

ROCHESTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT (Rochester Jewish community 1925-1975)

Interviewee Mr. Michael Boyar

Interviewer Tina Isaacs

Date(s) of interview 7/20/76; 7/27/76; 8/4/76

Setting (place of interview, people present, impressions)

The interviews took place either in Mr. Boyar's office or in a large meeting room at the Jewish Family Service, no one else was present. Although Mr. Boyar is an extremely busy man, he gladly participated in the Project and was very helpful and informative. Since he is a social worker by profession, he had thought through many of the problems about which I asked him (i.e. the riots) and was very lucid in answering my questions. He is very dedicated to what he does--even his few community and Jewish activities relate to his job.

Background of interviewee

Mr. Boyar is a native Rochesterian whose parents came from Russia and have been in Rochester since 1910. After obtaining a Masters in Social Work, Mr. Boyar went to work with the Jewish Family Service in 1949 and has been there since. He is now the Director of the Jewish Family Service.

Interview abstract

All three interviews went very well. As stated above, Mr. Boyar was very informative and thoughtful about the questions posed. All topics were covered, the most interesting parts of the interviews deal with the Family Service itself and what it does.

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

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social history	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jewish community
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Interview log

- corresponding to tape numbers, sides of tape, and casset recorder nos.
- including references to others in the Rochester community

--see following page(s) --

Mr. Michael Boyar: Interview Log

Tape I Side A

Background: Native Rochesterian, U of Iowa B.A., rejected at Medical School, met wife when stationed overseas, Mrs. Boyar is a German Jew who lived in London during the war, her parents were killed in the Holocaust, they married in 1947, Mr. Boyar obtained a Masters at U Buffalo and has worked for the Jewish Family Service since 1949. They have two children, the daughter teaches in Syracuse and the son recently graduated from Kent State. Mr. Boyars parents are Russian, and they've been in Rochester since 1910, he has a sister (Bernice Gantman) who is also a social worker in Rochester and a brother in Washington.

Parents; why Rochester, relatives here, Joseph Ave. area.
Parents live in the Joseph Ave. area until 1976.

Childhood memories of Joseph Ave.

Hebrew Education: Abraham Solomon, Hollander
Breaking away from Orthodoxy

Jewishness: Reform Jewry
A. Solomon's Hebrew School
Hebrew Education

**Riots: changing nature of Joseph Ave., Parents moving out, reactions, causes, Hannover Houses, outside agitation, Anti-Semitism
Saul Alinsky

Education--women working, volunteer system

Family relations: raising children, values, permissiveness.
Daughter married a man who converted to Judaism.
Religiousness of the younger generation

**Intermarriage: from a social workers point of view, decrease in the percentage of Jews, conversion.
Monroe Ave. area

*Irondequoit: resentment of Brighton facilities
Med School: Anti-Semitism? Quota system at the U of R
Anti-Semitic experiences

*Holocaust: personal experiences. German refugees

Tape I Side II

**Holocaust--WW II--early awareness, Wife's reaction to personal disasters
UN: changes of opinion
Israel: experience in Palestine
Zionism? Living in Israel, survival of Judaism
Rochester support for Israel

*Bernstein: visits all Rochester soldiers in Eng. during WW II

*B'rith Kodesh: increasing traditionalism, cyclical movement
Reform/Conservative/Orthodox friction

*German Jewish/Eastern European Jewish friction: class difference

*Anti-Semitism in Rochester: individuals with Anti-Semitic complaints, no large scale Anti-Semitism; speaker at Brockport

Local politics: Stephen May, Israel, sending local people over
Jews participating in the community
Rochester as a typical community
Over organization of the Jewish community

Mr. Michael Boyar: Interview Log cont.

Tape II Side A

Jewish Community activities

Family Services is part of the Federation (Community Services Division)

Campus Complex

Population Study

Social Legislation Committee of the Federation

**Campus Complex: implication for Family Services and for entire Jewish Community

Social worker at JCC

***Family Service Bureau

Origins: Assoc. Hebrew Charities, Assoc. Jewish Charities
Stella Shriffren, Anna Wolfe

Merger 1924

Baden St. building until 1948, then downtown location

Professionalization

Purposes

*Merger: how did it reflect the coming together of the Community?

**Concrete services to increasing professionalization

**Who are the clientele? Changes? Types of problems brought.

Fee system--class of clientele

**Changing nature of problems--changes in the Jewish family

*Difference between a Jewish family service and a Gentile Family Service

Volunteers for concrete services

Peak problems for agency: immigrations

Loans: Hebrew Free Loan Society, underwriting loans

Psychiatric/Psychological training; consultants

General change in agency: limitations of the Community Chest

Participation of the Federation

Tape II Side B

***Family Service Bureau

*Horizontal relations with other Jewish services

Avoidance of duplication, JCC, JHandI

**Are there specifically Jewish problems

**Jewish parents relations with their children

*Success rate

**Community Chest: changes in funding, change in emphasis,

Cut-off of funding for new programs

Transportation Service

Federal funding possibility

Community Chest

**Tri-Agency Branch: why it failed

Black agencies

**Changes in the Rochester Jewish Community

*Changes in the Jewish Family

Family Service changes: less welfare

Future of Rochester: leaders, Israel.

Boyer Tape 1, sides a and b.

Mr. Boyer (B): So then, well I don't know whether this is (inaudible)

Tina Isaacs (I): Ok, this is Tina Isaacs interviewing Mr. Michael Boyer. It is Tuesday July 20, and I'm in Mr. Boyer's office. Mr. Boyer, could you please tell me something about your background?

B: Yes, I'll (inaudible) do that. Give you a brief picture of my background. I'm, I'm a native Rochesterian which is rather unique for a social worker because most social workers move around a great deal. I went to school in Rochester, Graduated from Franklin Benjamin in 1937 and then went to the University of Iowa where I worked a year in Bonds, clothing factories as a, as a floor boy and then I went to the University of Iowa where I was pre-med. And after-when I graduated in 1942, or just prior to graduation, I applied to a number of medical schools. I was unable to get in and the war of course had already started so I enlisted in the army knowing that I would be drafted any day. And I was in the army for four and a half years, two and a half which were spent overseas. I met my wife overseas. I did not marry her in Europe. I sent for her when I came back. She is a former resident of Germany, who-whose parents sent her to England to save her life when Hitler came through. Unfortunately, her parents' lives were not saved. I-my wife and several of her friends signed up for the United States War Relocation Authority in Germany after the war ended and I was involved in the recruitment and transportation of that group. And having met my wife and having been stationed in the, in the camp that she was located in, I, we had the chance to get to know each other and when I went home I sent for her and we were married in 1947. I gave up the idea of going to medical school after I, after I kept getting refused and told to try again the following year. And since I was primarily interested in working with people, I decided I would go into the field of social work and applied at the University of Buffalo graduate school where I went for two and a half years and received my master's degree in 1949. After I graduated from Buffalo, I started work with the Jewish Social Service Bureau of Rochester. That agency of course is now a Jewish Family Service of Rochester and I've been working with the agency in various capacities for 27 years. We have two children. I have a daughter who is 24 who's married and lives in Syracuse. She's a teacher. And her husband is a social worker. I have a son, 21, who just graduated from Kent State University as a business major with a particular interest in advertising and public relations. My family, my parents are European. They were born in Russia, they've been here about sixty, oh about sixty-six or sixty-seven years. My parents, my father is 87 years old, my mother is 82. They've been married 63 years. And we're very fortunate that they're first of all alive, that they're reasonably well considering their age, that they're both together, and they're living in a very nice apartment and enjoying life as much as possible. I have a, I have a sister who is a social worker. Her name is Mrs. Gatman and works at the Jewish Home and Infirmary. And I have a brother who is working, who runs a franchise for a uniform company in Seattle, Washington. Essentially, these are some of the cursory effects about my background.

I: Why did your parents come to Rochester?

B: I suppose they came here pretty much the same way most immigrants come. In, in the early twentieth century and that is because they had relatives already here, so they joined.

I: Where-do you know where they settled when they first came here?

B: Yeah, they settled in the Joseph Avenue area.

I: And is that where you grew up?

B: That's where I grew up and my parents just now, about 3 months ago left the area. They lived in the inner city on Roberts street for 56 years, and they, they only left because there were a couple of mugging incidents that scared them. We've been, we'd been trying for years to get them out of Roberts street and they, they didn't want to leave. They, they just left three months ago and we're very grateful that they're out.

I: What was, what was it like growing up around Joseph Avenue? What, what kinds of childhood memories do you have of it?

B: I have very fond memories of it especially in retrospect because life was so, so much different. It was very warm, close, Yiddish speaking neighborly kind of neighborhood and setting. A lot of Yiddish, or primarily Yiddish was spoken. My brother didn't even speak a word of English until he went to start in grammar school. I, I'm about 6 years younger than my brother, so I didn't quite have that experience. We had, we had a lot of kids in the neighborhood, most of the street, I wouldn't, I wouldn't say most, I would say half of the street was Jewish and the rest was a mixture of ethnic groups/ But it was very-very friendly, very neighborly, very safe, and I remember it very warmly and very fondly.

I: Did you have a, have a Hebrew education of any kind?

B: I had a private rabbi teaching me, I had several rabbis. I had the Mr. Hollinger, I recall a Mr. Rosenbloom, an elderly man with a white beard, he was my first rabbi, and I frankly, I, I didn't like seeing him come to the house because he interrupted my baseball game and play and what have you. After Mr. Hollinger, I had Rabbi Abraham Solomon who is, thank goodness, still with us. He had a Hebrew school on Thomas Street and he was my rabbi.

I: I interviewed him a few weeks ago. So then your parents were Orthodox?

B: My parents were and still are very Orthodox, yes.

I: Are you?

B: I am not, no, I, I, I believe went through similar experiences that I've read about others going through and that is a, a breaking away from the Orthodoxy, almost a resentment towards the Orthodoxy, the restrictions and the unexplained rituals that are put on me socially and being young and immature, I resented it and almost was hostile towards it until I went off to school, until I went into the army, until I became a little bit more mature and saw what life was all about and especially in Europe with the Holocaust and, which brought me back into Jewishness much more strongly than what it would've ever, what it would've ever been. But, I, my, my Jewishness had to be practiced, at least the ritual part of it had to be practices in the, in the form that was much more acceptable, much more understandable to me, and that was the Reform Movement.

I: I see, do you belong to B'rith Kodesh?

B: Oh, I belong to B'rith Kodesh.

