

Interviewee Charlotte Sturman Reich

Interviewer Nancy J Posenblooy

Date(s) of interview April 3, 1977

Setting (place of interview, people present, impressions)

Mrs. Reich was interviewed at the home of her brother Leon Sturman, on the first day of Passover. The interview was rushed however Mrs Reich would gladly give another interview - Mrs C. Reich  
15 Park Avenue  
N.Y.C., N.Y. 10016

Background of interviewee

Mrs Reich is part of the Sturman family an old Jewish family in Rochester. She graduated from Cornell University in about 1928. She has always been active in volunteer work. Mrs. Reich moved to N.Y.C. in about 1964.

Interview abstract

The major part of the interview is Mrs Reich's account of the women's division of the Resettlement & Refugee Committee, 1939-40. The rest of the tape is devoted to a description of Mrs Reich's other activities, Jewish Family Service, NAACP, Interfaith Committees.

Interview index (corresponding to tape numbers, sides of tape, and cassett recorder numbers)

- Social history
- Family
- Demographic/residential
- Economic
- Political/civic
- Zionism/Israel
- Jewish community
- community relations
- Religious life
- Jewish education
- Anti-semitism

Interview loc

- a) corresponding to tape numbers, sides of tape, and cassett recorder nos
- b) including references to others in the Rochester community

Tape 1

Side A

Testing

Mrs

A. Origins of Resettlement Committee in Rochester 193

Mortimer Adler,  
various committees  
supplementary income for women -  
connections with National Council of Jewish Women.  
attitude of refugees themselves was positive  
waitress course taught to refugee women  
history of waitress course  
help from nutritionist at RBE  
~~small~~ manufactures by refugees sold in shop.  
participation of Mrs. Nelson (Hortense Cookhill - Lea  
Room organized

completely voluntary organization.  
Type of women that now found themselves in  
refugee situation. Emphasis on their  
positive attitude.

Relations of women with women in Rochester

Origins of name Open Door

Spread of community away from Rochester

B. Mrs. Reich

her own involvement in volunteerism  
anecdotes about types of people involved from both  
Rochester community and Refugee community.

C. Jewish Family Service

Mrs. Stella Chiffin

D. Involvement in Variety of Jewish Committees

Board of Trustees of B'nai B'rith  
Jewish Overseas Committee  
United Jewish Organizations - Community relations  
organization of first Jewish Band Drive  
NAACP  
involvement in JY - helped close dormitory situation  
Women's division of UJA  
Anecdote about Nelson Ruxchenbaum

Mrs. Charlotte Reich

: April 3, 1977

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(continuation)

drives for community funding  
participation in interfaith committees

Side B

E Senior Citizens Program in Rochester  
origins at Planforin Center  
participation with different councils of women  
NAACP

social involvement

no memory of pre-war indications

Negative attitude to Franklin Florence

Involvement in B'nai B'rith

prominent involvement

Overseas Council

7. Rochester as a Unique Jewish Community  
city with its own traditions  
Cultural aspects of city make it special  
importance of UGR  
Comment on mobility of community  
Comment on commitment of people to community

Interview I  
Tape I  
Side A

A. But you see fortunately people put a lot. . . did you put it on already?

Q. Yea, I just want to test it. Let's see. Today is April 3. This is Nancy Rosenbloom and I'm interviewing Mrs. Charlotte Reich at in Rochester. Just to test the tape recorder do you want to. . .?

A. All right.

Q. Just so I can test your voice.

A. Well, do you want to play it back now?

Q. OK. Mrs. Charlette Sturman Reich. OK. Maybe just to get started you want to tell us the story again about the resettlement of refugee committee work, how it got started and. . .?

A. What. . . you want me to tell you about the composition of the committee first?

Q. Yea.

A. Mr. Mortimer Adler was the chairman of the Refugee Resettlement Committee. We had several branches. One was a Physicians Committee, one was an Employment Committee, an Affidavit Committee, English to Foreign Born, and this committee that Mrs. Mortimer Adler and I headed we dealt with the problem of getting women some supplementary income. It grew out of a Council of Jewish Women actually. I was just finishing a term as President of the Council and Mrs. Adler was on the Board. And, of course, the National Council of Jewish Women was also part of refugee settlement, one of the national organizations, as several others were. And I said when we were discussing it at a Council Board meeting that Mrs. Adler will become the Chairman, I would work along with her. And so the two of us became the

A. (Continued) Co-Chairmen, which ultimately resulted in the Open Door Shop on Monroe Avenue.

Q. About what year was this?

A. 1939.

Q. Was that just at the peak of the refugees coming from. . .?

A. Yea. When most of the refugees came in before the war in this country, but of course they already had to flee from Austria/Germany, scourge of Hitler. And that's when the big in-flux came in at that time. And I must say that we had wonderful people, exceptional, most of 'em were educated. They had good backgrounds, and very cooperative and very grateful.

