort of act as sponsors without saying to them that to be a sponsor you've got to give so much and so on. So, we sent out letters asking them to be a sponsor without saying any more than that, that it was gonna (Unknown). These are the people who responded, who were glad to be associated with it. Now, there are two people, whose names ordinarily would be on there, but because they were democrats, the kind of democrats that probably wouldn't vote for the best man because he wouldn't be a democrat. They were not part of it.

- Q. Was this a republican . . . It was just that Keating was a republican, and that was . . .
- A. It was Keating was a republican who as a congressman, before becoming a senator, did so much for Israel. In fact, when the man who was the public relations man for the Jewish National Fund . . . we spent several weeks here in my office working together on this. He says, you know, he says, "Let's try to see if we can get Senator Javitz to be the speaker." "You expect both senators to be here at the same time?" He says, "What have we got to lose?" He called up Senator Javitz and he says, "I'd be very happy to be at Ken's (unintelligible)." He probably had a very close relationship with Keating.
- Q. Do you think that the republicans are . . . the republicans or the democrats are more or less friendly? I mean, is there a difference between the political party and their relation . . .
- A. I don't think so. I don't think so. I'm gonna show you something that'll be interesting about Keating. We were in Israel a few years ago, this . . . well, this was in '71. And, we were coming from outside the City of Jerusalem to the center of Jerusalem, and got into a cab, Mrs. Goldman and I, and after riding a few blocks, we see a woman waiting for a bus. I said, "She may have to wait there goodness knows how long." So we picked her up. She turns . . . it turns out that she lives . . . she's an Arab, she lives in Jerusalem, but has been working in India for one of the consoloets. I said, "Do you know Mr. Keating?" She says, "His office is right next door." I said, "If I give you a note to him, would you . . ." "Oh, sure." The only thing I had was my membership card to the JY. I wrote something on it.
- Q. (Laughter)

By Tina Isaacs

June 28, 1976

Tape 11

Side 1

Interview 11

Q. This is Tina Isaacs interviewing Mr. Reuben Goldman. It's Monday, June the 28th, and we're in Mr. Goldman's office. Mr. Goldman, last time I interviewed you, you mentioned an interest in the local Chamber of Commerce, and what I'd like to know is what were your experiences with the Chamber of Commerce, and if you'd belong to any other, sort of, civic organization?

A. My recollection is that I was helping mainly with the new citizens. And, it was a very small committee. I felt they were doing a pretty good job. But, after doing it one year, I think the second year, to me it was the same routine, and I didn't get enough out of it.

Q. When was this?

A. Oh, it's a long time ago. I . . . I'd be guessing, but I'd say twenty-five years ago.

Q. Where the new citizens . . . were any of these new citizens refugees from Europe?

A. Oh, yes. Yes.

Q. Can you remember any experiences that you might have had with these people coming in?

A. I can't remember them. I know this, that at the time I was able to talk to a few of them in Yiddish. And, I got a tremendous kick of hearing their stories and how much they loved America, and there's probably no other country in the world that would do what is being done for them.

Q. Do you belong to any other civic organizations?

A. The . . . I think the only other thing that I took an interest in, again for a few years, was the campaign of the Community Chest.

Q. And, what did you do for that? Did you solicit funds?

A. That's right.

Q. Did a lot of Jews belong to the Community Chest?

A. Oh, yeah. I would say the Jewish contributions are probably on a larger percentage per capita than non-Jews.

Q. And, how about working for . . . as solicitors?

A. Incidentally, there's one man who could probably give you more information that . . . he was . . . my recollection is, I think, he was president of the Community Chest. I know he was chairman of the budget committee for many years. Joseph Goldstein.

Q. He's being interviewed.

A. Yeah, I'm sure he's being interviewed. He should be.

Q. (Laughter)

A. Unfortunately, his hearing isn't . . . he's about eighty-three or eighty-four. His hearing isn't what it should, his eyesight isn't what it should be, but he's a grand, grand person. And, a very intelligent doctor. The entire Jewish scene . . . now, Joe isn't necessarily the most religious person, but he's a member of the temple and he comes several times, several times (unintelligible).

Q. Do you mind if I close the door?

A. Oh. Yeah, sure.

Q. All the background noises pick up on the tape. Sorry. Go ahead, sir.

A. Now, he would be a man, if you had special reasons to see him, I think you'd get a lot from him. People are surprised, people who . . . some people that are religious, when they hear me say that I regard Joe Goldstein as number one Jew in Rochester, they're surprised to hear me say that, but I think, it's a narrower view on their part. I have known him in Zionism, I've known him in Jewish education, in the Welfare Fund, and he was on national boards.

Q. I'm not going to be the one to interview him. I think he's already been interviewed, actually, I'm not sure. Now, were there a lot of Jewish people working as solicitors in the Community Chest?

A. Oh, yes. There was one man in Rochester that just Saturday, we were talking about you, and he said some nice things about you. There's one fellow, Robert Berman who is one of the (unintelligible). He originally told me that he wanted to see me . . . I think he has the job of the Zionist movement in Rochester and thought he'd come and see me. And, I told him that I had been interviewed by you. He thought that you were going to interview him. Do you have his name?

