

Interviewee Leon Germanow

Interviewer Brian Mitchell

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

Setting (place of interview, people present, impressions)

The interview took place at the Germanow-Simon Company offices on St. Paul Street in Rochester. It lasted over three hours. Mr. Germanow was most cordial and vaery accomodating. He seemed most anxious to present a detailed history of the company.

Background of interviewee

Mr. Germanpw is an industrialist who heads Germanow-Simon the leading manufacturer of watch crystals. He is actively engaged in Jewish activities and has helped build a community center in Israel dedicated to the memories of Mrs. Germanow and Simon. He was educated at the Wharton School of Finance, University of Pennsylvania and has worked at varying times in all aspects of the family business.

Interview abstract

Mr. Germanow us particularly excellent in detailing the growth of a small-scale manufacturing company into a larger-scale yet specialized industrial concern. It should be noted that his father, the company's original founder, has produced an autobiography which could be made aváálable in the latter stages of the project as a reference. He is particularly good at outlining the remarkable ingenuity involved in making his company grow and prosper.

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

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| * <u> </u> Social history | ** <u> </u> Jewish community |
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Interview log

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

--see following page(s)

- *** I. President of Germanow-Simon Machine Company
- a. manufacturer of plastic watch crystals, also a partner in Tell-True Manufacturing Company (general line of manufacturing items)
 1. G-S originally started in 1916; own association originated with graduation from the Wharton School (U of Penn)
 - b. Harry (father) trained as a Russian machinist; difficult to get financing for company
 1. came to Rochester because his half-brother was in Rochester working for Bausch and Lomb
 2. father worked for a variety of companies in metro NYC area
 - a. secured a job with the Willsie Works (machine shop) who would eventually supply him with their excess WWI work when G-S first set up
 - c. first plant located on Mill Street- runs parallel to State Street
 1. leased his machinery from the Strong Machinery Co.
 2. Julius Simon formed partnership with his father when Simon's father provided money for the company by borrowing on his insurance policy
 - d. following WWI, production no longer geared to the war effort; father "a very smart man"
 1. first effort was a commercial bottle-capper; also developed a vice which kept them going
 - a. discover that there was a need for plastic watch crystal
 2. first known plastic, nitrate, used disadvantages include discoloration and shrinking
 - a. prior to plastic, all crystals had been glass
 - b. father became the first salesman --- tremendous resistance to watch repairmen
 1. eventually, plastic crystal becomes more accepted
 2. gradually, gave up their original products and concentrated on the watch crystals
 3. nitrate soon replaced by acetate, had a yellowish cast and shrank more than nitrate
 - a. Romanhaus and Dupont develop plexi-glass
- *** II. originally born on Martin Street (Joseph Ave.); moved when he were five to Laburnan Crescent (2-family house)
- a: went to # 35 school
 - b: chose the Wharton School to prepare for his father's business
- END OF
SIDE I

c. at this point, father moved to West Ave. after moved out of Mill Street due to fire

1. by 1921, in Europe setting up international market

* d. father lost heavily in the stock market; difficult to finance a son through college

1. after graduation, took a number of months off before entering the company

** III. in 1936, enters the company --- company a one product company which sees the need to diversify

a. area selected? --- bimetallic household thermometers

b. initiation into selling stems from advertising for the thermometers

1. first effort at Marshall Field (Chicago); idea was to train himself (fascinating story)

a. also went to supervise crystal sales (where the company was established) -- marked difference in the reception

** c. with WWII, Tell-True adapts itself to war work as luxury item was disbanded

1. thermometer production changed to the production of dyes

2. after war, had to dispose of the war machinery/equipment at a loss

d. initiation continues after the war; as an example, the "eraser-Placer" for typewriters

ND OF
IDE II
*** e. Boise-Cascade association stems from diversification

1. Germanow-Simon uses substantial amount of plastic; had been buying plastic material from Romanhaus and Dupont

a. Conn. inventor invents an improvement in plexiglass material which prevents it from crazing

1. unable to produce enough material; offered to buy him out and he would run the company

2. agreement to sell 50% and he would run it with G-S as the sole company

** 2. Cast-Optics Corporation set up; decide to compete with Romanhaus and Dupont

a. Dupont decided to leave the business; Dupont continues to make the raw monomer for Cast-Optics

3. Boise-Cascade offered to provide the monomer, Cast Optics merged with Boise-Cascade

* a. then no longer owned Cast Optics; they continued to supply the necessary materials