Q. Do you remember what had brought them to Rochester? Was it. . .?

A. They were resettled from New York. There was a committee in New York that just dealt with refugees and they tried to spread them out throughout the country. And I think that's pretty well validated at the time. It isn't very small places throughout the country. It's a history of the Jews in America, they just stand out. And they were trying to get the Jews out of New York because there was such a concentration there. And so that's where each city tried to take so many quota. You were asked to take a quota, that was it. And at that time I had heard that somebody was on the National Council of Jewish Women in New York had given a waitress course to refugee women. And this waitress course that they taught to work by a very fine cateress in New York. So I contacted her and went to New York and copied down her material lesson by lesson, there were several . . . it was a regular course. And then I came back and it was given in my home. The. . .

Q. Where was that at that time? Where were you living at that time?

A. I was living on . . . I see. . . I was living on Castlebar or. . . I'm trying to think. Better shut it off a minute. I have to think. Well, and the women

A. (Continued) came to my house and I taught them, lesson by lesson. And then at the end of the course I would want them to serve the dinner in my house because as was proper would be as objective. So I took somebody else's house and. . . who ran a very fine household and that was the final lesson, if they were qualified. Not only were they qualified to earn 50¢ an hour as waitress, but they were also qualified to make canapes and that was taught by the nutritionist at the Gas & Electric Company. So you see we really had cooperation all around. Well we decided to rent this little shop. We had a gift shop, a lunch room and a little bakery counter. The women made jams, jellies, watermelon rind, dill pickles, taught by experts in our community, and we worked along with them and they were paid 50¢ an hour. We ran a so-called noodle factory in Mrs. Henry Stern's garage on East Avenue. And the noodles, very, very fine noodles. And that was one of our best sellers. Everything in the shop was made by refugees someplace. For instance, copper candies is one example. We had lingerie, cases of different kinds and many other items refugees already in New York were manufacturing. They just transferred their factories to New York, what they had done in Germany or Austria. And everything had to be made by a refugee to be sold there. And Mrs. Nelson Corkhill, who was in charge of the lunch room, has said she always wanted to run a tea room. So, we said all right Hortense, this is it, you're in charge of this. Well, that was quite an undertaking. And we had a refugee woman that we paid and she was in the kitchen. And we finally hired a refugee woman to be the manager, to keep track of the accounts. But all the rest of help were unpaid labor. All were volunteers and we had people in there every single day, in the morning and in the afternoon. And in this way the women were able to supplement income because in 1939 the wages were very low. For instance one man had been very comfortable in Germany and we placed him as an elevator man here and he

- A. (Continued) got \$25 a week. But by their wives supplementing their income, either by baking or through these other means that I explained to you, they were able to supplement their income and keep off the relief roles. They were very independent and very proud because they had all been people of substance and mostly very well educated.
- Q. The women also in. . . in. . . ?
- A. Pardon me?
- Q. In Europe had the women also been educated? Were they upper class women?
- A. They were. I must say, you can say the cream, they were it.
- Q. Had. . . do you think they worked in . . . in Austria or in Germany?
- A. No, they. . . I'm sure that the women had not worked there at all because as you got to know them and. . . Oh, I remember one woman her husband had owned a big department store, say like Forman's here. And well and. . . one elderly couple, he was always wonderful, wonderful people, he had been an Ulstein publisher and they had pictures of their house. What a beautiful mansions of East Avenue, that type of house. They were really, as I say, very fine people. And a couple of 'em were . . . had been with the Seis Works, the men. And scientists and Einstein. That's the kind of people that we had. So you see, they were easy to work with them 'cause they were very grateful and very independent and didn't want to take charity.
- Q. So they were more thankful. . . do you think they were more thankful to have the opportunity to work?
- A. Yes, they were. They were. And the fact that many had had servants in their own home and then to go out and wait on table in others homes and glad to earn, in those days, 50¢ an hour.
- Q. That's. . . that's a hard transition to make, don't you think?
- A. Pardon me?
- Q. That's a hard transition to make. . .