Q. Not yet. I might be, because, you know, I'm finishing . . .

A. He seemed to know your name when I told him.

Q. He's probably one of the people I'm starting next, you know, when I come back.

A. And, he's also going to do interviewing, as I understand it.

Q. Well, getting back to this. Do you think that Jews should participate in non-Jewish organizations?

A. Well, it all depends what you mean by non-Jewish organizations.

Q. Well, say, a civic organization.

A. Oh, yes. Yes.

Q. Do you think that's very important?

A. I think it is. I don't think it's the most important thing. I see some of our Jewish people who can become very active in the non-Jewish affairs, or . . . or civic. It isn't a question of Jewish or non-Jewish, and do little or nothing for Jewish organizations. I don't have much . . . oh, I don't attach much importance to them.

Q. Do you think, as Jews, they should participate first of all and primarily in Jewish organizations?

A. That's right.

Q. Do you think that Rochester, the Rochester Jewish Community is a closed community?

A. The only way I think I could answer that is yes and no.

Q. Could you elaborate on that?

A. I don't think we're democratic enough.

Q. In what sense?

A. I think things generally in synagogues, in all Jewish organizations, are all in control, you might say, although they have their way of doing it so that doesn't appear that way, in running particular institutions. And, I don't want to take away from the credit that they deserve for spending the time, but they manage to continue the same people . . . I'm happy to see younger people take over. I think it's necessary, even though when I come to a meeting now, and my . . . I go to very few meetings . . . I find that I'm listening to the same thing we talked about twenty years ago and thirty years ago. In fact, Joe Goldstein, I met him on the bus one morning. "You know," he says, "I was at a meeting of the Bureau of Jewish education." He says, "I was bored." Now this was unusual for Joe to say anything like that. He attended conferences even with his deficiencies. I know, up to last year anyway. He's . . . there was . . . I forget . . . the National Organization of the Welfare Fund. There was . . . I think, he went to New Orleans. And, it isn't easy for him to travel. In '67, we were . . . we were with the Mission of the United Jewish Appeal together. And, because of his sight and his general physical . . . he was the first one on the bus at 7:30 in the morning. And, he had such enthusiasm that Mrs. Goldman and I, we sort of felt that we'd want to take care of him, and to him it meant an awful lot. But, how he was able to get around as he did, and you could depend on him. He's an unusual person. I was surprised to hear him say that he was bored at a meeting of Jewish Education Association. And, I've been on the board. I was a former

A. (Continued) president of the American . . . er, of the Jewish . . . of the Bureau of Jewish Education, and on the National Board. He said, "You hear the same thing . . ." Over the last twenty-five years whenever we'd go to a meeting of the American Association in New York, mostly in New York, you'd get a report of a survey being taken in Chicago, a survey being taken in this city, in that city. And, we've had, I think, a couple of them over a period of years, in Rochester. It was the same thing, and you sort of felt what's true in one city is true in the other. Why spend all this money? Why spend all this time? But, I don't know. I'm not sure really that I can say that there is improvement in Jewish education. The exception is the day school. And, that isn't because I understand the value a whole lot better than ninety-nine percent of the people, I'm sorry to say. And, I know that it makes all difference when you have a person who has had intensive Jewish education as against one who's going . . . has been compelled to go through school, and the afternoon schools teach very little. The reason for it is, you come after a day at school, public school, and I don't have to tell you how the average youngster feels. So that, to me, the day school has been the thing. And, yet, leadership in the community . . . and this doesn't only apply to Rochester. I've talked to others. They've had an awful, awful tough time with the leadership in many communities. Because, to them, the day school is, as I told you the other day, is a parochial school like the Catholics.

Q. Do you think that the organizations are . . . do you think it's the older leadership wants to hang on or that there aren't enough younger people to take over?

A. Well, I think, speaking for Rochester and really . . . well, I shouldn't say only Rochester. When we were in Israel in November, there was a conference, I think of a thousand. They were mostly young couples from all over America.

- A. (Continued) It was thrilling to talk to these people. They wore a sign in Hebrew. They wore a badge which is called (Unknown), meaning strength. These kids, when we'd meet them in the morning, we sat down at the same table with them having breakfast. The enthusiasm of what they had seen, what they had done, and they immediately, I don't know how they got them so quickly, they were all wearing buttons, "I am a Zionist." And one other thing, I wish I'd kept the paper, and maybe I have it, the English paper that's put out in Israel, the daily, The Jerusalem Post . . . God bless you.
- Q. Thank you.
- A. . . . said that these one thousand, most all of them had given blood. And, they talked about it the very next day at breakfast with such enthusiasm: "Did you give blood?" "No, I made an appointment for this afternoon." "Well, that's the first thing you should do." Things like that. It was . . . No, I'm glad to see young people take an interest, but I will say this. They do not . . . they do not begin to understand. And, probably, that's natural. Maybe I was the same way at their age. But, they didn't come from the same kind of background. It makes a difference. No question about it.
- Q. So, you really . . . you think then, it's not, say, the younger generation, but the generation before that that was neglectful of . . .
- A. Oh, definitely. Definitely.
- Q. In what ways do you think they neglected the educations of their children?
- A. Let me tell you what happened this morning. I like to walk down Parkway. Delora picked me up this morning. He was a friend of my sons. So, I was telling him about last night's meeting. I said, "You'd a gotten a big kick out of it." Well, he hasn't shown the interests that he should have. He says, you know, he says, "Arnie and I, we weren't fortunate enough at our age to have had the opportunity of going to Israel." Because I told him about

A. (Continued) the type of boys and girls who were going. How enthusiastic they were. But, I don't think it was the lack of opportunity, I think, his parents had no interest in anything. My folks, after living there for forty years, because they always had contact with Palestine, naturally we got it from them. And, that's why in 1951, I took two of my three children to go with Mrs. Goldman. But, Arnold went the year before with his New York University group. Now, his boy is going to spend the summer in Israel. His daughter who is fourteen will be at (Unknown) Camp this summer.

