

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

Interviewee Herman Bieber

Interviewer Dennis B. Klein

Date(s) of interview July 14, 1976 (2 tapes)

Setting (place of interview, people present, impressions)

We met at Mr. Bieber's apartment at Clover and East Av. His place has many fine and rare reproductions of impressionist painting, a point of pleasant discussion before the interview began. At the end of the second tape, Mrs. Herman Bieber came into the room and offered her opinions on the subject of restricted neighborhoods and anti-Semitism at the Gannett papers where she worked.

Background of interviewee

Mr. Bieber was born in the Bronx in 1901. While still in college he pursued business interests, becoming involved in celluloid. He moved to Rochester in the late 1920s, working first with his brothers in clothing, and then with the Feinblooms and the Champion knitwear co. From 1927 to the present he helped the company grow into a multi-million business, and was active in sales and management. Though his work took him away from the local area for much of the year, Mr. Bieber became involved in Beth-El, the JY, and the almost exclusively Jewish Ironduoit Country club.

Interview abstract

Due to keen insights and experience with one of Rochester's most profitable businesses, the interview offers valuable information about Jewish life both in business and as an experience. His acquaintance with the New York City area provides an interesting contrast with the local area, revealing the relatively small incidence of anti-Semitism, the centers of Jewish life, and the nature of business development in Rochester.

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Interview loc

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Q This is Dennis Klein talking on July 14, 1976 with Mr. Herman Bieber at his home and this is tape #1 side A. I thought we would begin just with your background to get an idea of who you are, who we're talking with, you can tell us where you were born when you came to Rochester. Kind of fill us in that way.

A Well, I was born in the Bronx in New York City in 1901, and as a child I was one year old when we moved to Brooklyn and I spent the rest of my time in New York City in Brooklyn before, that is before emigrating to Rochester in 1924 or 1925, 26. The dates are really a little hazy there. Do you want to know something about my education, my background?

Q Yea, why don't you a?

A I went to grammar school in Brooklyn, I went to Boys High School in Brooklyn, graduated from Boys High School and then spent a couple of years at NYU on an engineering scholarship and that didn't a, that um started in the 1918 at the end of the world war, First World War.

Q Um.

A I was one of eight children, I had four brothers and three sisters, I was the next to the youngest in the family. We were always, in fact it might be interesting to know that we were - we lived - we moved from Berlpark before there was a Shul or Synagogue in Berpark. Now you wouldn't believe that possible, would ya?

Q In Berlpark. I don't know that area.

A That's a very, very strong Jewish City and our family has always identified with one of the synagogues there until we moved to Flatbush in 1910, oh about 1910, 1911 before the First World War, infact, there were no synagogues in Brooklyn at all then. We used to traipse from Flatbush . . .

Q I had no idea it was that way.

A Yea, We moved from Flatbush to . . on the holidays, walked from Flatbush to Berlpark to the synagogue on the major holidays. Some of our neighbors walked

with us, one of whom was Rabbi Halpern he was an outstanding Rabbi in Flatbush. He was the first Rabbi at the Jewish Community Center, Communal Center in Flatbush and then he became the Rabbi of the East Medwood Center when that was built, but this all followed. I would say that he must of started his term in the rabbinate about 1917, but that's Brooklyn and you're not concerned with that, but he became one of the Professors at the Theological Seminary.

Q What was his first name?

A Rabbi Harry Helpern. He had a brother who was a Rabbi in Long Island, Peter Helpern who applied for a job for the position of the Rabbi at the Temple Beth El when Rabbi Rosenberg left. That was before Rabbi Fischer took the office at temple Beth El. But when I came to Rochester to set up with my brother here, he was in the clothing business and I went in the clothing with him in 1927.

Q Allright and after that? You can give us kind of a sketch, we'll go back to these points.

A After that I left. Well he didn't have his mind on the business. He was a clothing man he went back to New York and so I teamed up with a group of men known as the . . . named Feinbloom who were the head men so to speak of the Champion Knitwear Company, which manufactured sweaters for the school trades and I started with them in 1927-28 the fall of 27, and I was with them until 1971 when I retired. I was with them 43 years, then remained as a consultant for a couple years until 72-73 and I have been retired ever since.

Q Where did you move to when you came to Rochester? What area of the City?

A I lived with my brother for a year or so and lived in downtown hotels. I lived at the Seneca, I lived at the Cadillac, I lived with a couple of unmarried men, in different hotels and private homes, but we just rented rooms you see.

Q All downtown?

A Yea, but I traveled you see. When I became affiliated with Champion I traveled and spent not less than eight months a year until I was married in 1941. I traveled by automobile and plane from Maine to Florida.

Q So you did a lot of traveling all during that period?

A Most of my time up to the middle sixties from twenty-seven on. I would say I spent at least I mean I was a member of the Country Club and I didn't get married until 1941 and up to that time I spent at least 80-85% of the time on the road, we traveled. I left in January, went home for the summer in about the early part of June, then left again in September. In that period I was a member of the Irondequoit Country Club and so I played golf and had a good time, to build up my resources, my energies you know for the harrowing. . .harrowing. . .

Q I bet that was harrowing.

A What traveling?

Q Yea.

A It was the greatest.

Q You liked it?

A Well, I tell ya, I traveled all those years you know, from 1927 until almost, well even after I was married, I spent at least six months on the road. Then I left my bed and board, my family, my wife, my son was born in 1945, that was the only challenge he had. My wife was a newspaper woman, we married in like I said 1941. She was with the Gannett Papers, secretary to the controller of the Gannett Paper.

Q Here in Rochester?

A Yes.

Q Ok, how long did you live in the downtown area? When did you move out of the hotels?

A When I was married.

Q In 1941?

A In 1941. But I moved to Monroe Avenue in the Westminster Apartments.

Q Ok, and after that?

A We lived at the Westminster Apartments for about three four years and then bought a home on Oakdale Drive which was sold three years ago.

Q I see so you were there for a number of years?

A Yes, many years. All our affiliation at that time, infact I joined the Temple even before I was married, I joined the Temple when I came to, oh I would say about 1930 or even earlier, I joined Temple Beth El and I have been a member I would say give or take a year or so about 1928. I think I'm positive I joined and I will have been a member of Temple Beth El at least 50 years this year or next year. That was of course when it was on Knight Street before the whole operation moved to Winton Road.

Q I wanted to, before we get into Rochester....

A What interest is there to you of my backround as far as my comercial backround?

Q What interest is that to us? Allright, I mean there is a number of dimensions here I think we can explore. One is the development of Champion Knitwear as far as your connection with it was concerned in Rochester. I think thats of interest for us just to get a feeling about the business community of Rochester.

A Yea, well I'll give you that. Now I was affiliated with Abe and Bill Feinbloom, they were the founders of the company after their father died. They manufactured sweaters and lines in New York, and I became affiliated with them in 1927, the fall of 27 and purely the capacity of salesmen. Infact, both of the Feinblooms, one was president, and the other was vice president, treasurer and secretary. They spent more time on the road than they did in their offices here. They were salesmen, both of them. It was a selling organization.

Q They were located in New York?

A They were located right here in Rochester.

Q Not in New York. The center was in Rochester?

A Rochester, yea. We sold to schools and colleges. We sold them athletic knitgoods, sportswear, sweaters, schoolwear?, teeshirts, sweatshirts, football jersey's. In fact, we became established as one of the biggest provayers of that type of merch-

andise in the school and college trade, schools and colleges, camps, national organizations.

Q That's a big business there?

A Oh yea. We started from a very small beginning. We started with the military schools, then we went to the colleges, then the high schools. We made all forms of athletic equipment for the athletic departments of the schools and for the college bookstores, and that sort of thing. All the imprinted teeshirts and sweatshirts. We were the originaters of that type of ... we were the first people to print and flock as they call it. Teeshirts and sweatshirts with emblematic designs.

Q Of any sort?

A Any college any school.

Q Oh wow. We take those for granted today.

A We were the originators of that. Bill Feinbloom had the patent.

Q Is that right? When did Champion Knitwear Company begin in Rochester?

A In 19.... About 19.... Our 50th was 1924 I think. Well they were wholesale sweater distributors and manufactured a few sweaters in Lines in New York where they had a factory.

Q They did have a factory in New York?

A In Lines, which is right outside.

Q Oh, I see, when you say New York you mean New York State?

A We started on Andrews and Water Street in a small store there on the corner. Did a little retail business, not to much.

Q This was 1924?

A About 19..... Well my affiliation with them started 1927, but they had been in the business about five or six years before that.

Q OK, so you didn't begin with them?

A I began with them, but when I started with them we spread out to a greater degree. We were only two men on the road, Bill and Abe and then I joined the Company.

They had another man who stayed for a very short time. Then we got another man named Sam Freidland, a Rochesterian, who started in the following fall. Between four or five of us we covered the entire United States.

Q That's a lot of traveling. You were divided up into regions?

A That's right. Well, we overlapped a little bit.

Q What region were you in?

A I worked Maine to Florida, the entire East Coast.

Q East Coast, that's a very lucrative part of the country?

A Well, there were more schools in Pennsylvania though and all I did was just go right from Philadelphia.

Q I see.

A Pennsylvania to Ohio had more colleges than the rest of the country put together at that time.

Q Is that right?

A Well, not that I'm exaggerating. New England had a very condensed population and they had a lot of colleges, they had a lot of preparatory schools. Their schools were well founded. They had good school systems in Boston and the bigger city of providence, Rhode Island and New Haven, Hartford Connecticut, Springfield Massachusetts, and down to New York City. I didn't do much business in New York City, it was to big an area, but I did cover the major colleges, Columbia, CCNY, NYU, Westpoint, that's all I did in New York City. Then I went into Jersey headed down through Princeton Rutgers, a few schools, a few preparatory schools. Then into Maryland and I hit the high spots.

Q Right.

A I hit the high spots and then went from Philadelphia, into Delaware and Maryland, District of Columbia, I spent a lot of time in Washington. Then headed down through Virginia (the Eastern part of Virginia), a little East of Richmond. Then headed

down to the Carolinas, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida.