A. Yea. . .

Q. . . .don't you think?

A. But they never complained.

Q. Yea.

A. And all the people that we had, as I look back, they were remarkable. They were glad to be here, that they had escaped. And, of course, today when I tell you this all their children are grown up and married and have children of their own and I can't think of any of the children who didn't go to college because they came from this background.

Q. Yea.

A. And also . . . oh, we saw that they. . . some of the children got scholarships in those days. I must say that the Rochester community did an outstanding job. It's not. . . I'm saying about the committee, but I mean it's a fact.

Q. Yea.

A. It's because even in the national refugee resettlement service, William Haber, in those days came down to see our operation at the Open Door a couple of times because, as I recall, I think we were the only shop of that kind in the country.

Q. Well I asked you before where you got the idea. Maybe. . .?

A. Well, I think it sort of grew. We felt we wanted to do something with the women. And first thing was the waitress course. Then I think of the waitress course and somebody said well let's talk to Gas & Electric. We went down there and as I say they were wonderful, a nutritionist gave a course in hors d'oeuvres making. And so that was a start. And then we thought, well we thought anybody that came from Europe would be an expert in cooking and baking. Well the baking is true, they were good at that. But when it came to dill pickles and. . . and some of the other things, the women in Rochester

A. (Continued) were the experts and had to teach them. But everybody. . . one person would say why don't we make this and we could have watermelon rind. Well, so as I said I used to go to the Jewish picnic because they always had watermelon. I'd get the watermelon rind, free, and then we made watermelon rind. One thing sort of led to another. And then we would deliver. We had volunteers in their car would a delivery. We tried to get orders in advance for the jams and jellies so that you could sell a dozen jars at a time, at least a half a dozen jars. And we had steady orders for noodles. And then, as I told you, the baked goods like schneken and fruit kuchens of different kinds, used some of that in the lunch room. And then people would come in and. . . Of course you couldn't advertize, you see, because we didn't pay any taxes. So we would try to get it in the temple bulletins or the JY bulletin to get the news around what we were doing. And we had little yellow labels and on the label was like a door divided in half, a dutch door, and it said at the top, "Open Door."

Q. That's cute.

A. Isn't that cute?

Q. Yea, yea.

A. I think I still have one of the labels home someplace.

Q. What language did you speak to the refugees?

A. Well most of them spoke English. And they. . . and the ones that didn't made a tremendous effort to learn fast. And, of course, some of us knew a little German and that was it. Of course, some people could speak Yiddish, wasn't exactly German but you could communicate enough to communicate. But, you see, most of them were so educated that they knew some English. And they made a tremendous effort. If you talk to Ruth Herz for instance, I mean she speaks with barely an accent now, and though her husband never did lose

- A. (Continued) his accent, but they made such an effort to learn English. And I helped many who were born in Germany and it's amazing some of them have barely a trace of an accent 'cause they. . . they worked on it.
- Q. Yea. Did you end up becoming close friends with any of these. . . ?
- A. Yes. Very, very close friends. And those days you couldn't have a camera or binoculars in your possession if you were a refugee.
- Q. Why?
- A. 'Course it's got nothing to do with that?
- Q. Well I don't care. Why?
- A. And so I had a Zeiss camera, custodian, you know, and binoculars. And the fact is one of the refugees sold me a pair of binoculars, they needed money too. Oh, they brought things and we bought them from them, you know, linens and things like that. And little Oriental rugs. And I still have a few presents that they gave me in appreciation for friendship and that I said, well you should, you know, they're lovely things and you should keep them. But, oh no, they insisted and I had Bohemian wine decanter that's absolutely exquisite. And another cut glass perfume bottle, in those days they were given to me because every little thing you did they appreciated so much, that was it. Oh, yes, became very close friends with many of them.
- Q. Where were most of these refugees living? All over the city?
- A. They were living all over the city. That's right, they were. And, of course, . . . see some of the older generation. . . they're mostly gone. Dr. Herzberg's in New Orleans now. He's been teaching down there. And well, Mr. Herz the one you talk about, of course, he's gone, she's here. See, I was the youngest one on the committee at that time. And so as I say when I look around there are not many at all.
- Q. Let's see. About how. . . can I ask you how old you were when you got into. . . ?

A. Pardon me?

Q. How old were you when you got involved in this work?

A. Let me see. Must have been my early thirties. Early thirties. But, you see, all the rest of 'em were on. . . well, Mrs. Adler just died a couple of years ago, she was 91, you see?