Q. Okay. I'd like to talk about the Hebrew Loan Association for awhile.

A. Alright.

Q. Now, how . . . what was the impetus for its original founding and how had it changed in your experience with it, and what's it all about?

A. Well, it's . . . of course, it's based on either a statement in the Talmud or a one of our Jewish books that the Hebrew is an act of kindness. And, there's a statement that the act of kindness is greater than charity. In the early part of the century when this was organized, and my father was one of the organizers in 1903, you'd be surprised what a fifty dollar loan meant to people. They used to get . . . they used to get their automobile licenses, truck . . . for trucks. There were hucksters who sold vegetables, fruits, you know. There were Jewish icemen who had to get their license. Some how or other in January, they didn't have the fifty dollars, the twenty dollars, whatever it was. They were operating from hand to mouth. So then, they could come to the free-loan society where we used to meet every Sunday morning at the Hebrew Charities Building on Bayden Street, and they'd come with a note and borrow up to two hundred dollars. And, they didn't have to pay one penny interest. And to give you two examples: when the depression was on, there used to be a loan society, it was for the purpose of making money. It was

A. (Continued) called the Provident Loan Society. Now, when people weren't working in the depression, and they had their furniture . . . they made a loan on their furniture, if they were only able to pay a dollar a week, or two dollars a week let's say, that really only represented the interest. So, they continually owed the same amount of money. I recall one person who, I think, he had owed this society perhaps a hundred dollars, see? A little more, a little less. And, he showed me his booklet. And, he kept owing the same amount, because he was paying a heavy interest rate, too. Just like they do today. So, I said to him, "Now you get two people who will endorse your note, and we'll give you (we'll call it) a hundred dollars. You go to the Provident Loan Society, pay it off. If you pay the same dollar (or two dollars) a week, eventually, you won't owe anything. Or, there's a doctor here . . . he's given up his practice. He's in a . . . he went to a non-Jewish charitable institution here in the city. And, he was studying . . . taking his medicine in Buffalo, at the University of Buffalo. In January or February of his senior year, he had to come up with about two hundred dollars in order to graduate. There's a family in Buffalo who, I think, was giving him room and board without charging him. They wrote to me and they said, "We've been helping this fellow as you probably know, but we can't give him the two hundred dollars. Is there a way that you could do it?" So, I suggested that when he . . . that he come in for a weekend to talk with him. We said to him, "We'll give you the two hundred dollars. That's the limit. All we need is a couple of endorsements." He says, "My father hasn't got a penny." And, I don't recall who else he mentioned. I says, "Alright. We'll . . . we are sure that some day you're gonna be able . . ." He says, "I'll be the happiest man in the world when that time comes." Well, we let him take the two hundred dollars, he graduated. He's very, very successful. He paid it back. He paid a whole lot more than that. It was a great thing to be able to do things for people like that.

A. (Continued) And, Somewhere, I should have dug it up, we used to have our books audited by a public accountant who never charged us a nickel for it. And, the way, as I said, the way that we increased our capital was to have this banquet. And, people, in addition to paying \$2.00 for a dinner, would become members, so to speak. They'd give \$5.00, \$10.00, whatever they could.

Q. You'd have a dinner meeting you said?

A. Yeah.

Q. Could you tell me what those were like and get it on the tape?

A. Well, the thing that I remember most is there was a unusual Orthodox Rabbi from Chicago. Because of something that Rochester did which he liked, he said, "If you ever want me to speak, I'll come here. It won't cost you a penny." And, he was quite a speaker. So, I was then the president of the Free-Loan Society, so it was after . . . it was after '26, because my father had already left to make his home in Palestine. And, I invited this rabbi . . . Rabbi Silver, his name was. And, he says . . . he says, "You know, the Gormor of the Talmud (spelling?) says that . . .", and he used the Hebrew for this act of kindness, " . . . is greater than charity." He says, "The Talmud says that there is a (call it) intelligence of the mind and intelligence of the heart." He says, "The intelligence of the mind is charity, but (he says) intelligence of the heart is acts of kindness. (He says) And, intelligence of the heart is greater than intelligence of the mind."

Q. Now, how do you think the Hebrew Loan Association changed from its inception?

A. To be perfectly frank with you, I'm really not sure that it is still going on. And, I think, the reason for it is, what is it, a fifty dollar, a hundred dollar loan today . . . and yet it's unfortunate. I think it should've been carried on where they could help and there was plenty of room for help. There is plenty of room for help today, if man . . . a small man in business or even

A. (Continued) a man who is working, and he has to buy something on a time-payment plan, the interest rates are heavy. The community should have been wide awake enough to say, alright, instead of having a capital of 30, \$40,000.00, let's have a capital of a quarter of a million. We can get that . . . we ought to be able to get people who would give \$1,000.00 and so on. But, I think, it just petered out because we were . . . we had to limit ourselves to \$200.00 and I'd say the average loan was probably \$75.00.