Q Well that's a big sweep.

A Yea, it is being away. As I said from January and sometimes I would make a trip and a half. One trip in the spring. Winter and Spring through New England right down to Florida.

Q O.K.

A And start again in the fall.

Q Let me ask you about the ...

A This Company ... I remember when we were doing \$100,000 worth of business a year, which is fantastic.

Q How Much?

A \$100,000

Q That's Net?

A No, that's sales.

Q Right.

A For a few years. Then there was a gradual development until....

Q That was a very good beginning, wasn't it?

A Yea, until we had some men who did \$100,000,000 a year.

Q Whistle....

A Me myself, individually.

Q You're kidding?

A Sure.

Q You yourself had....

A Gross sales, yea.

Q That's impressive. I think that's impressive. Now was this on a commission?

A Purely.

Q Purely.

A Never worked for a salery.

Q Even from the beginning? So, it can turn out to be a fairly nice....

A It was a very lucrative.

Q Lucrative way to a....

A We paid all our own expenses and we were paid a commission.

Q Now, the volume, you said the gross was \$100,000 in the beginning, what would you estimate it at today?

A Today, it was \$65,000,000 in 19 hundred and \$65,000,000. And now where I travel that from Maine to Florida, there are about 35 men that cover and there are more being put on.

Q Boy, I'll say it's growing, there's no question about it.

A Today there are 95 men from Maine to Florida, then we have distributing points. We have a factory in Perry, New York, that's where we did all are knitting. Perry New York, that's right out 40 miles south of here.

Q Oh yea.

A Livonia and Geneseo had three factories. We did no manufacturing here in Rochester at all except for one contract.

Q Why wasn't there manufacturing here in Rochester?

A Well, for various reasons. We had better labor outside. The type of labor they used here was clothing labor. It was skilled clothing labor, we didn't need that, we got these farmer ladies who would sew on a machine and that's all they had to do is follow certain well-to-find patterns.

Q I understand what you're saying. In other words, had you stayed in Rochester....

A We had better labor and that's labor problems in "The hinterlands".

Q That's the relationship with labor was.....

A Very good, always have been very good. Infact, they're not even unionized.

Q Well, that's interesting because.....

A We make that very, very high, relationship. Then we bought a factory a few years ago in Norwidge, New York, the Norwidge Knitting Company. We bought them out. Then we had, they had factories in North Carolina, three factories, which we have now, more modern than the one in Norwidge. That was a big company. Then we have a distributing point in Grasspass, Origon was the first big factory we opened out of to cover the North West Area. Then we have a factory in Arizona and in Iowa.

Q Has there ever been any labor problems in the years.

A No, we always maintained, the same as Kodak. I mean we've given them more I think than they... Oh they've tried to unionize.

Q At Kodak?

A They've tried to unionize us, but they weren't successful, they were out of vote??? couldn't understand There wouldn't have been any advantage other than the fact that, I mean if unionization became general, you see, it would be to the advantage of the company. But we maintained good relationships with the labor.

Q So you have been able to maintain good relations?

A Yea.

Q Never any disatisfactions or ? (They were talking over each other).

A No.

Q Now, Kodak has been able to remain in the city and yet avoid the problems of labor and union?

A Well, I mean the union, there's no... Why should they pay union dues for something the company gives them.

Q Why couldn't you maintain that philosophy and open a factory, for example in Rochester?

A Well, then you've got people who are, who are, have been indoctrinated into union.

A You see, the union has been so strong in the clothing industry here in Rochester. I mean, without the union, there wouldn't be any clothing industry. The union maintained, kept several factories going. The union the amalgamated has been a, they have been a benificent, they haven't been despotic, but they have done a lot. Unfortunately, at the present time, the clothing business is deteriorating to the point that the union suffers a good deal, but since they've had such a good strong background, the old union, as such is hanging on here, you might say. I think they are. Because what have you got, you've got Hickey's, you've got Micheal's, and you've got Bonds, and you've got uh..... Who's left besides them?

Q What about National?

A Well I'm talking about, that's a retail. I'm talking about the manufacturers. I don't know how many, how many Jews? About 30,000 Jews? I would venture that at least 10 or 15,000 were clothing workers, up to a few years ago.

Q Is that right? That high a percentage?

A I think so.

Q What about in your, Champion Knitwear? Was there a high percentage of Jews involved?

A Well, we were basically the, all the _____ of the company were Jewish with one acception up to a certain few years, when the company expanded the, well lets see, Mr. Joe Fox who is the President of the company now is not Jewish, Ed Lipsky the Executive Vice President is not Jewish, I would say that the sales department has a greater percent of Jews, about 50%. But administration, the key spots, it's about 50/50.

Q When it started it was all Jewish?

A All Jewish.

Q On the managerial level?

A On the managerial level.

Q What about the labor? I would assume that it wouldn't be so high because you were outside the city.

A No, very small percentage of Jewish. They were all farming personnel or Italians who lived in Geneseo. It was very strong in Italian. We bought a factory from Hickock in Lavonia, and they have mostly Italian labors there, you see, and we took over a lot of them because they were needle workers and that sort of thing. In Perry, there is about 99% Gentile. Geneseo is the same way.

Q Were you ever sensitive to the Jewish-non-Jewish dimensions of this.

A In our business, no. Because I dealt with 98% percent of the time with non-Jews. I didn't have a half of dozen customers in the athletic end that were Jewish. Benny Freidman for instance, he was I knew, and a few of these teachers and some of the coaches in the metropolitan area. But outside of that, no. Washington D.C. yes, a few here and a few there. But I would say that 95% of my clientele were gential in the athletic. In the bookstore business I had a few more Jewish, at the University and Highschool level, teachers, you see. But not in the athletic department. Which would be normal.

Q I guess it's interesting the way it breaks down. Where Jews get into and where they don't, you know?

A Yea.

Q Now, in Champion Knitwear, it really started off with the Feinblooms and then you told me you came into the organization, and another numbers of other Jews, and it kind of happened that way?

A That's right.

Q Is there any explanation as to why it happened that way, which is to say, why it attracted Jews into the managerial level of the company?

A Only because of frindships and associations, that's all.

Q Right, and also because I would think that there was a very large Jewish proposition in Jewish clothing generally.

A Yea, well I mean we had half a dozen of the mid-executive level of young people who were not Jewish. The bookkeeper presently, the general manager - the internal manager was a Gentile boy. These are boys that came right out of Catholic schools. And salesmen, well I mean we pick salesmen in various areas and it's just a matter of whom we had association whether they were Jewish or non-Jewish. I would say that up to a few years ago it was about 50-50 proportion of Jew and Gentile on the sales force. Primarily we manufactured 60-65% of the products we sold, but um the um, up to lets say about I'd say Champion up to about 15 years ago had 50-50 percentative Jew and Gentile salesmen. But today the percentative of the Gentile salesman is greater than the Jewish, it swung that way.

Q I see.

A When you got more administration than you. . . There was a proportion that a. . . movement there on the sales level.

Q In other words the administration would tend to hire. . . .

A No, no there was just a question, there wasn't that much effort: . . . aaaaaa. . . they went out into the area, they bought, they hired salesmen from orginiz. . . . sales a, oh the people, you know the a outlets or the people through them you seek, get positions, you know what I mean the um....

Q Do you mean manpower?

A Manpower organizations, yea.

Q OK, I am not exactly clear on that point.

A We would establish contacts with customers and take them into the organization selling. Coaches that wanted to sell. A lot of atheletes, because of the type of business who were taken into the sales force.

Q Yea, I guess the basis of my question is what relationship was there between the administration and sales so that um.....

A Always good.

Q Yea.

A Always good. There never was any, oh there might of been a few little incidents where the racial question, question came up. I've never experienced it anywhere. Bill Feinbloom died about 16 years ago and Abe Feinbloom took over the company. Became president, his son became vice-president, he has a son Harold Feinbloom, very active in the UJA. Joe fox is the president as I said, Harold Feinbloom is vice-president and secretary. Abe Feinbloom was President was president and treasurer.

Q Let me um....

A Now as of July 20, there will be a meeting of stockholders of Champion. It went public oh about 15-18 years ago, and it became Champion Products Company instead of Champion Knitwear because we sold more knitwear products, but when you are a public corporation you have got to make your name appealing to the general public, strictly the analysts, financial companies, and brokerage houses who are looking to sell your stock you see, and Knitwear was not to popular when we went public. Many of the mills were just about getting along, southern mills particularly where most of the stuff was being manufactured. So we called ourselves Champion Products, because we had other products than knitgoods and knitwear. On July 20 there will be a meeting of the stockholders of the Champion Products. I think there are several thousand stockholders, and they are going to vote on whether or not they will merge with a Company called the Jostens Company of Minneapolis. They are in the jewelry and affiliated school business, they sell school rings and industrial jewelry, this is one of their products. Now Champion does a business of 65 million and Jostens does a business of 116 some odd million, so in 1976 if the merger is effective by the approval of the stockholders then Champion will be a division of the Jostens Company.

Q Are they a big corporation?

A Yes, Abe Feinbloom is about ready to step out of chairman of the board and the company will be taken into the Jostens Corporation.

Q That looks like a fairly old watch.

A Yes it is, solid gold? No I don't think it is.

Q No, fairly old.

A No.

Q Oh, its not.

A I got that last year at the sales meeting.

Q Oh, well it has a tint to it. Laughter.

A You mean, what do they call it, patina?

Q Yea, right.

Q Um....

A Well that's the story of Champion.

Q Well if I may, you came to Rochester and you started in sales is that right?

A Yea, I was in the clothing business first, with my brother for a little more than a year.

Q I'll ask you about that in one second. When you came to the Champion Knitwear Company you started in sales.

A That's right.

Q And you stayed in sales through, I think you said the sixties.

A I became vice-president of sales, in 19. . . . about four years before I retired, about 66.

Q That was your first promotion in the company?

A Yea. I wasn't interested in titles, I was making money. I didn't want to be bothered with administrative duties.