I: What was Rabbi Solomon's Hebrew School like? Did you go five days a week?

B: Five days a week, after school. It was, he was, a very conscientious rabbi and very determined that his kids were going to learn and he was a disciplinarian. I still have reminders on my (inaudible), I'm joking, of course. Rabbi Solomon would check periodically, spot check periodically to see if we were

paying attention. I we weren't, we'd get a physical reminder that, that we weren't paying attention. We, he made sure that learned to read and we learned history. Again, in retrospect, Rabbi Solomon was a wonderful, *wonderful* teacher, very conscientious at the time. As eleven year olds and twelve year olds we didn't appreciate his (inaudible) because it interrupted with what we were more interested in at the time, and that was freedom and fun and playing, and what have you.

I: Right. Did you give your children a Hebrew Education?

B: Both my children went the Temple B'rith Kodesh religious school and, and my son went through the high school. My daughter was stopped after confirmation.

I: What are-what is your feeling in general about Heb-about the importance of Hebrew Education?

B: Oh, I think it's, it's, it's probably one of the most important factors in not only strengthening Jewish Identity, but preserving Jewish Identity. Without knowledge, without awareness of our background, it's difficult to have a strong, healthy feeling. I think education is important whether it's religious or any kind of education. If we are ignorant of something, we can't have feelings, or knowledgeable feelings.

I: Okay, now your parents, you say they lived on Joseph Avenue until just a few months ago. How long had you been trying to get them out of there?

B: As least, for the last five or six years, but we started right after the riots.

I: When did you notice that the neighborhood was changing?

B: Shortly after the riots.

I: So, -

B: Which was, were about twelve years ago. But it didn't change acutely, it was gradually changing. As long as there were still Jewish people living there, and there were, up until about five or six years ago. We felt some degree of comfort and security. But, but gradually, over a period of, of twelve years it deteriorated, and around five years ago it really took a sharp turn downward, to the point where it became very obvious that those Jewish people who lived there who were dying out or moving away, weren't going to be replaced by new ones.

I: Mhm.

B: So before we knew it, three or four years ago, my parents were kind of insolated, or isolated, from, from the Jewish community and from, from outside of two or three white families living close by, they were pretty much in a black community. Mind you, the, the, the black families living on Robert's Street, many of them in the area where my parents lived were very, very nice people and very good to them and they had good relationships. But there were a lot of unknown visitors, there were a lot of transient situations and you were, there was, there was an uneasy feeling. There was glass on the street, there were broken windows and about a year ago it became (inaudible). But because there, a couple of neighbors were still there who were very good to them and where they sort of supported each other, they, and because of inertia, because of the, of the difficulty in making a move, and the thought of making a move, and my parents basically, are not daring kind of people who, who people of the world. Anyhow, they, they always kind of got their enjoyment out of status quo, out of having the family together for meals, and they very rarely went anywhere, so that, it was difficult for them to move, you

know, because of inertia. As long as there were still some people around that they knew and got support from, they didn't want to move. But when, there were a couple of not serious incidents, but scary incidents, where my father was kind of knocked down, where he was, his pockets were torn up, where they threatened a knife and then, and then they came in another time and threatened my mother, which we didn't even know about. Suddenly, one day, my father said he thinks that they decided they're going to move. And it's, and we grabbed at the opportunity and we began making arrangements for them. It was only then that they told us what happened.

I: What were your personal reactions to the riots when they had them?

B: Well, my, my initial reaction was concern for my parents because for the first couple of hours we couldn't even get into the area, it was blocked off and so we were very concerned and we didn't know what was going to take place. Once we were able to get in our next reaction was again rather selfish and a primary concern for my parents-of trying to talk them into leaving. Then I must admit that there was a reaction of anger towards the blacks, a feeling that they're gone too far, you know, "Who do they think they are?" and "What do they want?" And then after a cooling off period and an attendance at various meetings, community meetings there was a realization of a more general and more serious problem, and the need to deal with this in planning and in cooperative efforts in the community, rather than reacting impulsively and angrily.

I: Mhm, What do you think caused the riots?

B: Well, they, they talk about a specific incident but of course the incident was strictly the straw that broke the camel's back. What caused the riots I believe were the increasing differentials in living conditions. Not only differentials but the increasing bad living conditions. The closeness, the heat, the, the stirrings of various leaders among the black community. I think a situation like the Hanover House was a very good-one of the causes. The Hanover House is as you know, first public housing in the Rochester area and it was a high rise. Or at least sort of high rise. Seven stories and there were seven buildings and you have a tremendous concentration of people in a very limited area. And, all you need is one little stirring and it's like, you know, it's like a germ, it spreads. And so something set off discontent which was already there, and before you knew it, you had crowds and you had riots.

I: Do you think there was outside agitation?

B: I think there probably was, yeah, I don't know. I have no way of proving, but I think that there probably was. I think that there probably were some national leaders who were saying that we're not going to get anywhere unless we call it to people's attention. You know, somebody's head gets smashed in, then so be it. But I think there probably was.

I: Do you think the riots were Anti-Semitic or Anti-White? Or neither?

B: Well, they were anti-establishment and there were a lot of Jewish establishments in the area. You know, remember Joseph Avenue was primarily Jewish and there were a lot of Jewish businesses and unfortunately there were a lot of Jewish business men taking advantage of blacks. And so they were a visible, active, and oppressive part of the establishment. So it might appear to be Anti-Semitic, I think there were some Anti-Semitic people, I think there were because they were the guys who were ripping them off. But I think the basic feeling was anti-white. It's the whites who were holding them down.

I: One more question along these lines.

B: Yeah, ok.

I: What do you think of Saul Alinsky and the Fight Organization?

B: Well, I think the original intent, the original approach by Saul Alinsky, at the time, I was very much against him. I thought he was extreme, I thought he was offensive, in retrospect I think he had some novel but good ideas. I think without stirring things up, the blacks would not be anywhere near as, as, as advanced as they are now. Now I think Saul Alinsky taught or believed in the principle of finding a very good issue, a very important issue, one in which you know you're right and one in which you have a darn good chance of winning. And then work on that issue. I think unfortunately what, what's happened with the Fight Organization is that their leadership is not as smart as it was in the beginning and I think they're picking too many surface issues, too many cursor issues which waters down their, not their visibility, but it waters down their (inaudible). But I think Saul Alinsky certainly had some good ideas.

I: Ok, I'd like to get back to your family now.

B: Yes, ok.

I: Is your wife college educated?

B: No, high school only.

I: But both your children are?

B: Both of my children are.

I: Do you think it's important for a woman to be college educated as it is for a man?

B: Yes, I think today it is, certainly.

I: Do you think it is a good idea for women to have careers? And-?

B: Yes, Not, like anything else, you know you're asking a general question and I would have to preface that with it depends on the individual. I think that for those women and certainly in 1976, for those women who want careers, and understandably, the-I can see where, where women would want careers, and they should have them.

I: Is your wife a homemaker?

B: Homemaker, and my wife enjoys being a homemaker and she enjoys sewing and she enjoys-She does a lot of work with my parent, and she does a lot of work with other people helping other people, on a volunteer basis, so she keeps busy. She enjoys being home.

I: You have, I take it you see your parents very often?

B: We do, and especially now because they don't live too far from us. We live in Irondequoit and their apartment is in Irondequoit. We see them because of, they just moved in and we, and we're heavily involved in setting them up, and putting up pictures and getting their apartment organized. We saw them almost daily. My mother just had a cataracts operation and we're seeing her almost daily again. But, yeah, we see them at least three times a week.

I: And your sister's family also lives in Rochester?

B: Right, right.

I: What did your father do?

B: My father was a tailor, worked (inaudible) clothing. Does that sound familiar?

I: Yeah, a part of the Great Rochester... (laughter). What kind of politics did he have if I may ask? And was he a member of the union?

B: Oh, he's been a part of the (inaudible), you know, he had to be. He is a subscriber to The Forward newspaper all of the years that I can remember and he still gets it mailed. He's, I would say a democrat, a liberal democrat.

I: Was he at all involved in the socialist movement in Rochester?

B: No, no.

I: Ok. Do you think that you've raised our children with the same sorts of values that you were raised?

B: Basically, I think the basic values are the same, methods of bringing up children change. You know, I feel as, I think many second generation or first generation Americans feel that European parents perhaps were preoccupied with food, were overindulgent, over-protective, and sometimes over-controlling or dominating because of their fears of the outside, gentile world. You know, that we have to be careful not to be visible and make loud noise. So I think in that respect, we certainly, from a personality, from an emotional development point of view, we've changed. We're more secure about our position in the world. We don't, we're not afraid like my parents were, my parents' generation. But as far as, so then we were more permissive with our kids, but probably not as, not as clear in our direction. My parents were quite clear in their direction, of what they wanted, and we didn't always like what they wanted and I wouldn't, I still wouldn't do it, even though I think their method was probably good. But the basic values of, of honesty, of loyalty of devotion to parenting what have you, I think, I think there are the same. We've raised the kids that way. I hope.

I: Do your children retain a strong Jewish identity, do you think?

B: Yeah, yeah, my daughter married a non-Jewish boy who converted to Judaism and as much as she loved him and as much as she felt very strongly about him and we were frankly in the beginning not in favor, but we liked, we liked her husband, we like him as a person but she would not have married him if he did not convert and she could not be anything but Jewish. And he, as a matter of fact was interested in Judaism even before he met Anita (?) and studied it and made up his mind about conversion long before he met Anita. I think basically they are strongly identified although not, not in an active way. They attend services, they don't observe, they don't keep kosher at home, they are very comfortable about being Jewish, they have a lot of Jewish friends, in that respect I would say yeah.

I: Do you think this is true in general, do you think the younger generation is as religious as the generations which came before it?

B: In a different way, you know, if you mean do they observe rituals the same way, except for those who really have felt very strongly that in order to be a Jew you must observe in the extreme orthodox way there are some young people who are following in that direction, but other than those I think that most young people today don't observe the, the ritual in a fundamental kind of way but I think they're just as religious, they're certainly, they're interested in Judaism, they're interested in Jewish identity, to me, that's, that's an aspect of being religious. If you're saying that in order to be religious you must observe ritual and unless you do, you're not, then I would have to say that today most young people they're not as Jewish.

I: What's your opinion on intermarriage both specifically in relation to your daughter and in general, just Jews marrying gentiles?