Q. Yea.

A. Because her husband died when he was seventy-something, but Mr. Sturman was quite well on in years, 'course Ange Gabin and Mannie Goldman, they're older than I am, but they're around. And if you see Mr. . . Mrs. Lowenthal's not so young. There are not many of them left who are on their original committee.

Q. Yea.

A. You see, the city committees I'm talking about, all-over committee.

Q. Can I ask you what motivated you personally to become involved?

A. To become involved in the refugee. . .? Well, I guess from the time I was in the kindergarten I was always into something or other. When I was in high school I organized what's called Kreny. . . Kaney Creek Society for the people in the mountains or Kentucky who are very poor and who want a travelling library, it's kind of weird now. But I organized a club for that. We had candy sales and there's always interested more or less in social work. And so it just seemed natural. And having been on the Council and I was interested in community activites, always. My whole family was. And my uncle, Sam Sturman, I guess started us all on that. He was the first President of the United Jewish Welfare Fund, where in the early days there were two Welfare Funds and he, when they combined, he was the first president. And he was one of the founders of Temple Beth El, so it came in our family you see?

Q. Yea.

A. And my brother's actively involved. We've always been involved. And this

- A. (Continued) was a terrible thing that happened to Jews, and as the refugees came in and they were such outstanding people, much better educated than I. . . I was only. . . I only had one degree and most of these people had these marvelous backgrounds.
- Q. Yea.
- A. And not only themselves, but they could trace their ancestry seven, eight hundred years back and say doctors in the line way back.
- Q. Yea.
- A. Marvelous people.
- Q. I know one person I interviewed mentioned that not that many people in Rochester even admitted knowing what was going on in Germany in the 1930's. How early do you recall hearing about. . . when did these refugees start coming to Rochester?
- A. They started in the early thirties, so they were lucky they got out. You see? Because the. . . after that, you see, that was it. Afterwards when the war came the whole thing was cut off. That was another reason we stopped because the immigration stopped when the war started, and that was another reason why we terminated the whole operation.
- Q. Now when did it terminate? When did. . . ?
- A. We were in business about a year and a half I think it was. But, as I say we. . . when the war came on we. . . that was it.
- Q. Do you think the people in Rochester generally accepted the refugees?
- A. I think that the Rochester community. . . don't forget this is an enlightened community, if you were born here you know, the very old and the very good, with a good conscience of helping people, we've always helped people because we're a very well-knit community. And maybe secure and assured one vis-a-vis the non-Jewish community. And we have always been an understanding

- A. (Continued) community. And I think as a whole they were very accepted because they're not. . . like you see, people come up like in New York when you were in the poor quarter, the Puerto Ricans, the poor blacks and so on, and to get on relief roles some of those kind of people had that kind of family. They didn't want to be on relief. If they just could get along without they would do anything. Mrs. . . . not this Mrs. Herz, but Herz who was a publisher, an Olstein publisher, his wife, marvelous woman, she took a job up at Strong Memorial Hospital scrubbing floors. And she said to me, don't feel sorry for me she says I've never been so happy in my life. Those were the kind of people we had.
- Q. Yea.
- A. You see?
- Q. Yea.
- A. So would you want to help 'em?
- Q. Sure. You mentioned before the interaction between the Resettlement Committee and the Jewish Family Service?
- A. Well the Jewish Family Service, the directions for say job hunting and so on, Stella Shivrín, who was the worker from the Jewish Family Service, and she was very active in securing jobs. And she was very active in securing household goods. She had a lot of people working with her. And again we saw that everybody had some literature they wanted to give away or somebody needed furniture and pots and pans we would start calling all around. And, but she was. . . she was in charge of that from the Jewish Family . . . And don't forget all these cases under the supervision of the Jewish Family Service has to come through a central agency, and that was it. And Jacobson at that time was the head of Jewish Family Service and later on it was Crystal. So Crystal was in the. . . when the Hungarians, when they had the revolution, you know,