Q OK, but you seem to know the administration fairly well.

A Oh yes because when we started we did everything, we designed, we cut, we created styles as well as selling. In fact in the summer we'd ship and we would role up

our sleeves and get the merchandise out because the nature of the business was such we started to take orders in January or even November of the previous year for shipment. In the spring more for school opening. You see. That meant in July or August when I spent alot of time here, we had to get the stuff out, so I'd go to the factories and help on production or shipping.

Q So when you speak in we, because alot of times you speak in the we.....

A Yea, well I am refering to some of the other men too.

Q I mean you are really speaking on the managerial level and not. . . .

A Well I was sort of a . . . yes, but I didn't have any title, but I was on the managerial level as well as the salesmen.

Q As well as sales?

A Yea sure, I trained new salesmen. I put men in certain areas and they in time sold more stuff than I did.

Q OK, so in effect you were very much a part of the growth of this company.

A Oh yes, I was very (slurred) infact, I was a stockholder, only before we became public.

Q Oh I see.

A Before we became public,we had,there were two men Sam Freidland and I were the only we had a the expression we had a piece of the company.

Q OK

A We bought into it.

Q You yourself had a fairly sizable piece?

A Yea.

Q From the start?

A Yea.

Q OK.

A Then the two Feinbloom brothers had the rest.

Q So there were really four people who had. . . .

A Yea, they were much larger holders than we were.

Q Right. I assume that you didn't have more than 50%?

A Oh no, no.

Q Right.

A Nobody had more than 50%

Laughter

Q Well you need that.

A When we went public, it was a fall for us and for all the original stockholders because for every share of stock we had, we got that many more, you know, when the stock was sold to the public.

Q When did you go public?

A Champion went public about 15 years ago.

Q What's the reason for a company going public?

A Going public?

Q Yea.

A Well, a company goes public and you are selling your birthright, because if you have a company that's personally held by two or three people, a partnership or in this case, Champion, the two Feinbloom brothers and myself and Sam Freidland, see we had all the stock in the company. It was privately held, it's a privately owned corporation, ya see.

Q Yes.

A And when you go public, you lose your birthright, you don't own the company. For instance, Champion had 800 and some odd shares of stock of which a little more than 50% was held by the Feinbloom's and ourselves.

Q I see.

A Then the Feinbloom trust took over the Feinbloom holdings you see, when Bill Feinbloom died you see. (Transcriber's note: This sentence is very slurred and might not be transcribed accurately).

A Now the rest of it is sold to the public, so the public, you buy Champion stock, you were a stockholder in the company. . .

Q You own part of the company?

A That's right, and at the stockholder's meeting you have the say, the SEC restricts your activities, there are things that you can't do, there are things that you must do in order to conform to the rules and regulations in the Security Exchange Commission.

Q Like any public institution.

A Oh yea, you don't flim-flam like a lot of these boys have, like (slurred) mentioned a few others, ya know.

Q Right.

A You can't falsify records, you've got to . . .

Q That's a good example.

A You've got to have your regular directors meetings, you see, and the board of directors run the company, and the president is responsible for the board of directors and all the officers are not only liable but they're accountable.

Q Right.

A You're protecting -- this is how the interest of the investing public is protected.

Q So what's the advantage of going public?

A Well, you don't have to -- you're not playing with your own money. You know what I mean?

Q Right.

A Then you finance with public money or money that you borrow from the banks.

Q And more money to deal with too, it seems?

A Oh sure.

Q Because of the investments that are made by the . . .

A That's right. You've got factories, you've got to have money, where that money comes from.

Q You have to have the capital.

Q Ok, so you decided to, around 1960, to take a step and expand a bit, essentially.

A Yea, you can expand because you have more money to expand with.

Q Right. What about . . .

A And when the public stops investing in the big, big corporations. . . do you hold any stock in any companies?

Q Yea, I do, I have some stock.

A Don't you get the annual report?

Q Yes, I get an annual report, I have a vote.

A You can attend the stockholders meetings, you get a report of what transpired, at which time the chairman of the board and the president lays the company out there, I mean there are no secrets.

Q There cannot be.

A There cannot be.

Q It's illegal to have a . . .

A The SEC is very very stern on its control, and there are alot of people who do nothing but seek and search for any defaultations or mismanagment, if they mismanage, the stockholders at the meeting, they can create enough of a raucus to . . .

Q I'll bet you're right.

A What do the directors do, they oust the heads or whoever is necessary to be replaced, you see, for the safe conduct of the business.

Q Let me ask you about the growth of the company, unquestionably, the theories, the depression had an impact. Would you tell something about what kind of an impact the depression had on Champion Knitwears--the Champion Knitwear Company?

A What Person?

Q The depression.

A The depression?

Q Yea.

A Never effected us at all, we were not ya see, we never delt with the retail stores

or such, except a few isolated instances, and I was (slurred) at the time of the depression but I kept right on working, our sales increased every year.

Q Is that right?

A There never was a year. . .

Q And what if one had to draw a chart, you know, one of those growth charts?

A You would never know when the depression was.

Q It would still continue to have that. . .

A Well you see, we were born during the depression, you might say.

Q Well thats true, thats true.

A 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, oh sure, there's a little handicap to travel because you didn't know, banks weren't open, if the banks were open they weren't going to cash any checks for you. I mean I was able to borrow \$200.00 from the University of Georgia, the athletic director, when I ran out of cash during the bank closing, then they wired me money when I needed it. There really wasn't any problem.

Q I'm a little suprised, I mean I don't have that much knowledge on the economy and of the depression but what I do know is that companies generally were hit.

A Oh yea.

Q And some very hard.

A It is a struggle.

Q But not for a. . .

A Not for Champion, never. We could do as much business as we had the capacity to produce.

Q It's an achievement.

A It is a fun business.

Q Right.

A I never worried about calling on accounts, they were all friends, and I visited with my customers. I would go to Harvard, there was never any problem, I would spend the whole day wandering all over the campus with the athletic department or the members

of the bookstore, and we still maintain that relationship, the men that followed me.

Q Oh I think that's incredible.

A Things have changed, of course, administrators change. My whole business was based, the nucleus of my business was the Ivy League. Every college in the Ivy League, Army, Navy, I classified them is the Ivy League, the Naval Academy, United States Military Base.

Q Sure.

A And the Military Schools were different, but Harvard and Yale and Princeton, Columbia, Pennsylvania, Dartmouth and Brown, they were you're Ivy League schools. And during the thirties they competed to buy the products. They had to, the college didn't close down.

Q That's true. But like . . .

(They were talking over each other).

A The retails were more worried, we did business with National Institutions like the American Leagues of the 4H Club.

Q I see, you went into a different league. . .

A The huge farms of America.

Q Yea.

A No, we developed those accounts, you see.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

Interview with Herman Bieber
July 14, 1976
By Dennis B. Klein

Interview I
Tape I
Side B

This is Dennis Klein talking with Mr. Herman Bieber we're on tape I side B. I am

a little surprised, Mr. Bieber that I keep pressing this point and the only reason is because we're going through kind of a recession now, or we may be coming out of it, but never-the-less there is a low period in the economy and my own behavior is such that at least I have cut back, I haven't closed down and I noticed at the universities they take short cuts, you know, they don't get into some fancy clothes they might have bought.

A That's right. They've cut their budgets.

Q I would think there was a period (they are talking over each other).

A If you have 2000 students at a high school, there are 1500 boys or 1000 boys and 1000 girls, they have physical education programs don't they?

Q Right.

A They're not going to let the boys and girls take the activity program in their dress clothes, they have to wear gym-suits.

Q They have to wear some. . .

A That's right.

Q So you're in a (couldn't understand) that provides a minimum.

A We're in the, I call it the fun business, but we're in that leisure and recreation business, which is getting greater all the time.

Q That's interesting, during periods of . . .

A Recession, we'd grow bigger, because people would have more time, look what's happened to the tennis business, we don't even scratch the surface on that business, or golf, these are leisure sports, boating business, goodness gracious, I was down at the highways, the parkways, through Connecticut and I saw the Marinas on the Long Island Sound and if you could see the boats there, my goodness gracious, I mean.

Q That's interesting.

A Thousands and thousands and thousands of boats there, so you see some how or other we veared from the retail business as such.

Q Yea.

A The retail accounts that we originally started to sell got into the school business, got into the leisure business, got into the recreation business.

Q So you started off in the retail and got into these other areas.

A Yea, yea.

Q How soon did you get into these other areas?

A The minute I started. I wouldn't call on the retail trades, I did nothing but the clothing business.

Q Was that you're. . .

A Well, I was a part of it.

Q Yea, I mean who's idea was it to begin going to the schools?

A Well it was just, Abe Feinbloom, Bill Feinbloom and myself.

Q Talked about it and decided. . .

A Yea. We used to deal with some of the sporting goods dealers, but not to any great extent.

Q Right. Let me go back now. I have some questions that we didn't cover when we first began. Where were your parents born?

A My parents were born in Austria.

Q Oh yea, where in Austria?

A I don't know the name of the town. It was in Austria Galisha.

Q In Galisha.

A In Galisha.

Q It's the empire now? (I couldn't understand, it was very slurred).

A Yea, Franz Joseph was the . . . because my dad came in the early 1890's.

Q I see.

A They were married on the other side, and they came over here with one or two children, my mother went back and another child was born, and the rest of the children were born in the East side. I was born in the Bronx, we lived there for one year. My dad was a tailor, and he went to Louisville Kentucky and the whole family might have

moved there, but somehow they didn't like the Southern atmosphere, and he came back, then we moved to Brooklyn.

Q So both of your parents were Galishianers?

A Oh yea, yea. My mother had a little of the Hungarian and my father was a Galishianer.

Q Your mother was Hungarian.

A Yea.

Q I see. Um, when your father came over in the 1890's and your mother came over about when?

A They were married over there and they came over here together.

Q I see.

A She went back to see her mother, you know the usual, a little lonesome. My brother was born on the boat coming back.