B: Well, you know, we deal with marriage problems, it seems, and god knows that there's a whole range of factors: social, emotional factors, psychological factors that affect marriage. Marriage is a very demanding, very intimate relationship and it requires a tremendous amount of maturity to overcome some of the demands and hurdles that marriage provides. Marriage can be a very rewarding, very wonderful relationship but it can also be a very devastating one if we have a lot of, a lot of unfinished stuff that we bring into it. Intermarriage, therefore, is just one more factor, I think, one more hurdle to an already existing set of hurdles. I shouldn't use the word hurdle because it almost sounds like marriage is a very dangerous step to take- it isn't dangerous, it's a wonderful thing, but, it's, there are an awful lot of people who are not ready or who have unrealistic expectations for marriage and if, if they have a set of unfinished parts of their past and combine it with intermarriage they're adding, they're adding another hurdle. So intermarriage, I would prefer that people did not intermarry. Intermarriage can be successful for some people, it's another hurdle for many, many people. Significant number of people can intermarry successfully and still retain their religion, their identity.

I: Do you think the Jewish person in an intermarriage is lost to Judaism in many cases?

B: No, no, I would like to feel that my daughter is not lost to Judaism. I think, you know, they feel very strongly about Judaism and especially if there's a conversion, and especially a wife whose children legally are the religion of the mother, and emotionally hopefully are (inaudible), I don't think they're lost. I think in fact when you get a convert that you gain something, and I've heard many rabbis, reform rabbis, who feel that because the Jewish numbers are decreasing percentage-wise, you know, the population grows much faster than the Jews propagate, and so percentage-wise we're going down, and that one of the ways of increasing this problem- (correcting himself) or of solving this problem is to get converts.

I: So you think that conversion is then a good idea?

B: Yeah, if it's done genuinely, if it's done intelligently. If it's done in a strategic way to, you know, to convince somebody that "I love you", but doesn't.., where the feelings are missing, then I think it's not a good idea.

I: Then, you're not advocating proselytizing, you're just-

B: No, no. I'm advocating that individuals, like in answer to your former question, "Should women have careers?" it depends on the individual situation.

I: Ok. When you were first married did you move out to Irondequoit immediately?

B: No, no. When we were first married we lived with my parents for a couple months and then I went to school so we lived in Buffalo.

I: Buffalo, right.

B: And then when we came back we lived in the Monroe area.

I: Alright. What was that area like?

B: That was, that was a very nice area. My wife particularly like that area because that was the newer, not newer but the middle Jewish class area and there were a lot of stores and lot of people around and my wife liked it very much and we rented an apartment there and we lived there for about two years and then when we had our first child we decided to buy a house and we bought it in Irondequoit.

I: Was there a sense of neighborhood in this Monroe Park Avenue area that you lived in?

B: Yeah, yeah. We lived in a four unit house and so we were friendly with the neighbors next door. Yeah- there were neighborhood stores and there was a neighborhood dentist and a pharmacy on the corner so we got to know people, yeah.

I: Was it a Jewish neighborhood?

B: Yeah, pretty much Jewish.

I: And how about your neighborhood in Irondequoit. What was that like, what is that like?

B: Well the neighborhood in Irondequoit it was a fairly new street with- well, actually our house was about twenty years old when we bought it but there were two or three year old houses that were there. It was a neighborhood with primarily young people with young children and so that was a compatible neighborhood for us too. It's interesting to see those families that have lived there all the years that we have. We have lived there for twenty-five years now, and...24 years, and many of the same families are still there and it's interesting to see the transition from wheeling baby carriages to bar mitzvahs to high school graduation to weddings. And now, in the last couple of years some of the older residents have moved out and young families are coming in again which is a nice change because for a while you saw no kids around and now we're seeing kids on bicycles and skates and it's a nice feeling.

I: Is that a Jewish neighborhood too?

B: It's mixed. We have, I would say, $\frac{1}{3}$ of the street is Jewish.

I: Do you—living out in Irondequoit, feel any, well I can't think of another word for resentment but that's not the word I really want to use, about the fact that most of the facilities in the organized community are in Brighton, the, the Jewish community center and the temples and such?

B: I did at first. I did at first but on the other hand being involved in the Jewish community I can readily see that you can't duplicate all the facilities although one time the Jewish community center, when they were building, were talking about community, I can readily see that you can't duplicate all the facilities, although one time the Jewish Community Center, when they were building, were talking about branch settings there. I really didn't think that the Irondequoit Jewish community was going to get smaller, I thought it was going to grow. And the planners, I think, will turn out to be right. The Jewish population in Irondequoit, there's still a sizable Jewish population, but I think gradually it's going to peter out and that most of the Jewish people who live in the south so that the—the institutions are placed in the right place I think. When you're building a temple that costs millions of dollars you have to put it where the majority of people live and if I chose to live in Irondequoit then I have to do what I did. I had to transport, my wife had to transport our kids to Hebrew school three times a week. It's a long haul—

I: Sure is!

B:—but we chose to live there. You can't have two Temple B'rith Kodesh there. Now, there is a, there is a reform temple out there, we could have joined that one but we had already been members of B'rith Kodesh and I was closely identified with it. I taught Sunday school there and I was involved in some of the youth institutes so this is our...it's not something that was imposed on us as children.

I: Do you think most people who live out in Irondequoit feel that way?

B: No, I know there's a group in Irondequoit who resent the idea that some of the institutions are on the other side of town. Now, I'm talking as if I never had any negative feelings—I did. I am involved with a lot of groups and with boards, committees, and meetings, and temple, and JCC and so running to meetings, besides taking the kids to Sunday school and what have you can become pretty laborious and time consuming, it's about 12, 13 miles away, every night, going out there. I would say that I resented a time. But not against anyone, they didn't do this to me, I did it to myself.

I: When you were trying to get into medical school did you think, at the time, or do you now think it even had to do with the fact that you are Jewish, that you were rejected?

B: At the time I did, yeah, at the time I did. And it's possible that there was, there was some selectivity on that basis. Although, as I look back, or as I see the caliber of people applying to medical school now, I see it particularly when we interview young people for scholarship grants that we give with this agency and some of the averages that I see, I wouldn't stand a chance nor would I deserve to have been selected among this group because I didn't have a 3.8 average that some of these kids have. I had about a 3.1 average which wouldn't get me into a medical school today. So, as I look back, and I don't know how I did on my medical applicant test, I was never told. And, I'm not sure, you know, I shouldn't say I'm

not sure, but as I've thought about it over the years, in the beginning I felt a little resentful. I'd like to blame it on something other than myself so I tend to think that there was some anti-Semitic activity involved. But as a look back, and as I have accepted the fact that being a doctor wasn't the only thing that's worthwhile in this life, I realized that it's probably more than just any anti-Semitic, it's just my personal capacity to make it (inaudible). I'm sure, I'm sure that before I applied, I know that there were anti-Semitic activity, that there was a quota system, but I don't think that applied in my case, I think that they had a legitimate reason to reject me.

I: Were you aware of a quota system at the University of Rochester?

B: Only what I heard because I didn't apply to University of Rochester medical school. Only that I heard that if you're Jewish only a certain percent of (inaudible)

I: Do you remember any childhood or early, up until the time you were working, anti-Semitic experience, either your own or of anyone else in Rochester?

B: You know, I've often thought about that and I...other than occasional remarks as a kid like "dirty Jew" coming from other kids and coming from somebody for the lack of other things to say might say that's the first thing to come to mind and the most hurtful thing. I don't remember any glaring experiences of anti-Semitism. The first time I really felt the anti-Semitism in the world, not personally, was when Hitler started his Holocaust. I remember when I went to the University of Iowa, I walked to the campus from where I lived and on my way I passed the journalism school and they had The Daily Iowan posted and I used to read that and see the headlines and the articles on what was going on in Germany. This was in 1938, 39, 40, just before the world got to really know what was going on and it brought very clearly to my mind how precarious the position of the Jews was. I-in answer to your question, I don't recall any personal anti-Semitic situations that was serious other than the cursory kind of thing I mentioned before.

I: When did you become aware of what was going on in Europe? It was in the late 30s?

B: In the middle 30s when Hitler became...what did he become? Chancellor.

I: Chancellor

B: Yeah

I: Do you think you were aware before the general population was because you were Jewish?

B: Yeah, I think as we begin to get smatterings from people who left, because I wasn't involved officially at that time but there were beginning immigration, beginning immigration of Germans who were smart enough to leave at that time, who had the courage to leave and start a new life. We began to hear things about what was happening to Jews, so I think I knew months before other people knew.

I: Did you have and person dealings with the people who came to Rochester before the war started?

B: In a very surface kind of way, yeah. We met a few and they talked about the fact that their kids were persona non grata in schools and in social organizations, that businesses were being, well were they just were losing business, you know, where customers were sort of diverting to other places. So, but, you never had the idea of the magnitude of what was gonna happen, thought hopefully something was going to change.

Transcription- Boyer Interview 2 Tape 1 Side 1a and 1b
Sarah Krulik and Kylie Sargeant

I: This is Tina Isaacs interviewing Mr. Michael Boyer this is tape 2 side a. Mr. Boyer what activities Jewish community activities have you participated in in Rochester ?

B: Well you know the Jewish Family Services is one of the functional Jewish agencies in the community, and as such it is part of the structure of the Jewish community federation. Which uh means that we have representatives uh in the social planning department uh we're very heavily involved in the fundraising in terms of the community services division. Uh so that I personally and members of my staff um have been active in that community service division raising money for the welfare fund. But aside from raising money uh and aside from the social planning department, we're, we're constantly involved in uh various phases of activities um that the federation um leads and directs. Um well for example, the uh the federation is now undertaking uh a study on what's called the campus conflicts and uh this, as you probably know you're shaking your head, uh involves the possibility of using Jewish community center grounds, unused grounds at this point, uh to to bring together community, Jewish community agencies who are now looking for a place to settle like Hillel school and so on. But the federation wants to explore all of the other agencies who might be interested either in being in that area or being part of the Jewish community center building itself or what ideas we have so we are involved in the deliberations. I sit on the uh, I'm in the committee and members of my board sit on that committee, and I could go on and on with the number of projects uh that take place through the Jewish community federation. The population study for example that was done 15 years ago and is now being uh reviewed and updated, we are heavily involved in that. They want to know what kind of information we need to uh plan uh for our services and so then they computerize that information in terms of the kinds of questions they ask when they go out and update the population study. Um we are involved in uh well I am on the social legislation committee of the Jewish Community Federation.

I: What does that do?