1. as a result, have large holdings in Boise-Cascade

** f. in Depression recently, had to lay off people for first time

1. business, slowly regaining strength, all plus some have been hired back

a. optimistic about business generally

- ** IV. Anti-Semitism - "never encountered any anti-Semitism as such"
- a. personal activities in the Jewish community considerable
 - 1. Mr. Germanow's efforts stem from his father's efforts
 - 2. Board of Directors of B'rith Kodesh; still maintains membership at Beth-el
 - ***
 - a. active in the Community Chest, Israel Bonds, UJWF; National Cabinet of the United Jewish Appeal
 - b. President of Jewish Home and Infirmary; UJWF, Israel Bonds
 - 1. not as active in JCC as his brother Irving
 - **
 - b. Roch Jewish community a good one but not unique; paid staff and executive director most important
 - 1. community has opened itself up in the past several years.
 - c. future of Rochester Jewish community stable; more professional people now
 - d. daughter living in Israel; married a native Israeli who runs a machine shop
 - 1. stresses the importance of a sense of homeland for the Jewish
 - **
 - e. children of Mrs. Germanow and Simon built a new Community Center in Israel in memory of their fathers
 - f. Israel will survive "'til the last man"

END OF
SIDE III

Interview with LEON GERMANOW
July 2, 1976
By Brian Mitchell

Interview 1
Tape 1
Side A

Q. I think the first thing that should be noted is that Mr. Germanow's official title is President of Germanow-Simon Machine Company. O.K. On that note, I think we can begin by examining the nature of your occupation.

A. Well, at the present time, as you indicated, I am the President of the Germanow-Simon Machine Company which is the manufacturer of plastic watch crystals. I am also a partner of Chelsea Manufacturing Company which manufactures a general line of industrial thermometers as well as laboratory thermometers and other areas of household use.

Q. There are two companies. Did one derive from the other?

A. These two companies were separately formed. The first company, Germanow-Simon Machine Co. was originally formed in 1916 by my father, Harry Germanow, and his partner, Julius Simon. They were both machinists and they worked in Rochester before getting together as partners to open up a small machine shop doing jobbing machine work for other large companies in Rochester. That was in 1916 during World War I. Then as time progressed and they built up their business and the manufacturing of different products, Tel-Tru Manufacturing Company came into existence in 1934.

Q. When did your association with the company begin?

A. My association with the company began one year after graduation from the Warton School of Finance in Pennsylvania in 1935. I began from the bottom up, you might say. Working in the factory doing various jobs in many different departments until I advanced, after one year, to a point where I was able to take over responsibilities both my father's as well as Mr. Simon's.

Q. Do you recall any of your father's comments on what it was like to own a machine company during World War I?

A. I would like to refer back to the start of our company in 1916. It was started by my father, Harry Germanow, who came to this country in early 1900, approximately, 1906 trained as a machinist in Russia. He attended a technical school.

Q. At that time that was unusual.

A. Yes. It was highly unusual because in Russia when he was a young boy the Jewish boys and girls were denied access to certain types of educational backgrounds and technical training. There was a Harand-Rothschild (that might not be the correct name), a Jewish philanthropist, who lives in England and knowing that the government of Russia would not allow these educational opportunities to Jewish people, he established technical schools throughout the country of Russia for the purpose of training young Jewish men and women in certain mechanical trades.

Q. Whereabouts in Russia was your father from?

A. Well, my dad was from a small town, it's hard for me to tell just exactly how many miles from Moscow.

Q. I know that the Rothschild's . . . (unintelligible)

A. Yes. and again I am not certain about the name, it was a certain barron who did this project and as a result of that, my father was trained to be a machinist so that he could learn a trade to earn a living with. He came to this country in 1906-07, thereabouts, and fortunately being a machinist he was able to, when he arrived in New York City, able to obtain jobs in machine shops. That helped him.

Q. Why did he originally come to America? Then, why did he come to Rochester?

A. Well, he came to the United States originally like millions and millions of other people from all over Europe. In Russia, particularly, indiscriminate killings of people of Jewish origin without any protection from the government, in small towns where it generally happened, the lack of opportunity to learn a trade or gain an education, and the fact that in those days the United States was the golden opportunity for millions. So he came here. He had no family except a step-brother who had come over a few years before. He landed in New York and worked there for a while. How he came to Rochester, I recall him telling us. He came here because his step-brother came to Rochester and worked for Bausch and Lomb and had a family here. My father came to Rochester after a number of different jobs throughout the metropolitan New York area and New Jersey area, working for such companies as Singer Sewing Machines, some small little job shops, and various kinds of hard, physical labor. He worked in one place, I recall him telling us, where they made fire escapes and that type of iron work, then he travelled on and had a couple of jobs with steel corporations. Then, he met my mother whom he had never known in Russia.