Q Oh, well that's nice. (Lauphter)

A As I say, we had eight, originally nine.

Q Well, why did they leave the old country?

A He didn't want to go into the military service. He was a very fine tailer, famous tailor.

Q There were alot of Jews that . . .

A My mothers' brothers were all very fine ladies and men's tailors.

Q So, clothing has been in your family for years and years?

A My brother was a teacher, but he became a men's tailor, infact there was a company in Rochester that he formed, he was originally with the Beiber Isaac Company.

Q What kind of company was this?

A Well, he manufactured clothing. He was one of the charter members of the board of Temple Beth El.

Q I see.

A He came here, they both came here in 1918, 1919, right after the First World War, and

as I said my brother Jack came back from France, he married a girl from the Bronx and they moved up here.

Q Now, why did they come to Rochester?

A Because of the fact that brothers clothing company, the Beiber Isaacs moved from New York to Rochester.

Q And Rochester at that point was a very important town for clothing, and that's why you came to Rochester, to join your family, your brothers?

A No, I was in the Celluloid business.

Q The what?

A The Celluloid business in New York.

Q Celluloid?

A Celluloid.

Q Celluloid, oh yea.

A Plastics, but they didn't know anything about plastics in those days. What we had was Celluloid was Nitroglycerin and camphor a explosive and inflamible, highly so. And then of course the plastic business was developed. My brother had a little difficulty with the Bieber Isaac Company. He left them for different reasons. So I went up and we formed another company called the Beiber and Beiber.

Q You?

A Yes. My brother Irving and my brother Jack, who was also an artist, but he had a share in the business, and I. But that didn't last.

Q What kind of business was this?

A We manufactured men's clothing.

Q Was that your first in Rochester, your first involvement?

A Yea, yea.

Q When was the transition between the Celluloid business and the clothing for you. When did you first believe that aspect?

A Well I knew about Rochester, because I used to travel through, I traveled selling

Celluloid.

Q I see.

A And my brothers were both here.

Q Right.

A So I visited with them and did my business and then he came home to the United States in the Celluloid Business. I was just a young squirt, cuz I sold. . . I quit college and had gotten into work with an exporting company for about a year and then went into the Celluloid Business with a neighbor. A very big company.

Q And when you came through Rochester you were aware of the magnitude of clothing, so that (talking over each other).

A No, I didn't know anything about clothing.

Q All right, so how did. . . .

A But he knew that I could sell, he wanted me to sell the clothing that he was manufacturing.

Q I see. So he encouraged you to come to Rochester, that was really the initiative that was on your brother's part?

A Oh yeah, he was in deep, there were a few things that had upset his personal life. He lost all interest in business here, and that's why I joined up with the Feinblooms.

Q OK, oh I see.

A And he went back to New York.

Q OK.

A And back into the clothing business, but he was very active when he was in the clothing business, very active. He was active in the City itself, in the Chamber of Commerce. He was much more active than I was, because I didn't spend enough time here.

Q I see.

A I would spend three or four months a year so my association with a good

many people was fragmentary, just a few friends that I knew, so a few of the guys the same age as me, we don't mind playing golf or we don't mind socializing.

Q How long did Beiber and Beiber last?

A It lasted about a year and a half.

Q And that's when you joined the Feinblooms.

Q Did you know the Feinblooms personally, or how did you become..

A I met Bill socially, and I met Bill one day in Syracuse, I was selling the clothing at the time and I knew I wasn't going to do that very much longer because as I said my brother had many things to overcome, with his marital affairs and that sort of thing. It hit him pretty hard and he lost his interest in working here in Rochester because of it.

Q Right.

A So, Bill said, why don't you come and work with me, and I took the line.

Q In Syracuse? This is when he made the offer (they were talking over each other).

A It was to me because I had a very, very healthy happy association in the business. As I said it is a fun business. I knew every football coach in the East, you mention a name and I knew him. I was always interested in track, as such and I knew all the track coaches and went to all the track meets I was an official and a timer and a judge.

Q No kidding!

A Oh yeah, sure, in the big league!!

Q Yeah

Q So you became involved in the athletics.

A In fact Harold Feinbloom and I went to the Olympic games in Munich, in 1972.

Q Oh, you were there.

A Everyone thinks of that...as the one thought that you can't avoid thinking of that of it now.

A It was a terrifying experience.

Q Did you. . .

A No, we were out in Germany that day the, there were no track events that day.

So Harold Feinblöom and I went out to one of the, our host really, who had a sporting goods store in Munich, and we went out in the country and he took us to two or three different factories that had the same kind of merchandise that we manufactured. We visited the factory and he brought back more tee-shirts to sell in his store.

Q Right. Well, so when you came back was when you first learned about the a . . .

A Well, we were coming back on the Autoban.

Q Right.

A And we saw the going under a bridge and we had gotten the regular reports about an hour earlier and we'd heard what had happened at the compound, you see, and a, we saw the German police cars blowing their sirens on a couple of the bridges that hold the Autoban going out to the airport, and then of course, we knew what everybody else knew. We didn't know until the next morning that the hostages had been murdered.

Q I see.

A Then of course we held one of them (this I could not understand.) and go right home then, but we couldn't get home cause we couldn't get an airplane, so we stayed, I'm glad we did.

Q Why is that?

A Well, there was nothing we could do, and I felt that as long as the games had started it was unfair to the country, so we weren't involved and the athletes were not involved. I mean here they had been praying for this for so many years. Then that's all we did that day, then the next day we saw some events then we went home before it was closed.

Q But Harold Feinblöom was very upset by the whole thing and he wanted to go back?

A Yea, well he, Harold has become a very pro, he never did have much Jewish

background and such. But he did develop, he became a very strong starch worker for Israel. He's local in the UJA, he would have headed the UJA program this year if it weren't for the fact this merger with Jostens was going to take a lot of his time and I don't think that he could, it would just be a bit too inconvenient for him. He couldn't devote as much time as he would want to. He's been over on a half of dozen missions.

Q What about yourself, what is your interest in Israel, is it there, do you have an interest?

A Oh yea, I've been to Israel.

Q You have.

A I was in Israel in 1966 before, the year before the six-day-war.

Q 67 was the . . .

A 67.

Q Six-day-war, right.

A And I contributed, and I have worked on the drive, not too active, because as I said, most of the time I am away when the drive is, when I was working with Champion. The last three years we have gone to Florida during October, and that's when the drive is held, so I was not too active in it. But I'll take a few cards before I go down.

Q Do you remember when the . . . with the bounding of the state of Israel in 1948? What were your own reactions to that?

A Oh, I was very much interested, very much, always have been.

Q To the point of Zionism, would you consider yourself a Zionist?

A No. I have been a member of the American Zionist AZO, for I don't know how many years, 25 or 35 years. I am a member of the Sports for Israel, fairly active in that, Abe Feinbloom is very active in that for Florida, he is the national vice president of the Sports for Israel, that's the organization that branches among different countries, and membership usually works toward the development of

sending coaches over to Israel for training the athletes. College coaches go over to train them in swimming and basketball. They are affiliated with the Wingate Institute. At home they have a national president and they are a very active group, active here in town, they are very active in Miami, very active in California, very active in New York, Chicago, they were very active, and outfitted the American team for the Makaviah Games, right from the inception, right from the start, Champion was.

Q Did you consider yourself a pro Palestine sympathizer before the founding of the state of Israel?

A Yea, my sympathies were always with them, I don't think I would ever go over myself. We have had members of our family that have moved years and years and years ago, until they had their last days there.

Q But you yourself never thought about going over to live in Israel?

A No, no, I wasn't a Zionist and such, I mean I supported the Zionist Organization, I wasn't a Louie Lipsky or I wasn't a, any of the great national figures who attended all the. . . Joe Goldstein is the local man who has been the most active of all. There are a couple of people. . . I have gone along at the Temple I haven't been to active in the Temple, I've never been on the board over there, they have asked me several of times, they said "your brothers were both on the board, why aren't you?" I said, because I am not he, and I don't think I would have enough time to spend. In other words just being on the board doesn't mean anything, a full time occupation.

Q Your affiliation with Temple Beth El you're talking about?

A Yea.

Q Well, you said you became a part of Beth El around. . .

A I am not sure whether it was 26 or 27.

Q OK

A And I've been a member ever since.

Q So, almost as soon as you came to Rochester, you became a member of Temple Beth El?

A Yea. Because of the fact that my brothers were there.

Q At Beth El?

A At Beth El.

Q You were affiliated with a synagogue in New York?

A Yea, the Israel Flatbush, and before that was built, with the Midwood Center, when that was orized by...the first Rabbi Harry Halpern.

Q I see.

A That was conservative. Young Israel was completely orthodox, see and when my mother died I spent alot more time at the synagogue, you see. We'd have the minion at the, in an orthodox Shul. I became affiliated with that orthodox Shul as well as the Midwood Center. Then we left the orthodox Shul, they kicked us out because we took over and developed the Young Israel Flatbush; I was one of the founders of the Young Israel Flatbush.

Q It's called the Young Israel Flatbush?

A The Young Israel Movement, of course of which the Flatbush. Then there was the Young Israel of Williamsberg, very, very active organizaiton.

Q What was the nature of the Young Israel Group? What were you trying to do? What was the nature of the movement?

A We, it was a more streamline group of othodoxs, where there was great participation in the services, we didn't hav a rabbi. We were are own rabbis, we had communal singing, we had a cantor, yes, a young Israel boy that would come over from Williamsberg, until we developed are own cantors from within. I had a nephew who was a cantor, and two or three of his friends were cantors who were very active. It is a very fine organization, but we don't have any Young Israel as such in Rochester.

Q Well, let me ask you. First of all, what was orthodox about it; what did you

retain?

A We retained the, there was complete orthodox service, I mean we used the old prayer book.

Q OK, but you streamlined it you said?

A I would say we streamlined it, sure. We eliminated a good many things. We eliminated for instance, there was no average orthodox; the ordinary orthodox, the regular ones. Most of them, they would have schneidering, they would sell the alaiyas, we never did that.