B: They review the uh legislation that is pending or that's been passed by both state and federal government, uh they have uh they're concerned about some of the social legislation and if it is something that is pending of course they want to have some input in uh either directing it in a way we would like to see it go or to try and get some changes if it has already been passed. Uh there we tie in with national bodies that constitution of federations and local funds has a liaison person in Washington whose uh purpose is to uh speak with influential people in Washington around particular kind of pieces of legislation that would be of interest to the Jewish community. For example, legislation on Sunday work uh legislation on um kashrut. not kashrut, but on uh um allowing certain forms of slaughtering which are part of kashrut which the general community has had some questions about. Uh I am involved in um I'm just trying to think of the variety of other committees. I may think of some others uh as we go along. But in general just let me say that uh I personally and Jewish Family Services are highly involved with the federation around community planning.

I: Um the campus complex now you think is part of project is exploring the possibilities of this office moving down there too?

B: Well the primary purpose of that project was to deal with two groups. The Jewish Home and Infirmary uh is in a location which is deteriorating to some degree. They've got a lot of money invested in buildings, uh so obviously they cant just pick up millions of dollars worth of buildings and move them. Uh but they do need to expand they are going to they have applied for federal money and state money and it looks like they may get it. Now in order for them to get it they have to have some concrete proposal where are we going to be and so on. They don't want to put it in that uh area because it means being tied down even that much more. So they would like to move to the JCC, they feel that the population first of all uh the children of residences who live in that area would be a lot easier and it would be a lot more convenient and so on. So that's one major organization. Hillel school is the other major organization. Their they don't have a home at this point. And when those two approached the JCC and the federation they decided to review everyone's needs. And now we have just been here a year and half and the federation uh has been here about four years, uh the Bureau of Jewish Education has been here about four years but only about a year and half downstairs. So uh their in spite of that they are asking whether we might be interested in a complex idea. Jewish Family Service even before the conflict campus conflicts idea came up, had spoken with the JCC and is still considering not only considering but is planning on doing it. Uh having a detached part time worker in the JCC and we plan on having one there in September or October. Uh now for us this is not a part of a campus complex but we do plan to have someone out there uh because there are built in cases in their in their case load they have 700 or 800 senior citizens coming there every week. They have youth groups meeting there, they have singles groups meeting there. So there are personal and family problems, situations that that come to that organization attention which can be referred to the worker right on the premises. In addition, we do uh camp interviews for the JCC. We interview families who cannot afford to send their kids to the camp for the whole summer or for a month and need some financial help, we do the interviewing well that person out there would do the interviewing rather than having people come into our office here. Now uh when the campus complex idea started they asked us whether we might even consider more than a detached worker whether we might once we have a detached worker uh we aren't necessarily going to be restricting ourselves to JCC clientele, what about all the all the other Jewish residents in the area where most of the Jewish community lives: Pittsford, Brighton, Penfield, and so on, would we refuse service to those people, of course we would not. And then the thought and the feeling was that uh that it could proliferate into a case load which would require more than a part time worker perhaps more than one full time worker. And could it eventually come to the point where we might have more workers out there than here, since parking is free and everything else and it's convenient. Our board has thought about this and uh in answer to the questions they are pressing to get an answer to, uh we've come up with the statement that for the time being we are only interested in a part-time detached worker. Uh we need to be central, we plan to have our main office downtown. If the need or the demand grows at the JCC then we'll have to deal with it at the time but for the present we are planning on being here and a part-time worker there.

I: Ok I would like to talk about the family service with you for a while.

B: yeah

I: Um ok now you have been with it now 27 years you said?

B: Yeah

I: How did the Family Service start, I take it it started before you came hahah?

B: Family service started with antiquity. Social work is uh goes back to the biblical times because uh our forefathers are the inventors I think of social work. Uh the people the people the uh the writers the developers of the Talmud and uh everything in the Torah uh deals with how to relate to fellow man in a whole range of ways. How to deal with the orphan, how to deal with the widow, how to deal with indigent and it talks about uh uh marital problems and uh it even has modern social work concepts such as the uh emphasis on confidentiality. I believe it was Maimonides Rules on Tzedakah which emphasized the idea that the giver of charity should not be known by the recipient. Uh so that they were aware of many psychological and emotional uh um truisms and concepts. But your question really is based on modern social work and modern family services. Well, look, through the years though, from biblical days on, Jews have been preoccupied with helping one another and uh well you have heard the expression even non Jews especially non Jews perhaps have heard the expression that Jews help their own and Jews are very concerned about their uh friends and relatives and that Jewish families have always been close and strong and what have you. When Jews migrated to uh to America, as the history has shown throughout societies sprang up, fraternal societies and uh social societies and uh charitable societies and temples. So the origin of this agency goes back to maybe the 1880s uh when the German Jews formed I believe it was called the Hebrew... Associated Hebrew Charities and it came out of temple Brith Kodesh, and it was primarily a volunteer group it was a non professional group but it was a strong Jewish feeling group out of the temple that uh involved those who were already established helping those who were just coming in and their work was primarily financial assistance, concrete kinds of services. Um and then as um as more and more Orthodox and Eastern European Jews came in, uh you had another organization called the Associated Jewish Charities, I believe that was the name of it. I think they sprang up in 1908 and you had almost a competitive parallel kind of arrangement uh similar to the to the development of you know one synagogue here and one synagogue there. I don't like to use the word competitive but uh they couldn't all see eye to eye on same concepts in one organization. So the Associated Jewish Charities were primarily for Eastern European Jews and the American Hebrew Charities or the Associated Hebrew Charities was for the German Jews. And they ran along parallel lines for a number of years. Um they had paid workers, uh single workers, they I think one woman ran one and one woman ran the other. As a matter of fact, I would like to mention these women because and if they were alive they could give you a tremendous wealth of information. The director of the Associated Hebrew charities eventually became uh Stella Shifran whose father was the lay leader way back. And the director of the um Associated Jewish Charities was Anna Wolf who later uh worked for the successor organization, this organization, and worked here until about 7 or 8 years ago when she passed away. So she was with the organization about 55 years. Um now when the community just came into Rochester came into being, uh they um they uh insisted that these two agencies merged because they were you know getting funds and duplicating services. So they did merge and um in 1924 they became the Jewish Welfare Council and then at the same time there was a Jewish Children's Bureau, I believe that what it was called I may be wrong on the exact name of the organization, or Jewish Children's Council. Uh and they ran along parallel lines too until 1943 and in 1943 these two organizations merged into what was called the Jewish Social Service Bureau and at that time it had its first professional director. Uh by professional I mean someone who had gotten a master's degree in social work in an accredited school and he had a staff. And he was dealing with situations involving more than just concrete

services like uh providing a ton of coal for an indigent family or providing a weekly maintenance allowance for an indigent family. It was beginning to deal with psychological and emotional problems with family interrelationship problems etc. Um the Jewish Social Service Bureau was located in the uh Talmud Torah building on Baden Street um and stayed there until 1948 and then it broke through a uh kind of a uh an expected um well how should I put it, it was difficult to for the Jewish community to think of a Jewish agency being away from the Jewish community so it broke through a uh a strong resistance to this sort of thing by moving downtown in 1948 and they moved into the Reynolds arcade downtown office building and then it really became quiet professionalized. Uh at that time David Crystal was the executive director of the agency and in 1958 uh oh in 1949 I started to work for the Jewish Social Service Bureau and there was a staff of about 4 professionals I believe. And in 1958, David Crystal had uh who had received his PhD while he was still with the agency, he did it on kind of a part time basis, he got his PhD in social work, uh was offered a position with San Francisco Jewish Family Services, which he accepted and then I was uh promoted to executive director. Um in 1960, I asked the board to consider changing the name of the agency to the Jewish Family Service because I felt that that um that name more appropriately described the kind of work that we were doing. We were doing social service work but we were doing primarily family counseling work and family oriented work. And so this tied in with the trend throughout the country, most agencies today are called Jewish Family or Jewish family and Children's Agency. Uh briefly, Jewish family services um is a multi function agency uh primary function or purpose is uh the rehabilitation of individuals and uh families that are having relationship problems or personal problems for a variety of reasons, uh I guess almost another way of saying it would that be almost any kind of tzorus that you can think of that would be befall a human being uh in a social or psychological way comes within our perview in a given year.

I: Ok I have about million questions I would like to ask you.

B: Alright.

I: Now when the agency merged the two agencies merged in 1924 was this sort of uh oh an external merger, I mean do you think it was forced upon them and they weren't very happy about it?

B: Um, I'm not quite sure. I don't see anything in minutes or records indicating that there were uh that there was malcontent or concern about or pressure on it rather. But, rather that in the inner circle kind of felt that it would be much more effective it would be much more productive to be together. These two organizations were working separately and uh I guess the funding was being wasted and um that there was some overlapping and uh I think internally they decided that it would be a better thing to do.

I: Do you think that this sort of thing is indicative of the two communities merging together, the German Jewish and the Eastern European Jewish, or is it one of those things that started the merging of the two communities?

B: Um, I think it is one of the things that started it, um because people came here from every kind of origin although uh the Jewish Social Service Bureau primarily up until maybe the middle 50s or early 50s the Jewish Social Service Bureau was kind of shunned or avoided by quote, uh the better to do uh better off people financially, because we were seen as a welfare agency. For so many years we were giving charity

and so to be seen in our office had some negative connotations and uh even though we became a counseling agency it took a while before the community would accept that. So maybe my previous statement is not quite correct, I am sort of speaking off the top of my head. I am really not sure what started the working together of German and uh Eastern European Jews. Maybe maybe it was prob... not maybe but I would think certainly that the war, World War Two, had a great deal to do with it. Uh and the change in temple membership, the change in rabbinical training and rabbinical attitude, I think the change in total attitudes about equality and about uh you know universal universality of people and life and activities. Uh I think the State of Israel certainly. All of these things are much more important.

I: Um ok now until 1943 this agency concentrated on as you put it concrete services, what... Um as I was saying, you were talking about how um before before World War Two that the agency mostly relied on concrete service sort of thing. Now what is it about Rochester or social work as it evolved that made for increasing professionalization?