Q. Were the people who worked for the Hebrew Loan Association all volunteers?

A. Yes, except a secretary.

Q. And, did that change at all? Was there any kind of professionalization in that organization?

A. No. No.

Q. What do you think of professionalization, in general, in these new organizations?

A. I hesitate to tell you.

Q. Do you think that . . . well, what do you think of the volunteer system in Rochester?

A. I think we do pretty well in getting volunteers for important work. In fact, even with a Jewish education . . . I am quite often surprised when I see who is elected to the board. A number of young people . . . years ago in a time, I think I was probably in my thirties, I was dealing with men anywhere from ten to twenty-five years older than I. And, those were the only men you could really count on at that time. There is a difference in that respect.

Q. How so? Do you think less people are volunteering?

A. No. I think more young people are volunteering. I'm not always convinced that they know what it's all about, but they make a sincere effort to do the best job they possibly can.

Q. Okay. I'm gonna ask about certain . . . amongst your activities, that you spoke about last time. You just had listed them all. I'm just gonna, you know,

Q. (Continued) see . . . What I'd like to know is . . . I'm gonna just, sort of, go through them one at a time. If you could tell me things like, oh, what the organization was about, and how it changed, and what it had to do with the Rochester Community. You said that you were president of the Rochester Zionist District? Could you tell me a little bit about that?

A. Well, we used to . . . we used to be active, and we were able to get some outstanding people to come because we did have, for the size of our community, I think we were either number one in the country or close to it, if it wasn't number one. The people who were in it, again, we didn't have any professional . . . the only professional that would come would be the one who worked for the national organization. I think I told you about the man who came once and saw what I was doing in the office, sending out notices, and seeing that the mail went out, and he says to me, he was comparatively new to the movement, and he says, "Now I know what they mean when they say, 'You don't have to be crazy to be a Zionist, but it helps.'" Here is some of the things we did, for example. The Jewish National Fund . . . I don't know whether you're really familiar : . . . that's the organization that has bought land, I think, they're in business . . . I shouldn't say in business, I think they've been doing that in Palestine, I'm sure for at least, seventy-five years. And, with the establishment of the State, that meant an awful lot to have so much of the land belonging to the Jewish people, really. There are always gimmicks of how . . . of raising money. First of all, are you familiar with the Jewish National Fund Box, the blue box that is, today, in many, many homes. You drop in a nickel every now and then, pennies, and so on. (Unknown) does a big job in placing these boxes in homes, and then, the women, either once a year or twice a year, whatever it is, will collect. Apparently, and I didn't realize this, this particular thing was on the fortieth anniversary Land for Victory Scroll,

- A. (Continued) where many of us went out and would collect a dollar, at least, a dollar . . . 'We the undersigned having made a minimum contribution of a dollar towards the said cause, have affixed signatures.' I see, when I went to Buffalo, I took this with me. There's a fellow, he's an attorney in Buffalo he was an attorney. Here's another one, Sam Darlick, 17 Court Street, Buffalo. Hundreds of these. I think, this was probably one of the . . . I didn't finish when it was all over with, and that's why I was surprised when I looked through a lot of my stuff, I found it. Here . . . this was a National Jewish Fund Dinner. This will show . . . pardon me. This will show that my brother Al was co-chairman of this particular . . .
- Q. Was . . . is there a lot of participation in Rochester in the Jewish National Fund?
- A. Not what it was.
- Q. Why do you think it . . . why?
- A. Well, that's quite a story. We had a devil of a time. When I say 'we', I mean Zionists. To me, there was quite a difference between a Zionist and one who is not a Zionist. The Zionists had a feeling . . . more of a feeling for everything Jewish, particularly to have Palestine the Jewish National Home. And, I think I went to conferences called on a twenty-four hour notice. Very often. Especially to Washington to see our assemblyman, er, our congressmen, senator. I recall when we thought of the Keating Forest. And, I'm not gonna mention names, and it was a question, I think, of raising \$20,000.00. Ten thousand trees at \$2.00 that would be enough to have a full forest in somebody's name, memory, and celebration of an anniversary, or so on. And, Keating had done such a good job for Palestine. When . . . then Israel. When it was so important to have a congressman, a senator, to be with the movement. So, I found myself being asked to be the chairman of the fund raising there. Well, the leadership in the community said at that time, and this was, I think, '59,

A. (Continued) 'Why do you want to have . . . why do you want to go to the trouble and ask the community to raise \$20,000.00? Let's have Senator Keating as the guest of honor at our annual dinner-meeting of the Welfare Fund.' Well, in the first place, we had already invited Keating for this purpose, and he was flabbergasted to think that we were going to have a forest in his name. So, I didn't feel that we could change that. But, this particular fellow . . . he caught a number of leaders together, and they were trying to, really, kill it. They thought, 'Alright. Yes. We should honor Keating, but let's do it in a way where it isn't gonna mean another campaign and it isn't gonna mean a . . . \$20,000.00.' At that time, I think, we had . . . I think, two new temples were going to go up, and that was gonna be millions of dollars. A \$20,000.00 campaign, at that time, wouldn't mean anything. I think . . . I think, I know from the response people were so glad to respond. In fact, we didn't try the \$2.00 tree sales, and so on. We were out to get large contributions and we did get them. And, the people were so happy with the way the thing worked out. I think I told you that whenever Keating came to Israel . . . So that, even though these people were leaders in the community, yet they couldn't . . . they didn't have the feeling that we had. I wasn't interested in . . . the best way I can put it is, if I hadn't been the chairman, I would have worked just as hard, because I knew what it would mean. I knew what it did mean. And, to this very day I know that it meant a lot.