- A. (Continued) with the Hungarians. And they came in this wave of Hungarians and Crystal wrote a book about that.
- Q. That was in the fifties?
- A. Hmm?
- Q. You mean in the fifties?
- A. Mid-fifties. This is a very interesting book, David Crystal's book. He got his Ph.D. on that.
- Q. OK. Let's see. Did most of these refugee families remain in Rochester?
- A. No. Very few of the children are here. They just. . . I guess that's the story of mobility, you know that from interviewing families, they've all spread out. The old families, very few of the American old families remain in Rochester. It's the same story. Out of Rochester, you get educated, find a job other places.
- Q. This story about the refugees is very interesting. I have a feeling that it involved other Jewish committees here in Rochester? Well, have you been involved on other. . .?
- A. I was President of Jewish Family Service before I moved to New York. I've been living in New York now. I've been living in New York about 14 years.
- Q. Since about 1960?
- A. I went to New York a little later than that. No, no, no. About '60. . . about '63 or '64 went to New York. 1964 I went to New York. But before that I was President of Jewish Family Service. And for a number of years I was head of the Personnel Committee there. I was pres. . . no, I was Secretary of National Association of Colored People. I was on that Board. I was . . . forget already. I was on, oh, many inter-faith committees. And I was, I think, the first woman trustee in Temple B'rith Kodesh, two terms active in Temple B'rith Kodesh, as I say on the Board of Trustees there. And I was on

- A. (Continued) the National Committee of the Council of Jewish Overseas Committee, which trips. . . it oversees scholarships. And I was also on a committee for the United Jewish organizations, community. . . community. . . I forgot what it's called already. Community relations. . . community relations.
- Q. Were all these volunteer?
- A. Yea. That was volunteer, but then I organized the first Bond Drive in Rochester and that I got paid for because I was always active in UJA. And, oh, let's see, I was on the Board of the Y. There's something that. . . of a Y that was difficult. They had a dormitory in the old JY that became very difficult because so many of the people were senile. They were interfering with the activities. And we wanted to get them out of the Y and put them into other places, to find homes for them. And we had opposition from some of the people. But finally, Sorenson was the director of the Y then, and finally accomplished that. That was one of the last things I did in Rochester.
- Q. This was about 1960? When the closed the dorm?
- A. That was in the 1960's, and as I say I hope they never will have any kind of dormitories in the Y because they certainly became a big problem. First you think it's gonna help financially, but then it's a wrong move.
- Q. Yea.
- A. You don't realize that, you see. It's very difficult to transfer people because they don't want to go, they've been living in a place a long time.
- Q. Yea. OK. Can I ask you about your activities on some of these other committees then besides. . .?
- A. You mean now in New York?
- Q. No, here in Rochester on the Jewish Family Service . . .?
- A. That's. . .

Q. Do you remember what some of the major activities were that you. . .?

A. I was. . . oh, I told you I started the Bond Drive. I was the first. . . When I was asked to become the first city manager and organize the Bond Drive, Henry Montor was the organizer of Israel Bonds. And I think there was one other woman and myself. And I said I don't want to do it because I felt I hadn't been in any kind of a paid job. And so when they came down and they said you've done more of unpaid jobs and have a better background than some of the people with paid jobs because you've been, as I say, . . . oh, I organized the first . . . when we started the Women's Division for the UJA I was one of the Chairmen of that. And I organized the . . . the first committee, we went from door to door, what do you call that activity now? It's part of the UJA drive, but anyhow, I'm trying to think. So there were several of that organized that time, Raye Airole, Mrs. Neisner, I think there were five of us, Marge Braiman, I think Julia Berlove and I. The five of us organized the Women's Division. And had to put down different parts and I had one part to organize the whole thing. And that was that. And so with all that background and already with the refugee resettlement thing, which we worked so hard on, we really worked hard. And so they said you can do it. I said, well if you think I could do it, so I will. So Philip Liebschutz was the President and I was exec and I had to set up the whole office. I didn't know anything about mailing permits or anything like that, but you learn because I'd never had that kind of background. And I hired a secretary and we set up an office. And the first year I said I would take it for a year because I wanted to go to Israel, I'd been planning to go to Israel. By that time I was divorced, quite a while. And I wanted to go to Israel. And I said, all right, I'll organize the first drive instead of going. And I did. And it was not till many years later that they beat the

A. (Continued) record we had. And Nelson Kirschenbaum's done a wonderful job, he was one of my volunteers.

Q. Oh.

A. And he asked me if he should take the job, and I said, Nelson who is better qualified? Of course you should take the job, you'll do a wonderful job. And, of course, he has. But he worked with me all those years. And when we started to work there it was funny, he says, you don't remember but I remember you, he said, when we had a Jewish National Fund Committee, Mrs. Rose said to me you'll be the Jewish National Fund Chairman for Hadassah, you never said no to Mrs. Rose. That was the first year I got out of college. I went to Cornell. So, they had the meetings down on Chadam Street. Oh, I don't you'd even know of Chadam Street.