B: Uh, well I think um as society became more and more complex and I think after World War Two or during World War Two certainly, uh there were a lot of things happening to families and individuals uprooting and certainly the holocaust and uh the DP movement and uh the breakup of marriages by, for a variety of reasons. The whole uh the whole uh speeding up of communication where you know radio and first television afterwards making almost instantaneous what's happening in one place can be seen somewhere else, mobility uh the increase of movement from one community to another. There was a time when you were born, raised, and died in one community this is not this began to change and of course today it's uh extreme. These things are fine and they are part of the changing society but they have uh their uh impact on other things, they upset the status quo. And as people uh and the feel of social work of course was a new field it was beginning to grow and people recognized that there were skills being developed that could be helpful. And as people were educated and became more sophisticated to the idea that getting help with problems is no crime, the demand for it increased and so social agencies began to develop not away from but in addition to concrete services, they began to develop uh counseling services to meet the needs. Now like anything else uh you know you go from one extreme to another and for a while in the 50s I would say and even 60s the counseling aspect of agencies became the {raisin detript?} For existing and everybody wanted to be a high {falouting} psychiatrist social worker and a working in a mental health clinic and becoming a junior psychiatrist and what have you and um getting away more and more from the concrete services which almost some seemed demeaning and didn't require training and anybody could do it. Um well as we matured just as anyone matures and you develop a greater sense of security about yourself and about your skills and what you have to offer and you don't have to be defensive about what you have to offer. And we began to realize that the responsibility and the charge and mandate to social agencies and especially Jewish Family Services uh are not just is not just to sit behind a desk and wait till somebody comes and says I have a problem that um the problems that began to manifest themselves particularly among the aging particularly among youth uh who were alienated from the establishment anyhow they wouldn't be seen dead in an office, you had to go out and reach out to them, particularly the aging today. So uh in a roundabout way I am trying to explain that this is how, how agencies developed from concrete to the other kind.

I: Um ok who exactly does the Jewish family service help? And has this changed over the years, I mean what is your, the bulk of sort of your caseload?

B: Ok well first of all, uh, if we're talking about ethnic clientele, the bulk of our caseload is Jewish. We are sectarian, Jewish sectarian agency. However, we see non-Jewish clients as well, uh ... at any given time we have a small percentage of non-Jewish clients because we are a community just agency and uh um we have a responsibility to, and our board feels we do, to deal with clients who wish to use our services, just as many Jewish clients people go to non sectarian agencies like Family Service or other non-Jewish agencies. Um we the bulk of our caseload, last year we had about 1100 situations, not all of those were long term situations that went on and on, some of them were one time contacts, some of them were telephone contact, but nevertheless a request for service by telephone. Uh out of those 1100 about 330 off hand were dealt with marital problems. Um then we had a I can't give you the exact figures at this point but we has a substantial number of uh personal counseling situations. Now personal counseling would involve young adults or uh maybe even late adolescents uh or it could be any adult, it doesn't have to be a young adult. An individual who is floundering, who is having personal internal problems that are reflected in the various things that he tries to do in life, that are reflective in his relationship, let's say if it's a man, his relationship with women, that he is unable to maintain relationships, that he is constantly getting in and out of situations that cause aggravation and not fulfillment it affects his relationship with employers and he is getting in and out of job situations, it reflects in his relationship with peers and with parents, and just in terms of his own personal feelings, a sense of not well being and a sense of anxiety many times. Uh someone who is floundering, and so this would be a person that would be called, would be in the category of personal counseling. We have a significant number of child parent counseling situations and we have a large senior citizen uh case load um especially since we started a transportation service two years ago and that uh we are dealing with um um several hundred people a year.

I: When you first came here were the proportions of what you just recounted to me the same or have they differed?

B: When I first came, no the marital counseling caseload was less. The ratio, the ratio was about the same, although we didn't have as many senior citizen caseload, we, that had to be developed. We knew they were there, but older people don't make their problems known, they're tucked away somewhere and you have to go really and find them. When public senior citizen housing developed and they became more visible because they are all in one place. But when I first came uh yeah we had uh percentage wise we had a lot marital counseling, personal counseling, child parent counseling, we had a lot of foster placements, kids in foster homes, which we don't have now, we had adoptions which we don't have now. But our caseload was smaller, our staff was smaller so.

I: Was the ratio of child-parent cases the same do you think?

B: Uh a little, it was less, it was less. What we find now, what we call child parent cases very often start off as child parent cases and then wind up becoming marital cases because you know as well as I that a youngster who is acting out is reflecting some problem in the household. Not always, I mean sometimes kids have uh serious problems within themselves that have nothing to do with the marriage or not serious uh reflection of the marriage, but most of the time kids who are having behavior problems are reflecting a bad family situation.

I: Ok um do you work with all income brackets?

B: Right our uh we have a fee system and uh that's based on a sliding scale so that people can pay 0 or they can pay 30. 30 is the cost of our uh marital counseling service, one hour of counseling is about 30 dollars.

I: And has the economic status of the people you're working with changed over the years?

B: Yeah, it's, we are dealing with a middle upper middle-income group. We do have people in the poverty range too. Most of our senior citizens are very marginal although they won't admit it, they won't tell you, many of them could use financial help or won't accept it. Many of them are getting SSI and can use additional money but won't even think of it. Um we also have some non-senior citizen families that are marginal, very few, and uh we are not in the position to help these families financially because we just don't get money from the community just to provide this service. Their position is that the Monroe County Department of Social Services is a tax funded body that has much more money than a private organization and it's their responsibility. By and large our clientele is middle class.

I: Ok now does your clientele come to you or do you go to them?

B: Most come to us. Occasionally we will go to them if we are asked to go to them. Now we sometimes we will get a call from someone in the community that says, "I don't want you to tell them that I called, but there is a family on my street that is in very bad shape, they are fighting day and night and uh that woman needs help, that husband is a no good so and so. So you know would you please go down there and see what you can do, but don't tell them I called." Well we couldn't do this kind of thing, we, because for the same reason that I'm sure you wouldn't want me rapping on your door and saying "I'm here, whether you like it or not, I'm here to help you." Uh so what we would do in a case like that is we would at least try and get the permission of that person, if not the name to say that someone called and that they're concerned about your situation and we would, we would like to be helpful and uh we would present the way that we might possibly be helpful and they would have to make the decision.

I: Um have there is there um any changing nature to the problems you are dealing with, for example are you dealing with more and more intermarriage now than you ever did before or anything on that along those line?

B: Well, yeah, there is a change in the problems in that um the Jewish family in a way unfortunately has become part of the total general value system. The Jewish family at one time for various reasons perhaps because it was ghettoized, perhaps --. Um becoming part of the uh general values system is something that actually we have fought for a long time uh because it involved eliminating quota at universities, it involves being able to buy homes where you want to, it involves being able to get jobs where suited to your skills regardless of religion and what have you. So uh we have gotten this equality but uh at the same time you can't have one without the other. When you get absorbed into the system then you take on some other negative features and one of the things we have taken on is some of the social pathology that uh exists in the general community, when you get outside of that wall that protects you, you pick up some other things. And so this is true so this is true as uh family life is concerned and at one point

the kinds of cases, marital counseling, that we did 20 years ago involved uh more insidious kinds of things uh sort of silent hostility and uh relationship problems and money problems and in-law problems. Uh covering up a lot of other things that were going on that simply weren't expressed that weren't allowed to be in the Jewish Value System. Today, because it no longer has to be concealed or, for whatever reason, some of the problems we see are very much like our counterpart agency sees. We see a lot of infidelity, we see a lot of uh alcoholism, we see-still not as much as the general community but it's an increasing amount. We see a lot of uh physical assault. We see the whole range of visible and sometimes violent pathology that we didn't use to see in Jewish families. So when you ask, you know, what changes there are, these are, are very significant changes, I would say.

I: Over the years did you deal with things such as housing discrimination and quota systems at universities and that sort of thing? Or were you simply aware of them?

B: Well, I personally didn't need to. I wasn't uh called in to deal with those things because when I came here a lot of that was beginning to peter-out.

I: Ok. What's the difference between a Jewish Family service and a Gentile Family service?

B: Well, that question is asked very, very frequently. We've asked it ourselves and our boards have asked it. And uh um the technique, the skills, are no different uh from one agency to another, no more than Jewish surgeon does a different job than a gentile surgeon. But um Jewish National organizations and Jewish local organizations are increasingly becoming more and more concerned about retaining the Jewish identity and strengthening Jewish family life and even at the risk of going counter to uh case work principles which, which say that you do not impose values on other people, and we don't, we don't try to. Nevertheless, they are, we are concerning ourselves with trying to somehow inject Jewishness into our interviews, into our caseload, to be aware of certain aspects of a family situation that perhaps a gentile agency would not. When we did adoptions, we were aware of certain values and certain ideas that Jewish parents would have about children that gentile families would not. We have a Jewish Board of directors and we choose our directors on the basis of their involvement in the Jewish community, their commitment to Judaism and to Israel and we would hope that they're-that kind of group would be very much committed to as much Jewishness in the agency as possible, so.

I: Do the people who work for you, are they Jewish?

B: Everybody on our staff, on the professional staff, is Jewish and uh increasingly we're involved in in-service training around Jewishness and we're developing Jewish family life education programs. Our clerical-some of our clerical staff is not Jewish, but that's...

I: Um, do you have volunteers working for you?

B: We have volunteers working for us, particularly with our immigration program and as a matter-of-fact we just met with the council of Jewish women yesterday to set up a structure where they will, they will take over a good part of our immigration through settlement program with the Russians.

I: Has the ratio of volunteers to professionals changed at all over the years?

B: Yeah, it's increased. As the years go on, we, we, I don't-I'm not quite sure what you mean because you have a sort of quizzical look on our face. Do you mean that we're getting-are we using more volunteers now than we've used to?

I: Yeah.

B: Oh, yeah, yeah, very much so, because programs have grown, and uh also we're not as jealous about confidentiality in certain kinds of situations. The Russian immigrants, for example, we uh, you know, they make themselves visible and known in a community, and so there's no reason why we have to be afraid of mentioning their name or giving their name to (inaudible) or to a lay person. The same thing is true with senior citizens. We are-we still are very jealous of confidentiality when it comes to dealing with personal counseling situations and lay people, in an agency like ours, do not get involved in counseling cases, they get involved in the concrete surface cases where we need someone to, to save us the time of doing a lot of legwork and a lot of running around.

I: Ok, now the refugees coming out of Europe after World War II, or-and during, would be seen as, I suppose a peak problem for the agency. I mean-it was one of those-were there any other sorts of peaks of problems that you could think of over the years?