Q. Was your mother from Russia?

A. My mother was also from Russia. She came here with her twin sister also through escape from Russia. Also from the lack of opportunity there and the more of an opportunity in the United States and she came with her twin sister and settled in New York City. My father in someway or other met her in New York City at some party or something, dance, and they began to go together and fell in love and after a period of time he came to Rochester, his step-brother was here, and he secured a job with the Wilsey Works. The Wilsey Works were a machine shop.

Q. Was Rochester a large machine shop district?

A. Yes. There were large companies. He went to work for Wilsey Works and he asked my mother to come to Rochester because he was settled here. She followed him to Rochester.

Q. Now Executive Works would eventually set up its own company . . .

A. Now, it might be of some interest to you if you wish, my father wrote a book of his life and that explains in more detail his early experiences that I'm just trying to recall offhand.

Q. Is the autobiography available . . .

A. Yes. That will give you more of the details of how a young immigrant boy arrives to this country and makes a go of it.

Q. Then it should be noted that the autobiography is in Mr. Germanow's private collection, could be made available for purposes of this project.

A. That's right.

- A. As a matter of fact, Professor Karp probably has that book also. It could be in the University archives because my father wrote this book on his own, it's strictly an autobiography in his own language with no help whatsoever. My did spoke good English but had somewhat of an accent, grammatically he wasn't perfect, but he spoke very well and he wrote this book on his own daily and worked on it and revised. He would never accept any help from me or my two brothers. Of course, we were born in this country and raised in the public schools and colleges, so we had a better command of the English language than he had, but he would not allow us to revise it for him. So it is strictly his autobiography. In that book, you will find many, many details which could be of quite an interest to you regarding an immigrant boy who comes here to do good. So I guess there's no point in my trying to recall incidents in that respect.
- Q. Then, why don't we push it up to the time when you founded the company?
- A. We founded the company, which is also in the book, you can't call it a company, it was a shop, a machine shop, about the size of this room which is perhaps 14'x18'. (They looked at a picture on the wall which had the caption: 1916-1920, original shop on Mills Street). You not being a Rochestarian you probably don't know Mills St. is. (They pointed to a lathe, drill press, etc.) and they were doing general shop work.
- Q. Where would Mills Street be today?
- A. Now Mills Street, if it existed today, it's the whole area of the Genessee crossroads, the Americana and the Holiday Inn, that area. State Street at that time was quite a commercial retail area and H.B. Graves Furniture Co. on State St. was the largest furniture company in Rochester. Directly behind State Street, running directly parallel with it was Mills Street; then Front Street. Front Street was our bowery. Now of course, that's all ripped down. So you had State Street, Mills Street, running parallel. Mills Street was a narrower street behind H.B. Graves. As a matter of fact, freight deliveries to H.B. Graves Furniture Company and any other retail company all came through Mills Street. So on Mills Street there was this tiny little house, it was sort of a building but it was a house, and they rented the space in that area. They bought the machinery, I was told, on a lease basis, from Strong Machinery Company. Strong Machinery Company was a dealer of machinery. That's the original Strong family which helped out Eastman Kodak, George Eastman when he started his company. They really helped out Eastman Kodak when he started. I guess they took a lot of stock from him in exchange for machinery and that's where the Strong fortune started.
- Q. He kept it in Eastman, though.
- A. Right, that's where all those millions came from. Strong Memorial Hospital, and all that. To my recollection, I may not be 100% right on those facts, but the Strong Machinery Company has a deal with those who run on a lease basis. He leased machinery to my father to start a machine shop, and over a period of time they made it, they paid for the machinery.
- Q. Was it an arrangement for them to lease the machinery?
- A. Well, if you didn't have the capital, you know, No, they didn't call it a lease. They sold you the equipment on notes, you'd sign notes, and then you'd pay them off. The idea of leasing equipment is relatively modern. Now, they, when I say they, my father was a machinist as I told you, and he worked for Wilsey Works. Now the Wilsey Works building is right across from our Telsar Manufacturing Building on the other side of the street. (Pointed out the arrangement on a map.) It was called the Angle Machine Co., now Wilsey Works.