Q I see.

A Same as a conservative. We leaned more to the conservative.

Q And you were instrumental?

A I wasn't instrumental, I went along with I would say 15 or 20 Zealots, and they attracted very prominent people in New York City too.

Q That's interesting. Why wasn't there a Young Israel Group formed in Rochester?

A Well, it wasn't active enough, it could have been done, it could have been done very easily. Because you see, you get the younger people who were not to happy with the ordinary orthodox, and that's why I think the conservative developed as much as it did.

Q I was going to ask if there was an overlap between the two.

A Yes, except I would say that the conservative were a little more, leaned a little more toward the modified ritual, or modified service. You know how many different groups there are that emanate from the. . .

Q Yes.

A You had a little covers they called it.

Q Yea.

A You had ten men and you had eleven men you had two Shuls. You see?

Q Yes.

A You spread the groups one man was unhappy because he didn't get the honors that he

coventing, you know what I mean?

Q Yes.

A And I have a nephew who is very active in the society for the reconstructionist movement.

Q Right.

A That's Rabbi Mortichi Kaplan.

Q Oh yea, a name I know good.

A You know of him?

Q Of course.

A They just celebrated his 95 birthday in Israel, he's there right now.

Q Oh.

A Ya see, he was the rabbi of the ASJ, that's the society for the advance of the Judaism which was the number one temple from which the movement spread as a very active one in Buffalo, and they have a college now in Philadelphia, from which they are turning out rabbis and rebicents.

Q What do you think of the reconstructionist group?

A I would become a reconstructionist if we could form one here.

Q There isn't anything in Rochester then?

A No, no. A few years ago they had one of the young men, I think he was related to Rabbi Motichi Kaplan, came to Rochester to speak at Beth El.

Q Yes.

A He was not warmly recieved at all.

Q But you were a . . .

A I went to hear him speak because I new him, a few years after that he went over and became the director of Hillel, I think at the university.

Q So, um, without the Young Leader Organization here, or without a reconstructionist organization, Beth El is really as close to . . .

A Better or as close to me always, I mean I would attend a few services at Beth

Kodesh, because a good many of my friends were there, like Phil Bernstein, I used to listen to his lectures, I liked him. I was very friendly with him because he went to school with a good many of my friends in Syracuse.

(Talking over each other).

A Yes, before I even came to Rochester.

Q How did you meet him?

A Through friends at Syracuse, who were his classmates at Syracuse. They were Brooklyn boys.

Q Oh I see.

A Before I came to Rochester.

Q I see.

Q But a, what was he doing then?

A A student, before he went to the a . . . he graduated from the Syracuse University, then he went to Hebrew U in Cincinnati.

Q Yea.

A He was indoctrinated into the . . . well he became, he came from an orthodox family.

Q I was going to say.

A There were a good many rabbis who came from the other side. Some very prominent rabbis, Rabbi Aldman, have you heard of him.

Q I haven't.

A He's a reformed rabbi, has a sister that lives here, one of the Kravetz girls, Jack Kravetz's wife, he was the brother to Levi Aldman, he was one . . . he um, I don't know whether it was Dallas or one of those . . . Dallas Houston or San Anton, I'm not sure.

Q You knew Phil Bernstein when he was affiliated with the orthodox?

A No.

Q He was an orthodox.

A Well I mean he was orthodox at the time, he was orthodox until he started to study at the rabbinate.

Q Were you aware of his . . .

A Rabbi Steinberg was one of his (couldn't understand), but that was a little before my time, before I, in the early 20's, before I became active in Rochester.

Q So you weren't really aware of his change from orthodox to reform?

A Oh, where do most of these reform rabbis come from? I don't think they have ever had a rabbi from Temple a . . . a reformed rabbi graduate of the B'rith Kodesh. We haven't had too many rabbis from the seminary from Beth El, there is one boy that has just been ordained. I don't know his name, I've heard him speak, I've heard him conduct some services.

Q The seminary in New York?

A Yea, the (couldn't understand) seminary. There have been some good rabbis at Beth El, Rabbi Minkin, he was a rabbi when I first attended services there, became a member. Rabbi Minkin was a very fine scholar, infact, he was one of the, he was considered an expert (couldn't understand)lore, when he resigned there were a few members on the board that didn't like him, because he had a slight accent. Then he was followed, a few followed Rabbi Minkin. A man named Al Hart who was the founder of the Star Markets, the Hart Stores, he was very active in the Temple and he had a . . . they brought in a young rabbi after Minkin. His name was Geramiha Berman, a young fellow, he didn't last too long, but he was a desciple of Al Hart. Al was the number one man at the Temple at the time. A lot of men were very very active. The Sturman's were active and the and the Frankel's were very active. Nobody mentions Israel Frankel, they make a big mistake, the Frankel family were very insrtumental in the founding of Beth El.

Q In the founding of the Temple or the present location?

A The Temple, the original one on Meigs Street.

Q That was the original one on Meigs Street?

A Yea, and after Berman came, well let's see, who, did Fischer precede Rosenberg?
There haven't been too many rabbis. Um, Fischer preceded Rosenberg. Fischer was a very very fine rabbi, I always liked him, people didn't like some of his, some of his personal habits, they always felt that he was looking for cigars and that sort of thing, but he was a great speaker.

Q His sermons were good?

A His sermons were excellent.

A Then he was followed by Rosenberg.

Q You said you knew Rosenberg back in Brooklyn?

A Well, I knew of him, because I was out of Brooklyn by the time he came here.

Q I see.

A You see? I lived here, but I knew his background, he went to Madison High School, and when I went to high school in Brooklyn, there was no James Madison High School.

Q OK.

A And then, he told me that he had a . . . when he found out that I had been active with The Young Israel, the Asheva had been established after I left Brooklyn, for Rochester, he was a student there.

Q What kind of a rabbi was Rosenberg?

A Wonderful speaker, wonderful mind, very fine. The orthodox crowd didn't like him because he felt that it was more important for the rabbi to mix with religious subjects, then to call on people in the hospital and go through the routines of a lot of the butka didn't like him because he didn't attend the morning services or the minikal service in the afternoon. They thought he was far and apart . . . he wasn't involved enough in the conduct of the temple, as far as the daily prayers and all that.

Q Is that true?

A To a degree it was, to a degree it was, I mean a, congregation of families as many

as we had, at that time they didn't have 1200 families or 1300 families. They had 4 or 5 hundred families. You couldn't attend every, you spend all your time visiting the ill or debrieved, couldn't you?

A Yea.

Q As far as I was concerned, as long as he kept my interest alive with the sermons, when I attended on the Sabbath or when I attended on a High Holiday, I looked forward to those because I liked Fischer the same way. They were both good rabbis. Minkin was a very fine speaker too, just like Berman was.

Q So you're appreciation . . .

A Then came along Karp, and then came along . . . Karp I was fairly friendly with, we met socially, but not, I really wasn't too involved with him. A new group came along, a young group, more active in the temple.

Q So your appreciation of these rabbis were to the sermons, if they gave your interest, and their a . . . what they had to say?

A Yea, that's right. I was involved in Jewish stuff, Jewish things, and community, participation. I worked with Gentiles all my life. When I went to school in Brooklyn, I was the only boy in my graduating class, and my elementary school, would you believe that possible?

Q In Brooklyn, that's hard to believe.

A In Brooklyn. It's hard to believe, and I always felt that myself and my brothers, and my family, you know we never had any problems because somehow or other we were taken in, and we always tried to make it appear that as Jews we were white and human and we didn't all wear long beards, and carry packs on our backs, and we were cash clothesmen. Jesus, I had a rabbi that came from the east side daily, twice a week or three times a week, he was an Arab, and he had a beard, he wore a beard, and that was a strange thing in Brooklyn at the time. But after talking with him a few times they respected him and he didn't have any trouble then.

And when my customers, I mean they all knew I was Jewish, I never hid it. Infact, when we had an occasion to get into Jewish things, I would have them participate. My sons BarMitzvah, I had atleast ten or fifteen Gential customers that came from as far as Washington.

Q Your relationship with Gentials . . .

A Oh always good, it was excellent.

Q Did you ever have any . . .

A Nobody ever told me you're different, I never had that told to me, but I've heard infact several people say, ya know something or other, you know you're Jewish but you're different. That's been told to a lot of people, but I never had that.

Q And you never had any of the tensions as a Jew with non-Jews?

A Any what?

Q Tensions.

A Oh once or twice, sure. That always creeps up.

Q How does that creep up? One for exsample.

A Well, once in a baseball game, and I go out, me and my brother, he was a picher, and I was a catcher, in high school.

Q Is this in New York?

A Back in New York, and my brother threw a ball pretty close to the batters head, he was a gential boy, and he says, why you dumb Jew, and with that my brother walked of the mound, the fellow was the same size as my brother. My brother said, what did you say? Before he you could say Jack Robinson, he belted him on the ear and he just dropped like a log, and I bet nobody ever said that again.

Q What was you reaction to that? You were there, yes?

A Yea, sure, my brother was bigger than I was, so. . .

Q So, he took care of it. (Laughter)

A He did the fighting for me, once in a while we were chased by the, we would call them a a few of the Miks, in Brooklyn.

And I knew just where I could run till I got into the house, ya know, and I would whistle and my brother might be there.

Q And he took care of it.

A He took care of it for me.

Q What was your . . .

A I was a school lover, teachers and ever.

Q Did that kind of, did you have of, did you have kind of and inner response of a discust, for example, when you did hear the, you know for example, when you heard this boy say, he's a damn Jew?

A No, we heard about that on the East Side, we heard the, I mean some of the young people today claim that they were being legislated against, and they were victoms of anti-Semitism and that sort of thing. We didn't know what the word meant, when my parents would tell me about what happened on the East Side, in certain areas, they had moved to before we came to Berlpark. My two sisters had to be escorted to station by private detectives, and so finally, we caught up with a couple of the ruff kids.

Q Yes.