B: Uh, no, in between, in between immigration, the peaks were not really uh discernible peaks, they were increasing requests for counseling. There was an increasing request for uh drug problems, but uh it wasn't, it wasn't like the 1949-50-51 peak of immigration when we were getting twelve and fifteen families a month of displaced persons and where the agency was primarily involved in that kind of work. We almost had to let everything else go. We are now getting another peak, although not anywhere near the 49-50 period. We're getting Russian refugees, but uh it's, it's very small compared to that period.

I: Ok, uh, do you now or have you ever given out loans?

B: Yes, we, we worked-for a long time we worked with the Hebrew Free Loan Society uh and we underwrote loans through them. They gave the money, we signed uh as responsible people to pay it if the people could not pay it themselves, uh up to \$300. Not-in the last couple of years that, that organization turned over its funds to Jewish Family services for the same purpose, uh so we still give loans. But, we have found that as the economy grew and got better that there was less and less demand on the loans. There was a time in the 40s and 30s when that was a very much demanded service.

I: Does-Are-Do a lot of cases of Anti-Semitism come up?

B: No, I can't, I can't say that they do.

I: And, have they ever?

B: I think I mentioned the other day that very often when they did they were mixed with personal-personality and emotional problems as well. I can't recall any serious anti-Semitism problems coming up.

I: Ok, is the agency very psychologically oriented?

B: Yes, well, when you say very-

I: Well-

B: We're, you know, our counseling is, is given in the, in the (melure?) of Freud and all of the, the prominent psychologists and psychiatrists. We are trained in the principles of uh psycho-sexual development related to Freud's principles and concepts. And so, yeah, we are very much involved in trying to understand the links between the past and the present that causes certain kinds of behavior, knowing that what a person does today, very much has some bearing on what's happened before or what hasn't happened before. But we're also geared to the present, and we don't sit somebody down and do an analys-analysis on them, even our psychiatrists, even our consultants don't do that. We're-we're geared to the present.

I: Do you send a lot of people to um psychiatrists?

B: Not a lot, but we have psychiatric consultants who are connected with the agency and when we have a question about uh diagnosis, or a question about psychosis, or medication, we, we consult with our psychiatrist.

I: Ok, um do you deal at all with either Planned Parenthood or teenage problems?

B: Not particularly.

I: Um can you think of any sort of general change that the agency has seen while you've been here that sort of stands out?

B: Um well um, some of the changes I think I've already mentioned, and that is that we've, we've gone from primarily concrete to a total uh family help and a community helping situation which involves counseling and relationship problems that's, that's one big change. I think um another big change that we're seeing is that we are increasingly coming to the federation for funding for new programs dealing primarily with, with Jewish clients because the chest is becoming very careful about its funding and limited in its funding. Um so that, you know, this is, this is a big change that we are coming to federation for more money and I think the federation will be fine being that there will be a proliferation of demands on their funds from local agencies. Uh the other-the corollary to that is that we have-the community chest is becoming very, very much more demanding in accountability uh to show how we are using the money and uh the kinds of services that we're giving and whether we're not overlapping and uh they're being much more concerned with evaluation and what have you. So this-these are big changes, I think.

Interview with MICHAEL BOYAR

Date

By Tina Isaacs

Interview 2

Tape 1

Sides 2a and 2b

I: This is Tina Isaacs, interviewing Mr. Michael Boyar. It is Wednesday, August the 4th. Okay, Mr. Boyar, um, can you please tell me about the horizontal relationships that this agency has with other Jewish agencies in Rochester?

B: Uh, yes I'd be glad to. Um, first of all, I think, at least in my experience, uh, with Jewish family service over 25 years, uh, I feel that the Rochester functional agencies, the directors of the Rochester functional agencies, have had a very good relationship, a very good personal relationship. It's a, uh, small enough community, uh, and it's a, uh, interested Jewish community, uh enough so that uh, there's been a lot of, of interaction between the agencies without feelings of competition or jealousy, or anything of that sort. Uh, but that uh isn't enough. There has to be, uh, an active, professional kind of relationship, and, uh, it's been that. We feel that, uh, every Jewish functional agency has its own expertise. And uh that expertise should be used, particularly in this day and age when, uh, money is so scarce and so limited. And therefore instead of, uh, an agency like the Jewish Community Center hiring a caseworker to do some of its, uh, casework finding and casework counseling, uh, such as they, they would do with a, with a built-in caseload they have at the JCC, their aging, their, their singles group, their youth activities, their campership program, uh, that it would be much more economical and much more productive to, to use, existing casework agencies, like Jewish Family Service and we have had a cooperative relationship with the JCC. I think I mentioned it earlier, in, in another section, uh,

but it's appropriate for the question you're asking, we- we feel that we have had a good relationship with the JCC and we want to expand that, because we want to be used as fully as possible by the Jewish community and, uh, by sister agencies that provide different kinds of services. We also, uh, feel that we can be used by, uh, the Bureau of Jewish Education and we have with their, uh, with some of their programs. And by the same token, they can be helpful to us. As I mentioned earlier, the Bureau's, uh, assistant director, who will be coming in September, will be working with our Jewish family life education program, to, uh, uh, establish discussion groups in the various religious schools and, and, uh, Jewish community groups that the Bureau has some connection, uh, with Jewish home and infirmary, of course they do have a social work staff for, uh, their internal operations. They- they need to have somebody who's on the spot for problems that exist or come up during the uh, during the day and that would be difficult to, to use an outside agency for that kind of work. However, uh, we make referrals to the Jewish home and the Jewish home uh, not only has a uh, permanent, uh, terminal, kinds of residents, they also have temporary residents. And they refer- when, when that temporary resident is rehabilitated and referred back to the community, then Jewish Family Services call them as a community agency to see what help it can be to, to that, to that person coming back to the community. Uh, they have a daycare program which meets on Friday. We make referrals to that day care program. Some of our people that, uh, that we work with in various ways, whom we feel can benefit from the geriatric daycare program, we refer to the Jewish home and infirmary. So, without going into detail and spelling out various programs, I, I, I think it's important for the historians and whatever uh, whatever purpose this material is going to be used for, uh, to have it known that there is a good, working relationship between sister agencies.

I: Has there ever been a problem with overlap, you know, the two cases going to- one case going to two places or something like that?

B: Not, not in the Jewish community because generally the uh, the service required is fairly clear-cut. If somebody needs - Well, lemme, lemme uh think of an example. A Jewish tenant coming through the city who needs housing might go to the JCC, or he might go to a rabbi, and ask for help. Uh, the community's sophisticated enough at this point to know that that should be referred to the Jewish Family Service, so that there would not be an overlap, they would not handle that case. Once in a while a rabbi will handle a case on his own without referring to the Jewish Family Service, but by and large, uh, referrals are made. I think uh, we meet enough, formally and informally, to know what our functions are. We know the staff, although our staff changes, uh, to be aware of each other's duties and service.

I: Um. Does this agency deal with similar problems as a Christian family service would? I mean, are there specifically Jewish problems that you come up with, do you think?

B: Uh, by and large, human... psychological and emotional problems, like human bodies, physical problems, are pretty much the same. I mean, there are certain generic, basic, emotional problems: fears, insecurities, uh... marital difficulties. I, so that we, uh, you know, we don't differ tremendously in the general nature of problems. We have the same categories, we have the same kind of services: individual therapy, group therapy, family therapy, what have you. I would say that there are many...subtle and insidious differences though, among Jewish families uh, in terms of values, in terms of umm...uhh...well, primarily in terms of values and expectations. I think

Jewish parents, for example, and maybe the Gentile community, uh, has caught up, but up until recently, certainly, Jewish families have expected academic performance from kids. Uh, they have been less tolerant of poor school performances from kids. They've been more demanding of kids. This are things that I think that, uh, we see a great deal of in child-parent relationships that perhaps other agencies do not see. Uh there was a time when, in our marital counseling, and I think I mentioned this again earlier, when uh, the marital problems were reflected in rather...uh...hard to see or less visible kinds of symptoms. Such as silences and hidden angers and, uh, sabotaging one another, rather than the open, overt kinds of, uh, of symptoms like assault and, and infidelity and alcoholism and what have you. This kind of difference is disappearing rapidly as we become more and more assimilated and as we take on the, the uh, the benefits of assimilation and the uh, uh.... appearance anduh...I-I can't think of an appropriate word. But as we, we take on some of the, uh, American ways of life that have now become more available to us, we also take on some of the negative aspects, some of the, uh, pathological statistics if you will. So, so that I would say the marital counseling and the, uh, personal counseling problems that we deal with are very much similar to the other kinds of agency caseloads. But there is still a...uh...hidden, subtle, kind of umm...Jewish value and, and Jewish awareness and Jewish, uh, uniqueness, I think, in cases that come up that are difficult to, to, extract and explain at this point, but they're there.

I: I have a question about sch- You mentioned school achievement with children.

B: Yeah

I: I'm just curious about your opinion on something. Now, when parents were pushing kids to get good grades, I mean I know I was pushed and pushed and pushed. Do you think that that helped the kids? Or did it, did it....did it hinder them? Did it make kids want to study more? I mean, do you think there's a difference now if a parent is more understanding, quote on quote, of a child and will sort of ignore a bad grade or something like that, do you think that works for the benefit of the kids?

B: Uh, I think that anything that parents do in any specific area, is...effective or ineffective depending on the total relationship. Now if, if, parents have basically a very good relationship with their kid, they're fair with them, they're understanding, they're, they're structured, they're, they're consistent, about the way they handle them. I think kids can take a certain amount of pushing. They can see mom and dad mean business on this one area. They want good marks. And that- you know, they, they give us some flexibility in every other way, and they're loving. And they don't even have to pinpoint it, they just feel it in their bones that mom and dad are loving, good people. And they will perform, I think, and respond to some pushing, as long as it, it isn't extremely excessive. Anything excessive creates a problem.