Q. Sure I do. Can I interrupt just to ask. . .?

A. What?

Q. What year was this?

A. Oh, my God this was about 1929, twenty. . .no wait a minute, no I came back to Rochester in 1929, maybe 1930. Wait a minute. I think it was about. . . yea, I think it was maybe. . . I graduated from college in 1928. It may have been that same fall. And they were all speaking in Yiddish and they were all old-timers. And Nelson was one of the young people. And he said I sat there, he said, I was in a different world. I didn't know what was going on, you know. And the way it was it was so. . . when I think how things have changed, you see. A handful of people and all old men and the Jewish National Fund and everything was conducted in Yiddish. Well, that was the beginning. In those days you put a box in every house you could and then you went to collect at the end of the year and that was it. So see how different it is? And that was the Jewish National Fund, one of my first jobs when I got out of college. And

- A. (Continued) then it wasn't long, it went from one thing to another. And you just got involved with the beginning of the Welfare Fund and as I say in the building certain. . . new JY, which we just vacated recently. And all those drives. Then you were on a committee, dance to the music. Community things besides. And very often, as I say, I was the representative to the inter-faith committees. You know, with the churches. I worked a lot with the church women.
- Q. What were some of the activities that you did with the church women? What were some of. . .?
- A. Inter-faith. Inter-faith committee.
- Q. I mean to. . .to better relations in the community?
- A. Yea, inter-faith relationships. And oh we. . . we tried it. . . they were interested in what we were doing and interested in Judaism. And we worked very, very well together.
- Q. Did they help out at all with the refugees?
- A. Some of them were very interested. And only at the beginning, you know, Steven. . . Rabbi Steven Weiss was interested in a boycott of Germany. And I can remember bringing that up, a woman was the director of the Council of Church Women. And they didn't want to go along with it. And all these years we worked very closely together and for many years. But I still can remember that, you know, I thought when the chips are down, you know, if you're Jewish you're interested in what happened to Jews everywhere. Maybe he looked at it, the boycott wouldn't . . . I don't know, but they just. . .
- Q. They wouldn't go along.
- A. They weren't interested in going along with it, and it had to go through, you know, maybe the National Council of Church Women or churches or, you know, I mean it was. . . And so I didn't pursue it. But I remember that so clearly.

Q. Do you remember what were some of the churches?

A. What's that?

Q. What were some of the church groups? What was it? Council of Church Women?  
Or was it. . .?

A. Council of Church Women. See, the Council of Church Women and the Council of Jewish Women worked very closely together on community things. And that's the first job I had on the Council of Jewish Women, I was Community Relations Chairman. See that was the beginning of the Council. So that's why I worked with all these non-Jewish groups. And we became very friendly. And let me . . . Mrs. Nicely whose husband, Harold Nicely, was the Minister of the Brick C hurch, very liberal people, wonderful people. We worked very closely together. We're still friends. He died, she's very sick, she lives in Connecticut. But even today we're friends. And the President of the Council of Church Women, one of them, was my neighbor over here on Monteroy Road, who was. . . She lives in Florida now and she's sick, but we're still friends. Mrs. Walter Post who is still living on Harvard Street. Those were some of the people we worked with in those days.

Q. I'm gonna turn the tape.

END OF TAPE I, SIDE A

Interview I  
Tape I  
Side B

- Q. This is Side B. Today is April 3rd. This is Nancy Rosenbloom and I'm interviewing Mrs. Charlotte Sturman Reich. OK. Started to mention the Senior Citizens?
- A. Yea, beginnings of the Senior Citizens. First we started with Senior Citizens Clubs. The first one was in the Baden Street Settlement. And the Council of Jewish Women, the Council of Church Women, were all in on it. See, that's what I say, these community projects. And we got elderly people to come there and they'd play cards and they had different kind of programs and so on. That was the first one. From there it spread out all over town and, of course, today we have a Senior Citizens program that functions every day and all day long in the Danforth Center. But, that was the beginning as I say, the first one. We figured the people needed some sort of a cohesive group for company. And I think this started once a week, that's the way it started, once a week. And people got friendly and. . . and felt they really needed it and we found spots all over town to have it. In churches, in temples and so on. And then as I say even now this everyday center.
- Q. Now these were Senior Citizens, not only Jewish?
- A. No.
- I want to tell you, it's all inter-faith. This is a Council of Jewish Women worked with the Council of Church Women, as I say, the activities we worked on together. And then we had this program of, oh, at the university taking the students into our homes for holidays. And that was also together, the U.N. was involved with that, you know, through the volunteer booths in the U.N. But, also all these community groups, then of course there's the Council of