A And a, the cop said, do you want to prosicute, and my father said, definately we would, because this has to be stopped. My sisters had to take the elevator in Brooklyn, to work downtown in Manhattan, and a, we a, decided to prosicute a couple of the kids, and the preist came and said, Mr. Beiber, if you will withdraw your complaint, I'll see that this never happens again. From that time on we never had any trouble. I said to the rabbi at that time, ya know, kids would run after him and try to pull his coat you know, cause he was wearing a beard, he cuffed them a couple times and that ended that. That's the way it was.

Q So, they were kind of small scirmishes then?

A Sure, I mean, at Berlpark we had to fight our way to Prospect Park, we had to go in groups, but the Widsor Terrace gang, Gential kids wouldn't let us pass.

Q What was the name of the gang?

A The Windsor Terrace gang.

Q I see.

A Sure, so we went through all of that, and we survived it, we didn't get it in school, we got it yea, when I was in college at NYU, the freshman class, had class elections, and a few of the Gentials got together and they elected a class president. So, we had to protest, all the Jewish boys in the class, I would say that we were about 30%, we were outnumbered by the Gentials, when we would go to attend classes, we would march even as freshman, across the hallowed.

Q You were part of this, you marched?

A Oh sure, and a, the relation with the administration, we had a regular election, and elected somebody else, that's all.

Q You stood up for your rights though?

A Oh yes, we had to, I mean I didn't have to, but why shouldn't we, I had a brother, I had five members of the family fighting for the first world war, I had two sisters and three brothers. So we didn't have to hide behind any closed curtains or closed windows.

Q You wouldn't do that, just out of your self-dignity?

A That's right.

Q What about Rochester?

A We always lived on good terms with our neighbors.

Q What about Rochester, have you had any incidents like the one you recalled in New York?

A Never. Ya see, but the old-timers, they did. Going back in the, before the 1920's, before I came.

Q Before you came?

A That's right.

Q In Rochester, you're talking about?

A Yea, they were polish groups.

Q The Joseph Avenue area?

A The Joseph Avenue, sure.

Q There was elements of Anti-semitism there?

A Oh sure, oh sure.

Q How did you find out about this?

A Oh, because of the stories some of my friends tell me.

Q Did it sound as if it was pretty intense, bad Anti-semitism?

A There used to be quite a few battles, particularly, when the boys got together in basketball games and that sort of thing.

Q They would call them a dirty Jew or something?

A Oh yea. Oh well I mean the Poles were in line, the Germans, the Dutchman, they had areas, that were all, that were localized. Poles lived in a certain area, Irish lived in a certain area, Germans lived in a certain area.

Q Allright.

A They were all pretty well-banded together. So the Jews had to, ah, they were pretty well banded together too.

(They were talking over each other)

Q You mean, those ethnic groups band together?

A Oh yea, sure.

Q When they had to confront this a

A JY basketball team, played the a, with some Polish team, they had their own group their. It was modified, and the JY the Jewish boys want out to play in the little a a a . . . Victor or in one of these towns around by there, they would lay for them, they were lucky to get out alive. They held their own.

Q But that was the degree of Anti-semitism that they confronted?

A Oh yea, that was innate in people. The dituation in the Midwest must have been a great deal worse. I used to run into people down South that were Jewish people, and they were very dignified in their attitude, but a, they new that they were

surrounded. And they kept their peace by their actions, they came through it, lived through it, overcame it.

Q Do you think there was an element of Anti-semitism expressed during the 1964 riots here in Rochester.

A No, I don't think it was. It's unfortunate that the Negroes lived in the, you might say, on the fringe, or became a part, you see as the Jewish people left to come over to this side.

Q That's right.

A Then the negroes filled in.

Q That's right.

A So, those that left were, naturally involved with the, Jack Cohen had that store there, he closed up, and yet I have friends who a, Bucky, what's his last name? I met him out at the club, he's with the Aldman Company, they manufacture these, all the different distribute Herrings and all that, all these delicatessen products, throughout the entire area. They are on Joseph Avenue, and I asked Bucky the other day, have you had any trouble with the negroes there? He said, he doesn't have any trouble. Jack had to close up, the whole area has changed so, drastically, I mean anybody who lived there goes back and doesn't even recognize it, because most of it has been torn down.

Q When you say Jack had to close up, I mean is that because of the riot?

A Oh sure, sure.

Q Do you think those riots were directed towards Jack Cohen and businesses like his?

A Well, I think that in the late part they were, I think a lot of the storekeepers took advantage of (couldn't understand) in New York City up in Harlem there, the Jewish storekeepers there, they were the only storekeepers there, they always took advantage of the negroes, there's no if's and or but's about it, particularly those in certain types of business, credit business and that sort of thing, and they do the same here.

Q Because the blacks said no they didn't?

A They didn't have any money, so if they wanted to buy something, they bought it on credit. They'd have these people that would go around and collect regularly, you see, and they paid twice as much for their product.

Q Right.

A And then they would collect it whenever they'd get um, after they'd get two or three collections, they'd drop them, then it would cost the regular price, then the rest of it was all gravey, or they repossessed after they've gotten, it didn't matter whether it was 25, 50, or 75% of the, of what the invoice called for.

Q Do you think it was on the part of the Jews a kind off a, or was it more of just a shrued business, or do you think there was kind of a social. . .

(They were talking over each other)

A They were very fine people that ran very fine stores, Nusbaum had a very, very fine department store, he didn't sell on credit. But there were a good many that did, I think there are many that did, you don't exploit it, or you don't, or a, perhaps if we had, or if more public-minded citizens had been, but you can't tell a man how to run his business. What are you going to do, go up to a furniture man and tell him he's charging too much, why should he double the cost, when these people can buy for cash? Buy for cash in a regular department store, they didn't shop.

Q So, it was partly their fault?

A Yea, but they didn't have any money. Ya see. They were given expansive credit, so to speak, they paid for it.

Q They paid for that?

A It didn't take much on the part of the hurangers to throw it at them.

Q Was this purely a business thing, or was it a Jewish-Black eliment; to what was happening down there?

A No, I don't think so, I don't think there was ever to great a . . .

Q You know what I'm saying?

A A sizzle between the two or?

Q Yea, that's right.

A Like a modified warfare?

Q Yea.

A No, no, cause the poor blacks, they took it anyway, you see.

Q So this is just the world of business we're talking about, and not a Jewish-Black a, so when the riots broke out there was obviously some tensions, and some hostilities, but you don't think that was necessarily aimed at a Jew?

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B

Interview with Herman Bieber
July 14, 1976
By Dennis Klein

Interview I
Tape 2
Side A

Q We were talking a little bit about the 1964 riots whether there was that element of anti-semitism, and you don't think there really was, involved in that. You know there was an incident recently the Schaeffer Fish market, I think it was 1973, does that ring a bell for you? There was a Jewish proprietor, a black came into the store and blinded the proprietor?

A Yea, I remember that.

Q You remember this?

A Yea.

Q I think there was some talk at that time, this was about three years ago, that there might have been, it was not so much a business a, or theft or anything of that nature, but it was an anti-semitic. . .

A I don't think so, I think it was some young fellow that needed some money, and they picked on this. . . and he was a very fine, very fine gentleman. They had some

lovely people, storekeepers there that lived with those blacks for years. Don't forget there was a..(talking over each other) of blacks from the South. My friends down South always used to tell me how many said, this goes back thirty, thirty-five, forty years, we're not going to have the trouble with the blacks when the day arrives, you are.

Q Here in Rochester?

A Oh not only in Rochester, but in Brooklyn, I went to Boys High School and there wasn't a black in the class. There were a few in some of the other high schools. Yea, we may have had one or two blacks, but you didn't have any black teachers, didn't have any women teachers as far as that's concerned. But today Boys High School in Brooklyn's 100% black.

Q That's true. So when you have that..(talking over each other), Yea you are bound to create some tension between groups of people then.

A We had a black women who used to tend to the house twice a week, and she was like one of the family.

Q Right.

A We still keep in . . . she'll come and see us, they are very nice people, her and her husband. But she had trouble with her children, one of them went to jail, the other one was always in trouble. Two of them graduated from college, they worked for the government in Washington.

Q So your impressions at least in Rochester, if we can bring you back for a moment here, um, is that there really hasn't been incidents of anti-semitism to speak of in the city here, in your recollection?

A Oh, yes, there always have been, but no different than elsewhere, it's one of those things that you learn to live with. With some it is more evident than it is with others, as I said before, in my case I haven't had the opportunity, because I didn't associate with the negros on the other side.

Q That's true.

A And in by business dealings with the Gentiles in my own business activities and social, no more or no less than anywhere else, than anybody else has had. As far as I'm concerned I never felt a . . . I played golf at the Irondequoit Country Club, and I don't think I have been over to the other clubs more that half a dozen times in all those forty some odd years, and I never felt at home there not that I gave a damn, but I was invited by Gentile friends, and so that was it, but I felt a little more comfortable in some of the schools and colleges that I did in some of these Country Clubs.

Q That's interesting.

A They've been very very strongly, Country Clubs not only in the metropolitan area, but here as well.

Q Strongly what?

A Anti-semitic feeling, but that's another story.

Q Yea. One reason that people support the causes in Israel is because there's this feeling that anti-semitism is a part of our life.

A Yea, ya see the Israeli's have caused so many Jewish Americans to feel as though we can hold are heads up. You know what I mean?

Q Yes.

A And it's been a terrific shot in the arm for so many people who have always had that inferiority complex.

Q Is that part of the reason for your interest in Israel?

A No, no, I feel because historicly, this is homeland after the . . . What you have got to do is go to (couldn't understand) or where I was in Munich, the concentration camp there.

Q Dachau?

A Dachau, yea, Harold and I went to Dachau, I'll never forget it. You can't describe in until you have been there.

Q I have been there myself.

A Oh you've been to Dachau?

Q Absolutely devistating.

A It's devistating, I mean it makes you feel, I mean there for the grace of God, might have been I. When you say it can't happen here, maybe it can, so you can't be oblivious to the possibilities of what surrounds you. Even in my case where I haven't been hurt.