I: Right

B: If the relationship is a pushing one right along, where parents are controlling, and parents are operating under the, the overused...uh...[chuckles] guise of "I mean it for your own good. I'm doing it for your own good" and "Do me a favor" and "Don't- Don't embarrass me" and "Don't- Don't make me angry". If they're doing it on that kind of a basis throughout their relationship,

whether it's uh, "Drink your glass of milk" or "Wear your rubbers" or "Go to bed on time" or "Don't go out with this girl" or "Don't go out with that boy". Uh, if it's a pervasive kind of thing where parents are controlling and, uh, create anger and hostility, then pushing for school is gonna be just one more thing. And what happens when you get that kind of control and it's, it's basically not a good relationship, kids will react, either directly or indirectly, and depending on...uh...on what they feel- or depending on their, on their, emotional and psychological development. Some kids will react in a very explosive...way. They'll bust everything in sight. Or they're swear and get angry at parents and they'll run away and they'll, they'll do all kinds of things. Other kids, uh, will react in a, in an indirect way. We get a lot of, uh, youngsters who are bed-wetters. And if, uh, this recording will pardon my expression, uh, these bed-wetters, after all physical, uh, possibilities have been ruled out are essentially saying to a domineering, uh, pushy mother, against whom an eight-year-old cannot fight back or he'll get pushed further, he we- wets the bed and is saying to his mother "piss on you". Because he can't say it in words, he has to say it in behavior, indirectly. So we find, kids find different ways of reacting. But if it's basically a good relationship, then, you know, we ca- kids can take a certain amount pushing, and sometimes even want some strong direction.

I: This made me think of, of another question. Which I also don't know how to phrase quite...well. But there's that stereotype of the pushy Jewish mama. Does she come into your agency? I mean, do you find that that is something sort of typically Jewish?

B: Um...Well, since we get mostly Jewish clients, we get some non-Jewish clients, it's hard to compare to a large extent and I- in talking with colleagues from other agencies, they seem to get

this kind of parent to. But we- yes, we do get some pushy parents who come in and uh in effect they're, they're saying- not in effect, they're actually saying. They bring nine-year-old Sammy in who's having a, a bad time in school and he's the bully of the neighborhood and they're saying "fix him, he, he's, he's driving me crazy." Ya know, "there's something wrong with him, fix him". So to that extent, they're extending their pushiness, their- as we talk with mama and, and the parents we find that Sammy is reflecting some of the control and pushiness and unfairness and inconsistency of the mother. And uh, part of our job is not fixing Sammy, but working with mama.

I: Do you think you're successful in the problems you deal with, by and large?

B: Well, uh, that question is asked of us an awful lot. And, and it's legitimately asked because a lot of money is spent in funding agencies like ours. And my answer is, uh, sounds like it's um...uh, kind of passing the buck or avoiding a direct answer, but I, I have to say it, it depends on what your definition of success is. If your definition of success is that somebody comes in with a lifelong problem who had...serious problems in his development, had serious deprivation in his, uh, bringing up, and uh, came into marriage with a lot of unfinished business, and married with expectations of uh, "at last I've going- I've found someone who understands me, who's gonna give me what I need" and unfortunately, probably, married someone who also is saying the same thing "at last I've found someone who's gonna give me all I need". Uh, your chances of having problems in this kind of a marriage are very great. And your chances of making these people, uh, quote "perfectly healthy and understanding and able to tolerate frustration" very limited. Now, uh, we're able to help people with problems like this in a limited way. Uh, what

I'm trying to say is that we do not see people and somehow magically in six or seven interviews, or maybe in a hundred interviews, uh, get them to the point where they lived happily ever after. Uh, because people continue to hold onto their ways of coping, but hopefully with different attitudes and with, with uh, better understanding and more precaution. And that they face problems in a, in a, little healthier way. But nevertheless, they still, they still, hang on to a general way of coping that they learned and that became part of their system as they grew up. Not everyone has serious, deprived backgrounds. People who come to us aren't all, uh, serious cases. They're people who, uh, who simply are not getting the fulfillment that they feel they'd like to have in their relationships either with a husband or a child or, or a boss or what have you. Um, and, uh, we're able to help people if they're motivated. We're able to help them to understand some of their behavior and make improvements in their way of coping. But uh- In that- If that's the definition of success then I'd say we're successful with a great number of cases. Uh, if it's total rehabilitation and uh, complete, healthy behavior, then our success is terrible
[both laugh]

I: Okay, um.... How- In what ways um, is the community chest related to this agency? You, you're funded by them, are you not?

B: Yeah, in a, in a big way

I: Right

B: Yeah they-

I: Can you just explain the-

B: Sure, sure, the chest is our, is our, uh, uh, our biggest provider of funds and, up until recently in fact, almost all of the money we received came from the chest outside of whatever income we generated from, from our investments and from fees. And both of which are relatively small percentages compared to the total budget. Uh, in recent years, because of the Russian refugee, uh, immigration, we've gotten, uh, quite a bit of money from the feder-, Jewish Community Federation and also since our development of a transportation program for the aging, which is funded from the Federation, and we're now approaching the Federation for, uh, Jewish family life education funds. But the chest, uh, is the funding agency with- The community chest in the last four or five years has been restructured and, uh, has a, a much larger representation on its board and corporation and allocation planning committees from the community which started when uh, Metro Act began to raise questions about the running of the chest and its representative uh...availability to the community. And since the arrival of Ted Moore, who's the- who's been a director for four or five years. Uh, because of lack- because of increasing limited funds, both from the government and from the- and therefore from the chest, uh the accountability and the management of agencies, uh, is under scrutiny much more than it ever has. And we have to prepare our budgets and memos very, very carefully and we have to account to a, a very...uh...well-trained and a very scrutinizing group of businesspeople and community people who, uh, throw some pretty good questions at us. So the chest, uh, is, uh, is a much more efficient operation I think and it's uh...it's very, very careful about not duplicating services. They're constantly reevaluating agencies and, uh, are constantly concerned about whether or not

agencies can, uh, be eliminated or reduced. They certainly are very, very careful about expansions, and this is one of the reasons why we have to get money from the Federation for new programs. The chest says "Fine, that's, that's very nice that you want a Jewish transportation for Jewish elderly, but uh, you'll have to find the money somewhere else" Yeah.

I: Umm, other than this past four or five years, this restructuring of the chest, what kinds of changes have you seen in the community chest and its relationship, not only to your agency, but to agencies in general, during your tenure here in Rochester?

B: Well actually, for a long, long time, prior to four or five years ago, it kind of went along on a, a pretty...even...keel. The chest was the funding body, the council of social agencies was the, uh, was the planning body. But only in theory, in, in actuality the council of social agencies did very little planning. And our meeting with the chest for funds was almost a, a cursory kind of brief meeting. Um, although the chest was very, very successful in its campaign, its board membership consisted of almost an inbred group of people, uh, who could afford the time to attend meetings and so on. They did not have adequate representation and really, uh, uh, my, my contact with the chest, up until about five or six years ago, was very limited. Other than, what I just had to do. I belonged to several committees, from the Council of Social Agencies and I was, you know, fairly active with that, with the CSA, but, uh, as far as the chest was concerned, uh, it was a, a fundraising group. Um, it was only about five years ago that- Well, I, I shouldn't say five, because when the riots started in '64...uh, was it '64 or '66?

I: '64

B: '64, yeah. Um, then the chest was being pushed and the Council of Social Agencies was being pushed to start looking into inner-city problems. And- so there was, there was a beginning change then, that, uh, I wasn't terribly aware of . I mean, I, I was aware of it, but I wasn't terribly involved. It's only in the last five or six years that we've really become more involved and I've seen big, big changes. The emphasis, uh, gradually, and continues at this point, has become, uh, to deal with problems of, of minority groups, inner-city groups, without ignoring some of the other groups, uh, because, uh, middle class people have problems too and have needs. But the emphasis for, uh, expenditures has been on- or certainly any new programs has been for inner-city groups.

I: Do you fi- Other than new programs, which you mentioned they cannot fund or will not fund, do you find the chest adequately funds the Jewish Family Service?

B: Well, I, I, ya know, I don't think any agency director would ever feel that they're adequately funded [both laugh]. I would, uh, we could use another worker. The casework director and I carry cases. The casework director here carries many, too many, cases, which cuts down on um, whatever else she has to do or it forces her to do- to work longer than she should be working: overtime and what have you. Uh, we could use another worker and the chest simply can't fund this for us. So yes, I, I think, well, I say yes, I think uh, the chest funds us as adequately as it realistically can in terms of the limited...philanthropic...contributions that they can expect in the community. And, and Rochester does a tremendous job. They raised over 15 million dollars last year, which is, uh, tremendous for a community our size. And uh, and you know, the demands on

them are tremendous. I'd hate to be on their allocations community. They are besieged from all sides and they have to make choices, so I can understand their problems.

I: Do you get any New York State or Federal funding?

B: Uh...well we got Federal funding when we, we settled the Vietnamese... uh... we could get Federal funding for transportation if we moved into a nonsectarian program.

I: ...Oh I see...

B: If we became a transportation service for... uh... non-Jews as well as Jews then we might be eligible for a Federal grant. But... um... we didn't feel that we wanted to get into a... a total transportation program... uh... we're not in this transportation program because we feel that's a... a... a very priority project for a Jewish Family Service. We are in it because we feel that the Jewish elderly of Rochester need transportation for various services that will keep them in the community...like medical, shopping, recreation, what have you...

I: Mhm

B: ...uh for people who otherwise would be homebound. So we're in it because of that and we want to serve the Jewish community and there, therefore we need Jewish money.

I: I see. So...I mean... Federal input would be that you can no longer run just Jewish programs.

B: Right we'd have to... we'd have to... uh... be able to serve the general community. The same thing is true about a home [inaudible] service. Uh we, we could possibly get money for a home [inaudible] service. But it would have to be a nonsectarian home [inaudible] service.

I: Does the community chest have any input to what you do? I mean other than this you know cut off of new programs...

B: Uh... no we're autonomous or at least theoretically we're autonomous. We have our own board and our board makes its own decisions on...on personal and on programs and... uh... and... uh financial management.... uh... no the chest doesn't have any input in the running of our agencies directly. Indirectly of course it does in terms of because funds are very much related to what you're doing. If they don't... if they don't go along with a program or if they don't give us a worker that we think we need then it affects programs... uh... but they... they don't have any direct involvement in the operations of our programs. Now I mentioned... uh... that they are evaluating agencies... uh... we did our own internal evaluation... uh last... this past year in our long range planning committee will be reviewing the total plannings of that internal evaluation. We did it in anticipation of a chest evaluation some time in the future we don't know when it will be. But they're taking 5 or 6 agencies at a time...

I: mhm

B: ...and so... uh that I suppose not even indirectly I suppose directly...covers some involvement from the chest. Because they not only do an evaluation, they make recommendations. But...

I: Are there Jews on the board of the chest?

B: Yes there are... there are... uh... now several Jewish people on the board. Uh people who have been active in the Jewish community usually you'd find it's the busy person who gets involved in other... in other activities... but... um... uh for a long time there were very few Jewish people on the board. I... I would say there are probably 10 or 12 Jewish people either on the board or the corporation.