- A. (Continued) Jewish Women, then there's Temple B'rith Kodesh, some of the people from there. And then we had them come to services at the temple, I entertained in my home on holidays. 'Course we just felt that any foreign student here shouldn't be alone on Thanksgiving. They didn't really know what Thanksgiving was about, but that's the way we felt about it. And kids didn't want to refuse an invitation because they felt that people would be hurt. So sometimes they ate two or three Thanksgiving dinners, I'll never forget this boy still. He's a professor now and we're still very good friends. And somebody told me in later years, you know that day I ate three Thanksgiving dinners. I said, oh, Carlo, you have to be a Jewish boy. But, that's my nephew Stewart. They were laughing. One Thanksgiving I had one of these Japanese students, one couldn't speak a word of English, the other one could speak a couple words of English. And my nephew Stewart reminds me of it every now and then, cause the boys were hysterical, my nephews at my house, these Japanese eating, but not a word of English and the other one just a couple of words of English. That was some Thanksgiving dinner, trying to entertain 'em you know. Really some things are funny when you look back.
- Q. I know. Maybe. . . can I ask you something about your participation in the NAACP. . . with the NAACP you said?
- A. Yea. National Association of Colored People.
- Q. When was. . . when were you with them?
- A. Oh, I was with them for years. I was on the Board for years and I was. . . I was the Secretary for a few years, too.
- Q. In the fifties or sixties?
- A. In the fifties I'd say. No wait a minute. Maybe forties and fifties. Forties and fifties I'd say.
- Q. Now how active was that group here in Rochester?

A. We were very active. In fact, we started to come in when some of the top men at Kodak, the scientists, came in and they tried to get housing in white neighborhoods. And then also we worked with the YW was active with other organizations. And so that they were able to buy houses in white neighborhoods. But they were top people, highly educated, you know, Ph.D.'s, scientists. And marvelous people, some of those people are still my friends because they were exceptional people. And we tried with housing and we tried . . . we got scholarships. The first two scholarships in this community for black girls came through NAACP. And at that time I said I will see that they get the clothes to go to college. They went around to different people, Forman's and National, and saw that they were outfitted to go to college. So things like that. You see? This was the beginning.

Q. Were you still in Rochester when we had the riots?

A. No, no, that's afterwards. No, no that's afterwards.

Q. Did. . . Do you think that came as a surprise to you as someone who . . .?

A. Well, it did. 'Course that was . . . we were in Florence and I really didn't know at all. See we had had some black ministers on our committee, but not like him. We all worked very well together. You see, afterwards, the NAACP became more and more black. They didn't want the whites in on it, you see. Before, oh, I think Joe Wilson was one of our presidents. You see, we had a lot of people who were fighting for blacks. I always felt that wasn't such a good idea, should sacrifice for yourself. Nobody else can fight your battles. And I think that was healthy that they finally started to fight their own battles.

Q. How about your participation in B'rith Kodesh? You were. . .?

A. I was on the . . . on the Board of Trustees twice. And I was on the Board of the Sisterhood, I was an officer on the Board of the Sisterhood for many years.

A. (Continued) And as I say in the temple's problems, you know, under Jack Rubens was the President at that time, wonderful person. Very good people.

Q. Have you always been part of the Reform movement?

A. Pardon me?

Q. Have you always belonged to Reformed?

A. Always been what?

Q. Belonged to a Reform temple?

A. Oh, when I married I joined the Reform temple 'cause Philip Bernstein was a good friend of mine, very close friend. My family was Conservative at that time, but my father was President of Temple Beth El. But I've always wanted. . . I've tried a temple, I joined B'rith Kodesh. I loved it. I still love it and I still . . . I still a member.

Q. You're a member of B'rith Kodesh. Are you a Zionist? I know a lot of. . .

A. Oh, yes. We've always been Zionists in our family. My grandfathers were Zionist. No, no. We didn't come lately. Not. . . we're not. . . I always say I'm not a Hitler Zionist. Because we were Zionists from way back, both sides.