Q So, even though you said you haven't confronted personally, anti-semitism, you are aware of its existence?

A Oh sure, a nephew of mine was a victim of it in a college in Virginia, and luckily I had seen it in time, because there they have the honorcourts, and he was a victim of an anti-semitic a . . . not even an assistant professor, just a, what do they call. . . an instructor in the chemical, in the qualitative analysis class. He didn't like his, he didn't get along with this instructor, and the instructor knew that he was Jewish, and he hadn't had much experience with Jews, he just didn't like Jews, that's all, and they reported him for cheating on a test, it wasn't a test, it was a, he was given a solution and asked to do the normal lab procedings, and he just wrote the answer down in five minutes and turned it in, so he declared that he had cheated. When you're accused by an instructor, it is brought up to the honorcouncil.

Q Right.

A And he was given 24 hours to get off the campus, that's all, no possibility to hear the other side of the case. My sister called me and I flew down the next day, and I had some very good friends in the athletic department who, and the dean who was active in the athletic, he was also the (coudn't understand) of athletics. I explained the situation to him, and he said, well I'll tell you what we'll do, we'll get the chairman of the honorcouncil, and he called him in and I had a meeting with him and I explained the situation and they gave the boy (couldn't understand) He says well we didn't, it's one of those things

you know, the same as what's going on at Westpoint. So they said we'll have a meeting and they had another meeting with the honorcouncil and he was suspended, but was permitted to come back. And he finished, got his degree.

Q Your interception was an important one then?

A Well without the interception, he would have never had an opportunity to finish his a . . . it would have been a black mark on his entire life. He was accused of cheating when he wasn't cheating. And they new that because they gave him an opportunity to come back.

Q So, are these kind of incidents that remind you. .

A Oh sure, I've been to the Westpoint and you can see a good many of those soldiers are anti-semitic, they don't want to many Jewish cadets, but those who were there, they fought their way up and they were respected. They would give as well as take, and Mickey Markus, you have heard the story of him?

Q The name sounds familiar.

A He was a hero in the First War.

Q Yea.

A Infact he was married at Westpoint. Some of the football players I know, they more than carried their own. They are getting a great percentage of Jewish boys there now, it's a way to get a good education.

Q Yea, I'll say.

A And a career.

Q Yea

A When they were appointed by the congressmen they were, they never had any problem, they were able to carry on, carry the load. So you see that's evidence of anti-semitism. You see it everywhere, to a degree you're a part of it, you are a part of the story and know matter what you can't say that there is no such thing as anti-semitism. Sure I was never directly affected by it, although I was (couldn't understand) but never to any degree that it caused me any harm.

A I wasn't aware of it.

Q OK, let me change the subject for a moment and ask you if you had any affiliation with the JY here in Rochester?

A Which?

Q The JY.

A Only as a member, a contributor, I lived at the JY for a little while and didn't like it.

Q When were you down there? Was it when you first came to Rochester?

A Yes, when I first came to Rochester.

Q I think the JY was built in 1928 or 29 though, it was really a little later then?

A It was after it yea.

Q After you came?

A It was before I got married. I came in twenty . . . I remember I attended the meeting where an announcement was made that they were going to have a drive for the new one, and I attended the drive and took part in it.

Q This was in the 30's?

A Yea.

Q You didn't like it down there?

A I didn't like it in the new building, no. I didn't like the way the WMCA is on the road either.

Q I see. It had that, I know what you mean, it had that feeling of darkness or something, something about it?

A There was something about it, that living there I didn't like, I used to attend many of the functions there, activities. But I didn't want to live there.

Q Was there a very much of a Jewish feeling though?

A You mean in?

Q In the JY?

A I would think so, yes, I mean this is a Jewish organization, it certainly, you

had a different feeling there then when you'd go into a WMCA.

Q OK

A And I always visited the WMCA, because they were my accouts, I called on them.

Q I've stayed in WMCA's and never had the feeling of religion, it was always just a place to hang your hat.

A I used to call on the Babtists, they always tried to convert me.

Lauphter.

A I did business with Catholics, I always got along well with Catholics.

Q Yea.

A Very good business with the Catholic colleges and the Catholic prep schools, Boston, Baltimore, New York.

Q But, was the feeling in the JY different, was it more than just a place to hang your hat? You know what I mean?

A In the JY?

Q Yea.

A Well, I never attended any of the programs.

Q I see. So, you really just were there to. . .

A I would attend if there was a nice concert or something like that. I met some very nice boys that were at the JY when I was there, one of them had to leave the country because of his . . . He was a very fine musician, very fine pianist, and he was a good accountant. But he couldn't do an honest thing in his life.

Q Oh.

A They finally chased him out of the country, and he never did come back. They had enough counts against him.

Q That's something.

A He was dashed in on so many counts. (Lauphter).

Q Wow.

A We had a lot of fun in the JY. Jack Cohen had his restaurant there, so you had

a good place to eat.

Q That's true, yea.

A When he was there.

A Right. No, I mean I utilized it for service as far as that's concerned, that's all, but it didn't have, I never would have joined an organization that, well I belonged to the Brooklyn Central WMCA, went down twice and quit.

Q So that means that in Rochester as well you weren't a part of many groups?

A No, not too many, no.

Q Civic or religious?

A No, I left that to my brothers, they were both very active in community affairs, Chamber of Commerce.

Q Now when a, one thing you did belong to. . .

A I was a member of the Chamber of Commerce, I belonged to them all.

Q Oh you did?

A Oh sure.'

Q The Chamber of Commerce?

A I always belonged to the Chamber of Commerce, I belonged to the JY, the CYO.

Q Right. Hello.

A This is Mr. Klein, Dennis Klein. (Mr. Beiber introducing someone).

Q How are you? Um, one thing that you did belong to, alright, you do belong to the Country Club, (ICC)?

A I've belonged to the Country Club for twenty some odd years, a few years less than the Temple. I belonged to the Zionist of America, I belonged to every Jewish organization in the city, I belonged to the American Friends of The Hebrew University, I belonged to the um . . . I joined them.

Q You joined them, but you weren't very active in them?

A None. I was fairly active in the Temple at different times, I helped them in their Bazaar Sales and things like that. I would go to the Sabath Services and

the Holiday Services.

Q So you maintained the steady ties with Judaism?

A That's right. Although I'm not religious, I'm not a cardiac as they call it, you know, I don't have to give here because I know I'm a Jew, I've got it in my heart, you see? But he doesn't belong to any Temple or he doesn't do this, or he doesn't do that, you see?

Q No, so they call that a cardiac?

A That's a cardiac, he's got it in his heart.

Laughter.

Q OK, well it seems that one dimension of a cardiac Jew is that there is always a feeling of Comradship, should we say, fellowship, a feeling of a comfort of being with other Jews.

A Yea, I was always active in my teams, with the Jewish group and the Young Israel and the Medwood Center.

Q That goes beyond religion, there is something social?

A Yea, this is our area, an area where you felt that you belonged, you were a part of it you see, and that's why you went along with the normal activities, you partook with everything.

Q Right. And that feeling of yours is strong?

A Oh yes.

Q Isn't Irondequoit Country Club largely Jewish a?

A It 100% Jewish.

Q Oh, you know it's 100% Jewish?

A Oh yea, we had about a half a dozen non-Jewish members over the years.

Q I didn't know it's 100% though.

A There might be two or three, oh yes there are, but two or three that have been converted, and by the same token, the wives.

Q Was that the way it was when you first joined the Country Club?

A Oh sure.

Q I didn't know this.

A When you first joined the Country Club, you couldn't get in unless you were one of the German Jews.

Q Oh, I see. But that wasn't your background?

A No, at that time they let the bars down, because I was eligible, and there were half a dozen others, there was Mannie Goldman and Dr. Segal. The a (couldn't understand) were not German Jews, but they were very active as Jews in the city, you see. Stanley Sandels (not sure on the name) was the same way, none of them were German Jews, but they were all members of the club. So gradually the bars were let down, they accepted a Jew even though he wasn't a German.

Q So, this was in the 1930's?

A I think it was the 20's, late 20's and the early 30's the bars were down. They had to because there wouldn't have been any club. They let the younger people in because the German families had a lot of daughters, and it was a good place for them to possibly. . .

Q Well I know about the tension between the German and the Eastern European Jewish Communities, where at one time they wouldn't mix, certainly not socially, so it makes sense what you are talking about.

A But that thing in Rochester was broken down to a great degree when the United Jewish Appeal Drives were instituted after the war.

Q The second war?

A Yea. Then there was an assimilation process that was very very gradual, and the barriers were broken down between the German's and the rest of the community.

Q How is that an assimilation process? I don't quite follow that.

A Well, first of all it was evident in your Temple. There were know German Jews in Beth El. There may have been a few, but your German's by background,

their rabbi's were, I would say that some of the rabbi's at B'rith Kodesh were anti-semitic. Oh they had know respect at all for the. . .

Q I understand what you're saying.

A A lot of people will tell that. I know several freinds of mine today that are violent in their. . . they wouldn't come to the Country Club, and play there. I've asked them to come and play with me, and no sir, I would never step into that place, the last place in the world I would ever go to because of their attitude.

Q Towards?

A Towards them and their freinds that lived on the other side of the street. We had anti-semitism within here. You have it everywhere, you have it in the German clubs in New York City and Chicago, and Philadelphia the exclusive clubs as such.

Q After WWII however, that began to change?

A To a certain degree, yes. There are still clubs in New York City that are very strict, they won't take anybody in, they don't have to, they're wealthy enough.

Q But not the ICC, they began taking in?

A Oh yea. We let Jews in.

Lauphter.

Q That's kind of a funny concept.

A Well, you have to live through it you see, to appreciate the development. Of-course there have been books written about it, there have been good stories.

Q Sure.

A But a man like what's his name, who wrote Goodbye Columbus?

Q Philip Roth, yea.

A But that's a bias point of view. It's untrue, as far as I'm concerned, I never went along with him because I think his treatment was completely unfair because he was so wallowed in his backround about his mother, who was, the only thing he

could remember about her was that she was so completely Jewish, that she wasn't human in his eyes.