Q. Do you think a person can be a good Jew and be a non-Zionist? I know that's . . .

A. We had that come up within the last, I think, within the temple. I think, it was yesterday. It comes up very often. I've got to put it this way: I have been told more than once of people who generally, I think, that it's put by people who are lukewarm. And, the way they put it, 'You mean to tell me that so-and-so, who goes to the synagogue every morning, or every Saturday, but in

- A. (Continued) his business, he'll cheat. . . he'll do this which is wrong. You think that he's a good Jew?' I say, 'No, he isn't a good Jew, because he's just kidding himself. He isn't honest.' The relationship between man to man. Not only Jew to Jew, but man to man, is at least as important as the relationship of man to God. So that, I would say that if the Jew who is observing sincerely and truly and does . . . he's charitable, he's kind, he does every . . . I think he's a better Jew than one who just . . . I can tell you some people here in the building that would say, 'I'm a good Jew at heart.' But, you wouldn't see them members of this organization or a member of that organization. You know, it reminds me of the question that is . . . you don't hear about it as much as you did back a few years ago: Who is a Jew? Or, what is a Jew? Which, I think, became involved in the courts of Israel. Different questions were . . . where they were converted, but not converted according to the strict Jewish law . . . Orthodox law. The Orthodox would say, 'He's not a Jew.' I believe that the courts of Israel have decided, and perhaps for a different reason, that the foundation of the State of Israel . . . every Jew could become a citizen of Israel from any part of the world. It didn't go into detail who is a Jew and what is a Jew. But, that question comes up very often. I sort of hesitate to give you one definition, but I will say, I don't consider myself, frankly, I don't consider myself a better Jew because I observe the Sabbath, or because I observe the laws of (Unknown). If anything, I may be a better Jew in having taken part in all of these things, as against one who's done nothing.
- Q. Okay. You've also been the president . . . the vice president, excuse me, of the United Synagogue, and on the board. What kinds of things do you do for that?
- A. Well, I did.
- Q. What have you done?

A. I'm not . . . pushed upward. I'm now an honorary member of the board. Oh, I went around speaking for the United Synagogue in different communities, because I feel that the Conservative movement, in the first place, is an important institution in Jewish life. It probably has kept many Jews from leaving Judaism, either because they felt . . . not that I agree with them . . . they felt that Orthodoxy is too strigent. They felt that Reformed had gone too far, although Reformed has come back a great deal, I don't know whether you're familiar with that. Sometimes when I hear and see a Reformed Rabbi in Miami Beach (unintelligible) unusual. His love for Israel . . . he goes there a half a dozen or more times a year, and he raises money from his membership in order to send as many children of his congregation to Israel every summer. So, the fact that he's a Reformed Jew . . . to me, he's a good Jew.

Q. Okay. And, you've also been a member of the Board of Overseers' of the Jewish Theological Seminary?

A. That and the United Synagogue is the laymen's group. The seminary the institution that prepares men for the rabbinate.

Q. Now, you said that you curtailed your activities somewhat. Why?

A. Well, perhaps it's age. No. I'm interested, but I don't attend meetings. I don't solicit as I used to. I just don't feel that I can do. No special reason, but I can't.

Q. Okay.

END OF TAPE II, SIDE I, INTERVIEW II

Tape 11
Side 11
Interview 11

Q. Mr. Goldman, could you . . .

A. Here . . . here was one of the outstanding Zionists' Conferences before the establishment of the state called the (Unknown) Conference.

Q. Could you tell me about what happened . . . what went on during this Biltmore (spelling?) Conference? This was in 1942.

A. Yeah.

Q. Um . . .

A. I think it was called because the Zionists felt that the war . . . when the war would be ended, the question of Palestine becoming a Jewish State would come up, should come up, and all the Zionist bodies . . . the general Zionists, the Labor Zionists, the religious Zionists, the (Unknown), the Pioneer Women, they were all represented at this conference. And, my recollection is that the first president of Israel, Weisman . . . my recollection is that Ben Gurion was there (unintelligible). The greatest in the Zionist district. And, of course, they did pass a resolution favoring the establishment of the State of Israel. Another couple of years later, was the American Jewish Conference at which the Zionists wanted their resolution adopted by all American Jewry. And because the resolution was adopted, the non-Zionists . . . I don't know if I'd call any of them anti-Zionists who attended, I don't think so. But, there were men . . . there was . . . can't think of the name of the judge who was a very important person in that conference, who was president of the American Jewish Committee, and he was an outstanding person. He didn't want the Zionists to insist on that at that time. And because the over-whelming number of delegates voting for the resolution . . . the American Jewish Committee walked out of the American Jewish Conference. My recollection is that B'nai B'rith walked out, which they wouldn't do today, I'm sure. I think the Jewish Labor Committee.

Q. Do you think that Rochester was also split along those same lines?

A. Only to this extent: there were, I would say, a few individuals. I'm thinking of one man who is among the wealthier people in the city. And, I don't think that he took any special, as I recall, in anything Jewish. But, he would give his contribution to the United Jewish Welfare Fund which takes in everything. No part of this contribution should go to Palestine or for Palestine. There were others who felt that way, I don't that anyone went as far as that (unintelligible). But, I think, some said they didn't want their money to go to Palestine. It's interesting that that same man who, I could say, was extremely Reformed, and probably, never even attended a Reformed service. I may be wrong about that. But, I've . . . some say that that was so. And, he was a real nice guy to talk with. His daughter, I believe, married a observant, Orthodox Jew. Would you believe that it even had some change that I recall his coming to the dinner meeting at the home of a former president of the Welfare Fund, and we had somebody from Israel to speak, and you could see the difference in his attitude. And, I was wondering why, but I was told that his daughter had married a religious, observant Jew and that has made a change in him.