Q. When did your family come to Rochester?

A. My grandfather? My grandfather came to Rochester probably about 1885, in through there.

Q. From where?

A. From Bialostock, Poland. You read Herman Howe's book. That's a story of most of our ancestors. They may be in New York, Rochester, wherever it is. My other grandfather came about 1855 to Syracuse. That's the history of the Jews in America. Everybody came. . .

Q. Yea, yea.

A. Interesting, isn't it?

Q. How about the Council Overseas Committee? You mentioned. . .

A. The Council, that was the ship a box, send it to Israel. And then they gave scholarships to students in foreign countries to come here to study, still got that. I was on that for a couple of years.

Q. When, in the fifties? 1950's or. . .?

A. Shortly before I went to New York. The late fifties, the beginning of the sixties, in through there.

Q. OK. Let's see. We've sort of skipped over so many pages of that. Do you think Rochester is a special city in terms of. . . you do think Rochester is a special city in terms. . .?

A. I think it's one of the best-knit communities, cities, in the country. And also its relation vis-a-vis the non-Jewish community. I think we're not integrated in the sense that we've lost our identity. We maintain our identity and we maintain the respect of the community as a whole. And I think that the non-Jewish community is cooperating with the Jewish community and is also helping financially, also the drives and so on.

Q. Is that what you think makes Rochester so special?

A. Well I think it isn't a transient population. It's been an old city and it has traditions and I think understanding, well-educated people. And with open minds as a whole, there's exceptions everywhere. But I think Rochester's one of the most outgoing cities in the United States. I think that's taken for granted.

Q. What are some of the changes that you see, especially as someone who's been away from the city now?

A. In Rochester?

Q. Yea.

A. Well, of course, physically it's changed some. Streets where I lived, was born,

A. (Continued) there aren't any more there. Business. . . my father's business isn't anymore. . .

Q. Now where was that?

A. My father's business was on Clinton Avenue North, a fish store, that's no more. All that's wiped out, the physical changes. And as far as a community, it's always been a cultural community. And well, I think probably grown in sophistication, like other places. Because there's been an influx of different people. And I think the small problems with some of the people coming in to us, but you've also had influx of very good people at the universities, R.I.T. and so on and that all adds to the total aspects of the city. If anything it certainly has always been a cultural city, but I think it's even grown in those aspects. You see the university, the university and the reknown of the Eastman School.

Q. Yea.

A. Eastman School probably started in my time.

Q. Yea. Why did you go to Cornell and not to the U. of R.?

A. Because there. . . you want to know the truth? I went up for a spring weekend and I had such a good time, I wouldn't go to the U. of R. anyhow because everybody wanted to go out of town if you could go about it. And I went up and I decided to go to Cornell. I didn't apply anyplace else and I was accepted. Now I'm one of the Chairmen for the Secondary School Committee for Cornell. And I think back and I think how did I have the nerve to say, I'm going to Cornell and that's it. Because today I probably would never get in.

Q. Do you think it was hard for a Jew?

A. Pardon?

Q. Was it hard for a Jew then?

A. Not from here no. I never felt that pressure. Maybe you did, maybe in big

- A. (Continued) cities, I don't know. But I don't know. . . an awful lot of Jewish students when I was there. I didn't feel that pressure ever.
- Q. What I was going to ask you before about the. . . when we were talking about the sort of the changes in Rochester, one thing that people have told me is that women my age for example are more reluctant. . .
- A. More what?
- Q. Reluctant to become involved in volunteer aspects of Jewish charities and . . .
- A. Well that is hard for me to say because I've been away for a long time. And as I say most of the young people I know, the children of my friends, don't live in Rochester anymore. It's hard for me to judge that.
- Q. Right.
- A. And. . . and my contemporaries are still active in everything so I couldn't voice an opinion on that authentically. I, as far as women generally are concerned, I think that they're much more involved in their careers. And I think most of us didn't go in for that at that time, and so we were in community activities. Oh, I forgot. I was also active in the League of Women Voters. I was Vice-President of the League of Women Voters for a few years. I was involved in that. And as I say you felt an obligation to your community. I think maybe more than young people do today because I think they're more interested in their careers and they'll be here for a year, some place else you know next year. They want promotions.
- Q. Certainly in the 1930's there was no lack of enthusiasm to help the refugees?
- A. Some people may have been reluctant, some people resented them, sure. I know that. But I think as a whole the community pulled together on it to help them and help them get resettled. And I think we can be proud of them.