Q And that you felt was . . .

A Certainly, completely erroneous, I mean not all country clubs are like that, they brought out the worst, we got a few members of the country club who if I was chairman of the membership committee, and I certainly am not anti-semitic in no sense of the word. But I don't feel that their actions are worthy of the tone that we want to keep of the club. But I remember even as a kid in Brooklyn, there were certain people who were nice people and there were certain people that weren't, among are Jewish brother. We had names for them, you know what I mean?

Q Yea.

A The same as in the old, even in Europe, those that were educated and spent their life in the schools and that sort of thing looked down upon the man with the mule driver.

Q That's true, even if they were fellow Jews.

A That's right.

A Yea. He wasn't an honest man and the other people knew it, therefore, he was a Jew, but they had no respect for him, perhaps he didn't give a damn whether he did or didn't. People were strong whether they were Jews or otherwise.

Q Why did you join the Country Club?

A Because I liked to play golf.

Q You were attracted to the idea that they were all Jews?

A Yea, that's right sure.

Q (Couldn't understand) seems to be what some of the other aspects of your life, you have always seemed to have found groups that turn out to be Jewish?

A I think I've lived a Jewish life, not an ultra religious life.

Q Yea.

A But I've found my business association, friends and otherwise have been mainly with Jews even though my commercial activities focuses primarily on the Gentile. So I tried to live a life that showed that the Gentile is no different than a Jew is. I've been proud in my habits in that direction.

Q Well OK, I a . . .

A I've been a little more fortunate than most people in Rochester because of those who don't have association. Some people have lived in Rochester and still don't know what a Gentile is. I was raised in the beginning when I went to High School everybody in most of the schools, most of the people, their attitude among the Jewish people thought that if you were a Gentile, you were dumb. They would call them a stupid boy or a stupid Pollock, or the only smart people were the Jewish people.

Q The only what were the Jewish people?

A The smart people were the Jewish people. And I found kids in my class, I wasn't the smartest kid in the class. One of them became the president of one biggest chemical houses in the country, two of them became Admirals in the Navy. Several of them went on to Phi Beta Kapa into colleges and became the highest honors. And when I went to Boys High School, there were few Gentile boys in the school, I think it was about 90% Jewish. Then they found out that there were bright boys there, but the Gentiles were just as bright. So you didn't live in that clustered world, there were a lot of Rochesterians that never got out of it, they were a victim of the circumstances, they didn't have the opportunity perhaps.

Q To get out of what?

A To get out of the Getto.

Q Now you talk to some people who lived in the area, and they don't regard it a Getto, it's home, ya know?

A To me it was the Getto. But it's broken down completely now, because 95% of

people that lived there live in Brighton, live in this area, spread out to Irondequoit, Penfield and all the other areas.

Q The area you moved into in Monroe was um, am I right, you moved into the Monroe area?

A Monroe Avenue, right. That is beyond the City limits.

Q But there was a fairly substantial Jewish population?

A No, no there wasn't, no. There were in the Park Avenue section, Barrington, Berkely, Dartmouth, that became Jewish. That was the nucleus of the expansion into Brighton, then from there they went into Brighton.

Q But not in the area you moved into originally?

A Where in Monroe Avenue?

Q Yea.

A Not to many, we became, it became, there were a lot of Jews, it was in 1941, no 45. Then when we moved to Oakdale Drive, there weren't to many Jews. (Mrs. Bieber says "Oh Herman how can you say that?" There weren't to many mom. Are next door neighbor, both sides were Gentile. Mrs. Bieber: Yea, that little area of Oakdale, but the other area was more Jews." Down towards Monroe Avenue, yes. Some of the more (couldn't understand) Jews started building beautiful homes in that section. Mrs. Bieber: The Bergers moved on Oakdale Drive many years before. Oh yea, I mean as far as that's concerned, the expansion started I think in the end of, from the city itself in the Suburbs in the 20's. Listen, Beth El, you had the nucleus for the Jewish, in the 20's. There were several hundred families there at the time, there must have been at least 253,000 families, and they lived in the area, and that's in the early 20's. But that was in the Park Avenue area, you see.

Q It would seem to me to be, I mean, I would not be suprised that where you moved would be where other Jews were living in the city.

A Oh yea, yea, we almost got into a section that was completely resricted.

Q Oh where was this?

A Roosevelt Road, off Monroe Avenue.

Q I didn't know that, I didn't know there was that restricted area.

Mrs. Bieber: It was, that's what are Real Estate Agent told us.

This was in 1944, it was on the other side of Monroe Avenue, between the Twelve Corners and Culver Road, or a little beyond, right before Edgewood.

Q That's interesting, that isn't the case today?

A No.

Q But you almost moved in?

Mrs. Bieber: We liked the house, it was a very charming house, but we were told and when we went to see it, they told us that they have Christmas Parties, in other words, if you're not a Christian don't come. But the next day the Real Estate Agent called and said that we would be acceptable.

Q Oh, so it wasn't entirely restricted if you were acceptable.

A Well, they must have looked up into a . . .

Mrs. Bieber: Well, it wasn't 100% restricted, it was restricted by the people that owned the houses.

Q Oh, but the area itself was not restricted?

Mrs. Bieber: Well I don't think they would say.

A We bought a house on Oakdale Drive from an anti-semitic family.

Mrs. Bieber: There were several areas in there that were really restricted to Kodak people.

Q Yea, that was a Kodak area.

Mrs. Bieber: They didn't like to say it, Meadowbrook.

A I know that Meadowbrook was a restricted area.

Mrs. Bieber: I think that Roosevelt Road was in that.

Q Yea, you said that you bought your house?

A We didn't want any part of it.

Q You didn't want any part of that?

A No.

Mrs. Bieber: Before we went into The Westminster, a new building was going up at that time, 520 East Avenue, that was suppose to be restricted, but we were going to be allowed to live in there.

A Oh sure, there was always a (couldn't understand) here. How many Jewish families do you think were on East Avenue in the 20's, between Alexander and Culver Road in all those beautiful mansions?

Q I wouldn't say a whole lot.

A One, Al Hart. It was just off Culver Road on East Avenue. Although I imagine the Stern's must have lived on East Avenue didn't they mom?

Mrs. Bieber: I think so. And the Lowenthal's.

A But they were just as anti-semitic, weren't they mom?

Mrs. Bieber: I would say so.

A Betty was from the other side of the tracks. Her father had a grocery store on Hudson Avenue.

Mrs. Bieber: It bothers me to be on the other side of the tracks.

Q It bothered you to be on the other side of the tracks?

Mrs. Bieber: It sure did.

Q You felt inferior?

Mrs. Bieber: Yes I did. I didn't think that Herman was going to marry me because I lived there. Lauphter.

Q Well about 20 years earlier he probably wouldn't have.

A I wasn't a man yet, I wasn't thinking of getting married.

Q No, I mean if had you been the same age twenty years earlier. I'm talking about the climate of Rochester at that point, it was such a division as you were saying between the tracks, the other side of the tracks.

A It was, you see (talking over each other) on this side, even though I didn't

have it in Brooklyn. I lived with both my brothers who had established good relationships with the middle group, you might call it.

Q Right.

A Between the Germans on one side and the a . . . Of course I would make contact with those on the other side, because I'd go around and visit the Sweat Shops, the contractors, you see, and meet all these people. We'd always go over to Cohen's, of course when you went to Cohen's you met all the Jewish people who were eating in a Kosher restaurant.

A OK I think we've had a long session.

Q I enjoyed it, once I get started I can. . .

Mrs. Bieber: He likes to talk.

Lauphter

(Tape restarted)

A What chances did you have to get anywhere there, in a high position at the Gannett Newspapers?

Mrs. Bieber: When they bought the Brooklyn Daily Eagle, the auditor was a Jewish fellow called Harry Cohen, and he said that they thought that all Jews were idiots, until they met him, they liked him, they don't just allow themselves to meet, well they didn't at that time.

Q So you confronted to anti-semitism at the Gannett Newspapers?

MRS Well, I never really had any problem. I mean I worked with all (talking over each other) and I was friendly with all the secretaries. The only thing that always tickled me was when a secretary once said to me "Is it true that the Jewish people have a different color blood?" (Talking over each other) But that's the way they think.

A See it didn't matter whether you were in (couldn't understand) or in Flatbush. When we moved to Flatbush, I mean they didn't know what a Jew was.

MRS Also one other experiance I had, I dated with a Vice President of the United

Press and we were in New York, and we were dancing and he had gone out for the day in Philadelphia and came back and I don't know if he must have gotten some idea, all the sudden that I was Jewish and he was trying to find out and he said a couple things about Jewish people.

A Why didn't you tell him you were Jewish?

MRS Well because I didn't think at that point I wanted to.

A You think it would have injured your position at the home office?

MRS No, why would it?

A Well, that's why I asked. Socially and Commercially, these are two entirely different fields implied to analyze the subject of anti-semitism in relationship to your life with the people around you. I don't think you can put them on the same plane. First of all, you find commercially, sometimes people have to do business with you and you're Jewish and they have got to tolerate you. If it was the other way around, they wouldn't.

Q That's true.

A Banker's for instance, the biggest bunch of Anti-Semites in the world are bankers. Don't you think so?

Q I don't know.

A I do. In Gentile banks, commercial banks, but when they have Jewish clients that they need, you're damn toot'n, but they won't. . . Listen Shakespere wasn't wrong when he bought out the Shilock, he said he stood upon my Jewish Gaberdine and now you want me to lend you money. They needed him.

Q Well, Jewish money has always. . .

A He will not eat with you, I will not sleep with you, but I will do business with you, because that's the only level of which we have common interests.

Q I see. Did you ever feel that in your own business, that that's the only level that Gentile's dealt with you, was on the money level?

A No, absolutely not, I have been dealt with on a friendship basis. I had a

product for them, I couldn't have sold them advertising in the Jewish Ledger.

Q Right, that would be a little more obvious.