Q. Do you think that when Israel is established that most everybody in the community was behind it?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. When did you first become aware of what was happening to the Jews in Europe in the '30s?

A. I think . . . I think I go back to that . . . you know, during the First World War, there was a relief organization. In fact, there were three different relief organizations nationally, so you had it in all local communities. There was one which they called the German-Jews, the wealthy, German-Jews had their

A. (Continued) organization. Then, the religious Jews were the Central Relief Committee. And, the Labor Group, the People's Relief Committee. I'm trying to think what the Reformed called themselves. Anyway, they did finally come together, and they were all joined so that it was called the Joint Distribution Committee, you probably have heard that. Well, my father was the head of the Orthodox Committee, which was the, at that time, the most active. I think they were closer to the Jews of Europe, people who had come over after the German-Jews came here. The German-Jews had already become not only a hundred percent Americanized, they wanted to be a thousand percent Americanized. And, how I became interested at that time is every Sunday morning, we would come down to the charity building on Bayden Street and there were three different books with tickets. I think, ten cent tickets, twenty-five, fifty, maybe a dollar; maybe there were four. And, we'd be given these four books, and we'd be given certain areas. I took, let's say, three streets where they probably were, I'd say, at least fifty Jewish families. And, every Sunday morning we'd pick up a dime here, a quarter here, a dollar here. Come back and report, turn in the money. I don't know how the German-Jews, how they raised their funds. Probably contributions, fifty dollars at a time, a hundred dollars at a time. But, I knew why we were doing it that we were trying to help the Jews that were being taken advantage of by all of the countries of Europe at that time. And then, the war was over with. They started to come in great numbers.

Q. What were your personal experiences with people who came to Rochester?

A. I think I was too young, at that time, let's see . . . when they came in 1918, 1920 . . . I was seventeen, eighteen years old.

Q. How about the people who came in . . . before the Second World War?

A. You mean among . . . mainly the Germans?

- Q. Well, not necessarily. Any of the people that were coming into Rochester, the Jewish people.
- A. Well, I think that the people that were able to come in the early days before the Second World War, I think they were able to bring money with them. And, many of them had been very successful. But then, there were quite a few that when they were finally able to get out, but couldn't bring anything with them, they were helped and we're going through the same thing now with Russian-Jewry. It's interesting. You get two different points of view. You get some people who say, 'My gosh. They want you to do everything for them.' On the other hand, my oldest married daughter has had some of the Russian Jews over to her home several times, she's become pretty well known to a number of them. She's anxious to help whatever she can. We had a most interesting night when she must have had eight or ten Russian Jews, and some of them . . . the only other language they could speak other than Russian was Yiddish. Wait a minute. Wait a minute. This was for the Sayder (spelling?) on Passover Night. She invited, I think, six or eight of them, and we came from Florida for the . . . to be there at the Sayder. And because I was able to speak Yiddish to them, and tell them more about the story that we kept reading of the history of why we have Passover and so on, it was a tremendous experience to all my children. They thought it was the greatest thing that I was able to talk to them, to explain to them, and they felt that they had learned so much . . . otherwise, they couldn't speak English. And, it was an unusual event that . . . You know, it's hard to generalize. I found some of them who I don't think they have the proper attitude, and I don't think they appreciate, or they would like you to be able to get 'em a job, and start tomorrow, and if you can get them a job particularly that they have been doing in Russia. But, I expect that. I always use something that I've learned from the time I was child in Hebrew School that says, 'Don't judge your neighbor until you have been in his position.'

Q. Before I turned on the tape, we were talking about the home for the wayfarers. Could you please tell me about your experiences with that?

A. Well, again, I knew where the house was. In fact, sometimes when somehow or other they got over at our house, they didn't know where it was. At that time, I wasn't old enough to drive, and I walked over, maybe a ten or fifteen minute walk, and took them to the house. They were, I think, they were, in every case I think they were just poor people. I don't think that they were taking advantage of the situation. And, I used to feel sorry for them, because when I'd come into that house, it wasn't the most elaborately furnished or anything like that. I felt sorry that they had to live there, whether it was a night or three nights, and so on.

Q. These were just Jewish people?

A. Yeah.

Q. Yeah. And, where did they . . . Did they just come from all over?

A. Yeah. I think most of them came from New York, the New York area.

Q. How long was this house in existence, do you know?

A. No. I don't. I'd be guessing.

Q. Okay. Well, could you please tell me about your brother Al's participation in the Rochester Jewish Community? He was very active, was he not?

A. Oh, he was . . . he was active in the Zionist Organization, and he was active in the Jewish National Fund which was part of Zionism.