I: But this is... this is more recent then?

B: This is only in the last couple of years. Yeah.

I: Has there been a difference in their attitude towards the Family Service when there were Jews on the board and, and before when there weren't or were less?

[In the next two lines I and B are speaking simultaneously]

B: A difference the attitude of whom, of the chest-

I: Or fewer- I, I mean of the,

I: of the chest to, to funding you?

B: Uh... no... no I... I at least I haven't noticed any visible difference ... uh I ...let me say this that the... uh... our meetings with the chest up to this point have been really good ... uh...they are scrutinizing, they ask good question and they... uh... they're very... uh... business like but they've been very fair and... uh... even though I implied and I think I said that we are not funded as much as we'd like to be... uh... we'd always had very good relationships with them and our budgets have been pretty trimmed before we go in and so any... any cut in our budget has been really small and pretty much what we would expect to be cut. So... uh... and to answer your question I haven't noticed anything different between the... I'd like to mention something as long as we're talking about chest and we talked about horizontal relationships with Jewish agencies...uh... we also of course have relationships with nonsectarian agencies, particularly our... uh... the other family agencies and we meet regularly with the other directors... uh... and staff. We have institutes together on you know family counseling and... uh... and family therapy. We sit down and discuss mutual kinds of problems and... uh... we belong to the state associations together. We have... uh... long-range planning committees that meet together on various mutual problems. And we also about 6 or 7 years ago or maybe longer... uh... we started what was called a tri-agency branch...uh out in Henrietta and... uh it was not a merger. It was a ...it was a tri-agency operation which involved a worker from each Family Service...uh... to... uh complete the staff: three professionals and then Catholic Family Center was responsible for the administration of the office in terms of secretarial help and the office supplies and rent and so on...uh... there was an advisory committee in from Henrietta picked from interested people who acted as a board, although it was not a board but the boards were the home boards of the home

agency and the policies were established by the home boards...uh... it worked reas... quite well. I shouldn't say reasonably well. It worked quite well for... for some time... uh... but it was... uh... it was a cumbersome operation because... uh... there... there were various differences that cropped up every once in a while that caused some problems...we had different holidays [laugh], we... uh...salaries were different of course. The salaries were paid by the home agencies... uh... certain policies were a little bit different. We... Jewish Family Service policy on abortion was different from Catholic Family Center... uh... so there were little differences that cropped up that created some problems and then... uh... eventually... uh... the management supervision became a problem. We kinda felt that if a supervisor from Jewish Family Service supervised the whole group, then the operation would be considered a Jewish family operation. And... uh... conversely, whatever agency provided the supervisor...so supervision was... uh... worker to home office and... uh... sometimes it wasn't consistent with the other worker to home office. And eventually... uh... it... uh... when a new director at family service came two years ago, he made a push for... uh... not closing the office because the office was doing a lot of a lot of work and they had a big case load and the need was there. But he was for changing the structure and... and either having one agency operate that office or... uh... or he would pull out of it. And there was a lot of talk back and forth we were kinda reluctant to let it go and the chest was reluctant too but they felt that this was a good model for joint operations but it kinda fizzled out and so Family Service is now running the...

I: Is there a specifically black Family Service in Rochester?

B: No... no. Catholic Family Center and Family Service have black workers on their staff...uh... Urban League of course is essentially a black agency and they do some family counseling although it's not primarily a... a family counseling agency... uh... Action For Better Community is a broad total social agency, which... uh... has a variety of concrete services as well as counseling services. But they're not traditionally uh quote high [inaudible] intensive family counseling agency. But maybe they're... uh they... they shouldn't be... uh they're probably... ABC and Urban League are probably better equipped with indigenous people on their staff to deal with the neighborhood people who have problems that agencies like ours wouldn't understand... that's all. Regardless of training. Ya know, somebody who's hungry or somebody who has certain sexual acting out in...in his particular culture ...uh... is not gonna sit and listen to my values that I would hope not to impose, but nevertheless it would come through.

I: Ok. Um. What sorts of changes have you seen in Rochester over the past x number of [switch to 2b] years both personally as a Jew and also with the agency?

B: Alright...well... in Rochester and as a Jew, first of all I imagine you heard this from... uh... 83 other people... uh... the... the city has... uh... lost population. The city... uh... has changed in... in... in the type of population... uh... so that... uh... where Jews once lived, Blacks and Puerto Ricans now live.... Uh... I historically... I guess we operate in concentric circles around the railroad track I learned in sociology way back [laughter] in Iowa. And... uh... different groups in and and... and inhabit the different circles you know and different decades...uh... what I've seen in the last 25 years has been a gradual and then almost total withdrawal from the city of Jews into suburban areas, mostly Brighton, Pittsford. There's a substantial Jewish

community in Irondequoit, which is getting smaller I think...uh... there is still some Jewish population in the northern part of the city... uh... a geriatric Jewish population because...uh...senior citizen housing is essentially in that area so you... you still have that group there. And then you also have some older people living in their own homes who are reluctant to leave and are holding out until they absolutely have to leave and I can attest to that by my own parents... I think I mentioned that earlier...um...I have seen changes again previously mentioned... uh... and the accessibility to Jews of various facets of the community: recreational, facilities are more accessible and available... such as, country clubs and... uh and other eating places and what have you...university certainly are much more accessible without quotes that once existed when I was in school... about to go to school... uh residential areas are much more available...um... I've seen Jews... uh... getting into prominent positions in the general as well as Jewish community in the business world in... in manufacturing and even in banking to some extent. So, there's been an increase in mobility and accessibility for the Jews and... and... uh... for professionally trained and.... uh and even for you know skilled mechanically skilled people...um... but, as I pointed out before you can't have one without the other. So when you take on the good features you also somehow take on the negative features. And I think by having achieved all of these goodies we've also probably lost some of the family strengthening characteristics that once Jews were noted for... And still are, statistically we're still ahead but we're losing ground and [laugh] our statistics [inaudible] out and... uh... we don't need our statistics we can just talk to neighbors and read papers and magazines and books and we know that that we begun to take on the living habits of our Gentile neighbors. So, I've seen these things happening and ...uh... I think I've mentioned also changes in temple memberships... uh... once... uh... reform temples that were exclusively made up of German background are

now...an-and German... uh... reform backgrounds are now made up of ... uh... people whose parents and grandparents were orthodox and Eastern European. So, there have been changes in this area. And of course there have been changes in the... in the orientation and in the general religious developments...so that there has been kind of a almost middle meeting ground of... it's almost like...um...like...political parties...there are some parts of the democratic party which could be republican...there could be republicans... it could be democrats just as easily because there is very little difference in philosophy and I think... uh... you know basically there... there are lots of areas where conservative and reform are very much the same. So, there have been changes like this that certainly...they were much more delineated when I was a kid.

I: Mhm

B: Families...are... family relationships. Well... we...these are... I think this is something that's generic and general but it's unfortunately true for Jewish families as well that because of the mobility because of the instant visibility that we have in terms of television, satellite and what have you...uh...that we're part of the general stream of society. So...uh...family structure among Jews as well as others ...uh...is kinda broken down.

I: Hm.

B: And uh...these are...these are the sad things that I've noticed...that we've all noticed...that we're concerned about...and I supposed this very...uh... this very oral history is related and geared to the same end that... uh... that well what I'm talking about what we're all talking about

and that is our concern for somehow ...uh... stop... stopping the chipping away of Jewish life, of Jewishness.

I: mhm

B: ...not bringing it back to the 1890s because we can't do that and we don't want to do that but somehow learning to... to use what we have and... uh... in a constructive way so that we don't lose the baby with the bath water.

I: Mhm. How has ...um...how has the Family Service stuff changed over the years...other...well...you mentioned at our initial interview the increasing professionalization...[B begins to interrupt]...has that been the sort of dominant change do you think?

B: Well the... yes the increasing professionalization and also I... I can't remember whether I mentioned along with that the types of case load...that...we had ..uh... because years ago the primary...uh... applicant to a Jewish welfare agency was welfare. And charity and... uh ... this is the... the thing that kept many people away from Jewish social services and Jewish Family Services for a long time until it became sophisticated to the fact that the... uh... to get counseling help with no crime and that it wasn't related to charity. Many people stayed away because to be seen here was identifiable with getting concrete services. I would say the biggest change has been a shift from exclusive...exclusively concrete services like providing...a breadbasket or a food basket and a ton of coal and... uh... a placement for a child from... from

parents were either were divorced or unemployed or and for whom there was no social legislation to take care of their poverty...uh...and uh...uh...social workers coming around and snooping in the ice boxes...and...and what have you...shifted to uh...not exclusively a counseling agency but at least but at least an agency where counseling is the predominate service...

I: What...we...we...we did discuss

B: We did discuss that yeah...

I: Yeah...what kind of a future do you see for the Roches...just throwing you a loop I guess [laughter]...what sort of a future do you see for the Rochester Jewish community?

B: Well I... I'm a native Rochesterian. And...uh...uh...maybe I'm um...I'm overly proud of it... uh...but having been here as a... uh... as uh citizen and also being here as a professional social worker...uh where I know...through which I've learned... uh that... uh that the Jewish community has been tremendous force and has been a very... uh... strongly identified group of people...hard workers...of... of contributors and what have you...I have very strong positive feelings about the future of Rochesterian...I think...I think that...uh...for a long time we had beautiful leadership among Jewish...uh...members of our community and... uh for a while there was a concern and a question of how are we gonna replace a Joe Goldstein or a Joe Silverstein or... uh Manny Hauffman...thank goodness they're still with us...we've lost many good people. But they themselves were the ones who were instrumental in helping the federation develop in

leadership training program. And we've developed some real top-notch people so that... uh there's a continuum...and I... I have strong positive feelings...and hopes...

I: So you think the new...the new leadership with be...

B: ...will be effective...

I: ...up to the task...

B: ...and...and I think they'll be identified. They come from different backgrounds and different experiences let's put it that way so that they're identified in a different kind of way but I think that there's strong identification and I think Israel is the ...is the cementing, unifying force and you know with the commissions going to Israel and with the literature and information that is available to everybody and the first hand... uh... contact with Israel our leadership is... uh... sincerely and genuinely and honestly identified with Israel and... uh... and with Jewish survival. So, I have no worries about it.

I: [Coughing]...Excuse me...well unless you can think of anything else...um...I'd like to...

B: We, we've done it...[laughter]

I: I'd like to thank you very much for participating.

B: You're very welcome.