Q. Um Now, you've been a Zionist all your life. How did feel when Israel was established in 1948?

A. I think I danced all night.

Q. How many times have you yourself been to Israel?

A. Well, since the establishment of Israel, seven times. But in addition to that, in 1924 I was in Palestine.

- Q. Now, do you think that the survival of the State of Israel is necessary for the survival of the Jewish people?
- A. I certainly do; I hate to think what Jewish life would be like without Israel.
- Q. What do you think would happen? You don't think the Jews in America could retain . . .
- A. I . . . I see a difference since the establishment of the State that Jews that I would never have expected to continue in Judaism, people who never sent their children to a Hebrew School. I don't know, I think there were some who never even attended a synagogue. And, then there was a group . . . we used to refer to them as the Socialists . . . I think it was before Communism came now, where they'd go to the extent of Yom Kippur Eve, which is the holiest time of the year. We'd be coming out of synagogue and these people were out there with circulars . . . 'There's a dance tonight.' But, you know, the descendants of those people take an active interest. Particularly in Israel.
- Q. That's interesting what you said about the Socialists Labor . . . types. I . . . now I read about that in the THE WORLD OF OUR FATHERS happening in New York City.
- A. That's right.
- Q. But, I was not aware that it also happened in Rochester. That's sort of . . .
- A. I think it happened all over.
- Q. So, it was, sort of, a national effort, do you think, to become . . . to ignore the tradition.
- A. I think so.
- Q. Do you think that alienated a lot of people?
- A. It's interesting. I think it alienated a lot of people, but I think as many of them came back. I think many who would have been, and perhaps in the early stages, were Communists, but when they say what Communism means in Russia, I think they came back to Judaism.

Q. Do you have any memories of the active years of Socialism here in Rochester?

A. Yes. Yes. I recall one man who is fairly successful in business, but who is a Socialist . . . two of them come to my mind. And, I had an older brother who went to New York University to take up accounting, and he used to take care of this man's books. And, this man's always preaching Socialism. And, my brother said to him one day, "You know, you preach Socialism, but here you have men working for you that you're really not giving them a living wage." Well, his answer was that was the American System. Now, it was alright for him to take three, four times more than he needed out of his business, but he couldn't afford to give his employees any more.

Q. Do you think that most of the Socialists around here were not serious about their political committment?

A. I wouldn't say . . . no. I think many of them were serious. But, why they couldn't be Socialists and at the same time be more Jewish . . . oh, I don't know, I can't find the term. Why they felt they had to be anti-Jewish. Anti-religious. I don't think they wanted to give up Judaism. Being Jews. But, it was anti-religious to me.

Q. Do you think that the same sort of feeling holds true for most Jews who are . . . who hold radical beliefs? Do you think that they're less religious?

A. Yes. I would say so. But, not so much today as they were back forty, fifty years ago.

Q. Why do you think that's changed?

A. I think, because of the disappointment in Russia. After all, most of them came from there.

Q. Now, when . . . did you work for the establishment of the U.N. after the war?

A. I didn't work for it.

Q. Were you in favor of the establishment of the U.N?

A. Yeah.

Q. What kinds of opinions did you have of the United Nations then?

A. I thought it was a great hope for the world. I'm not so sure that I feel that way today, but I think we still must have the United Nations.

Q. Do you think it's an effective peace-keeping force?

A. To the extent that it could be, it should be.

Q. What do you think . . . well, what made you change . . . what made your opinion of the U.N. become less so?

A. Because I see that they are politicians just as we have politicians in America that they're not really interested in doing the most that they could do for the establishment of peace in general. I'm not only talking about Israel. For example, even right now, when they've killed so many people in Lebanon. No one . . . no one is . . . has brought to the attention of the Security Council . . . we've got to have an army, an United Nations army there. It's perfectly all right. Even the Pope doesn't take either one to task, or says both are wrong, and they . . . something has got to be done to stop the bloodshed. Well, the same thing has happened in Bangladesh, in so many other places.

Q. So, do you think your opinions started changing before all of this, sort of, anti-Israel opinion was being manifested in the U.N.?

A. I think so. Only, let's go back to at least '47 or '48.

Q. Well, I guess what I meant was the more recent, you know, all the mandates going through.

A. Oh.

Q. You know, that sort of thing.

A. When, again, not because it's Israel, but when they can permit a man like (Unknown) to come and speak to them . . . First of all, as I have read time and time again, no one has spoken to the United Nations who wasn't the head

- A. (Continued) of the government. Here's a man who stands there with a gun in his hands! I just can't understand it.
- Q. Well, were you . . . did you become disenchanted with the U.N. over things, say, like, oh, Viet Nam or there were, you know, in Africa when there was tribal warfare when there were, you know, a tribe was wiping out a Christian tribe or something like that?
- A. I think the time that bothered me most is when Russia went into Hungary and did what she did, and the United Nations did nothing about it.
- Q. But, you still think the organization . . . what do think can be done to give the U.N. this . . . more of a less political?
- A. I don't know. I'm afraid that I must go back to a feeling that I've had. I had hoped that humanity was becoming more civilized and from the days of Hitler right to this very day, I think it's as bad as it ever was.
- Q. Alright, I'm gonna ask you three very related . . . excuse me.
- A. But, I think without the United Nations I think it would be worse.
- Q. Alright. I'm gonna ask you three very related questions, and that is: do you think that there is as much or more anti-semitism in the world, in the United States, and in Rochester? I guess one at a time: do you think . . . do you think there's still anti-semitism in the world? Do you think it's growing?
- A. I think at times I feel that it is, and at times I feel it isn't. I think it's . . . probably is not as much as it was. Particularly in America.
- Q. How about . . . okay.
- A. I think America has been through a great deal of improvement, although it still exists.
- Q. And, in Rochester?
- A. I don't think it's any different in that respect. But, I do remember as a youngster when a Jew with a beard would walk through certain sections and

A. (Continued) they would go so far as to pull his beard, or during the winter, throw snowballs at him. You don't see or hear of that anymore.

Q. In your law practice, did you have mostly Jewish clients?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that Jewish people tended to go to Jewish lawyers when they were, you know, needed a lawyer?

A. I don't think that is quite as true today as it was. I think back twenty-five, thirty years ago. Before that, I think they did. But today, I think, among among the wealthier clients, many of them prefer to go to the largest law firms, let's say. They probably have the feeling that they have so many specialists, and so on, that they can do a better job.

Q. Are there many large law firms in Rochester?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. And, was this always the case?

A. Well, there's always large firms, but there are more today, of course.

Q. What do you think that? Is it . . . why do you think that more people are joining firms rather than just, sort of, going into either a family practice like you have here or, you know . . . ?

A. That's the tendency in all business.

Q. That's the kind of thing that I was trying to get at.

A. That's the tendency in all business. The bigger are becoming bigger, and people seem to feel that the bigger ones can do more for you.

Q. What direction do you think the Rochester Jewish Community is going in?

A. Well, I think the Rochester Jewish Community in many respects is better than most Jewish Communities. On the other hand, when I am in Florida . . . Miami Beach, to me the activities in Jewish life there is the closest thing to Israel. There are a lot of things that I see there, I wish we'd have here, but

A. (Continued) we can't. I know we can't.

Q. Do you think there's good relations between the Jewish Community and the Gentile Community in Rochester?

A. Yes. Yes.

Q. Do you think that Rochesterians who are Jews perceive of themselves as Jews who are living in Rochester? Do you know what I'm saying? That . . . that . . . they think of themselves as a community within a community?

A. Oh, yes. Yes. But, I also think that they know they're part of the community and that they want to take an interest in . . . well, the Community Chest. After all, the hospitals are something that every person should be interested in. Even the welfare organizations that we should be interested in seeing that they take care of their poor. Although, that has become more of a government obligation than we . . . it has taken away a great deal of the Jewish spirit. Today, we send them to the welfare office.

Q. And, how about things like in the culture? The Eastman School of Music, and the Philharmonic, and the Memorial Art Gallery, and that sort of thing?

A. I think the Jewish people support them as much as . . . and perhaps more. I think when we used to live here in the winter, and go to concerts, I think the percentage of Jewish people attending the concert was out of proportion to their number.

Q. Has the lifestyle of Rochester changed at all? I mean, it must have changed, as far as things getting bigger and more crowded, but has the ambience surrounding Rochester changed in the past fifty years?

A. I was . . . I just want to see if I can find it. I have one grandson who . . . (unintelligible) the letter. This may be it. This was a letter from the same grandson, but . . . He said something about: he wanted to come here . . . It's interesting to me how he referred Rochester. He said something about,

A. (Continued) Rochester doesn't have . . . He's talking about his other grandfather who passed away just a short time ago, three or four months ago. He says, "I . . .", he was living in Miami Beach and he came back here. "I hope he does all right in Rochester. It isn't the most active city in the world. I never thought it had a lot to offer in the way of activities, music, and special programs or events, but that might have changed."

Q. (Laughter) And you think it has?

A. He went to school in Cincinnati, where I think music plays a greater part in the community than it does here. But, this is something that, I think, perhaps . . . the only reason I'm gonna read it to you . . . this is from him when he was in Israel when he went just before the Yom Kippur War started. And, it says Bubby and Grandpa. He calls his grandma Bubby, but I don't know why he doesn't . . . all right: "Just before the holidays begin, I want to thank you for the many ways in which you helped me to either remain at school or at camp. I probably don't realize the different sort of presents, gifts, or otherwise, favors, that you have generously given to me by mail or in person, but I am most grateful for the opportunities afforded to me by your good deeds and wishes that allow me to attend such a fine camp as Rama, such a well-known school as the Hebrew University, and such a nice college as Cincinnati. I'm indeed for all the chances to grow up in an atmosphere of not only Jewish culture, (this is my main purpose in reading this) but also that of relaxation and enjoyment. I hope I will be not only as considerate but also as thoughtful to my children and grandchildren, and possibly, great-grandchildren as you have been, are, and will surely be. Please enjoy the holidays, and I will do the same. I must go to customs now to pick up a package. Again, thank you and happy new year." Of course, he ends with some Hebrew here. "Shalom.

(Unknown) Good year". This, to me, represents the difference between a boy

- A. (Continued) who is . . . had a pretty good Jewish background, feeling for Judaism, and so on.
- Q. Do you think that Rochester is culturally orientated. Do you, you know, that it offers a lot?
- A. Perhaps not as much as it could, or should. I think he feels that . . . I remember when he came back, and I asked him about . . . Well, he told about different things that went on in Cincinnati.
- Q. Well, okay. Now, can you think of anything that I have . . . Is there anything else that you would like to speak about? About anything at all?
- A. No. I'll tell you what I will do. I've got a whole lot of stuff at home that I've kept over a period of years. One time, I was gonna throw a lot of it out, and may someday. I'll go through that and if there's anything of special interest, I can get in touch with you. You tell me how I can reach you.
- Q. Okay. I would appreciate that very much.

END OF TAPE II, SIDE II, INTERVIEW II