A. While my dad was working for the Wilsey Works, and prior to Wilsey Works, he worked in other small companies in Rochester, I don't recall the names, he worked there as a machinist on a lathe. He was a very good machinist. While he lived in Rochester, he became acquainted to a family by the name of Simon. They were very, very poor people. My father was a very poor man. They worked for \$7-\$8/week. The Simons were very, very poor. Mr. Simon, the head of the family was a tailor and worked at one of the clothing plants as you recall past history, Rochester was a real big center of clothing manufacturing. They had a young son by the name of Julius Simon who was going to high school, but they wanted to take him out of high school because they needed some income. They wanted him to get a job. They knew my father, so they asked my father whether he could get this young Julius Simon a job in the Wilsey Works and taught as an apprentice and become a machinist. My father agreed and tried to get him this job and he was successful. He went to his foreman and evidently they wanted some young boys to train as an apprentices. So he got a job for Julius Simon who was instead, perhaps 15 years younger than my father. Wait, he was younger, but I don't know exactly how much. My father, incidentally, came over here when he was about 19 or 18. In any case, he got Julius Simon a job and was teaching Julius Simon to become a machinist alongside his bench and his machine. Then my father, this was during World War II, and my father felt that he would like to become his own boss but he didn't have much money. He was married and I was the firstborn and he had about \$500. He needed about \$1,000 to start a shop. He went to his foreman and told him what he would like to do and his foreman said O.K., if you can start your shop up, I'll see that you get some work. This is during the war, and all the shops were busy. He asked a number of the employees whether they had \$500 and would they go into equal partners with him, to start up a little machine shop and do a little job work. Well, of course, they turned him down for many reasons and most of the reasons were that they had a secure job and they didn't want to take a gamble. So then he went to Julius Simon's family, his mother and father, and said, now look, I want to start my own little shop, I only have \$500, I need \$1,000 to buy three to four pieces of equipment, and if you can raise \$500, I will take your son with me as a partner, 50-50, and we'll have our own little business. Well, Julius Simon's father apparently had an insurance policy which had some equity in it, and he got \$500 out of that equity. He turned it over to my father . . .

Q. He was willing to take that gamble?

A. Yes. Right. He was foresighted. He had to cash in his insurance policy to give his son a chance to go into business. So they got started in that way. With the \$1,000, they rented the place on Mills Street, and they got the equipment in and the foreman of the Wilsey Works started to feed them some surplus work that they couldn't handle themselves and that's the way they gradually got started in the machine shop on Mills Street. The other people, . . . In later years, occasionally I would meet someone whom I didn't know, some man, and he would say to me, you know, my father used to work with your father. Yes, as a matter of fact, my father was asked by your father to go into business with him. And he turned your father down.

Q. There are people out there kicking themselves . . .

A. I said your father had company because he had asked others . . . So anyway, that was the way that machine shop started. And that's where the name came from: Germanow-Simon Machine Company. And the company name hasn't been changed to this date although the product has been changed.

Q. O.K. It's the end of World War I. Was business still relatively good after World War I?

A. That's a very good question because you know, I'm sure, of the unfortunately, after after every war there is a business letdown because primarily business production was geared to war efforts and then suddenly you have to go back to your own product

whatever it might be to keep business going and in their case they had this little machine shop and they had quite a bit of work. What my father, he was a very, I have to say this, with due modesty for him, was a very smart man. He realized that once the war ended, this would be shut off for him, this type of work. Because Wilsey Works was then be able to handle whatever work came to them themselves. He knew he had to have a product to sell and not just be a job shop for someone else, because when you're a job shop for someone else, you're always depending on them for work. You can know the end result: if they had no work, you had no work. He felt they had to have some kind of product to sell. My father was an inventive type of person and so he and Julius Simon, who could by then be a very well trained machinist, who also had a rather inventive mind as it turned out, which his parents didn't realize either. He was given the opportunity to develop and so they tried to develop different types of products that could be sold to the consumer and one of their products was a bottle capper. In those days, there was a great deal of home canning, tomato canning, etc. A bottle capper was a good item. The bottle capper had potential but not great, because there were other bottle cappers on the market. So that was one product they tried. Then, also, being machinists, they developed a machine vice for holding metal parts for filing, and so forth in machine shops. It was sold to many of the major manufacturing (local) companies as well as throughout the country.

- Q. They were companies like General Electric, Goodyear, Edison and Sullivan.
- A. Right. Many of those names we can still recognize today. This vice was a very unusual, it had some unusual features to it because obviously there were other vices on the market as well made by . . . they developed some unusual features to it. This kept them going.
- Q. Each time they were only able to capture a fraction . . .
- A. Only a fraction of the market.
- Q. But it was enough to keep them going.
- A. Enough to keep he and my father keep earning a living. They also at the same time had one or two other men by then working for them. So it shows that they were trying very hard to develop products that would keep them going and change them from a job shop to a manufacturer of their own products. They had control of the sales. Now, my father by then was not only in production but was becoming the salesman and now you have to picture a young man, not very well conversant with the English language although by then he was probably able to make himself understood, and starting to take over the business end of the small operation. He not only worked in the shop but after they produced the product, he went out and tried to sell it.
- Q. Was he also responsible for keeping the books?
- A. Yes, he was responsible for keeping the books, I presume they must have had an accountant for details, but he was responsible for keeping the books and so was Simon because Simon had gone to high school and knew how to put the figures down. They weren't very big figures and didn't have a lot of customers, so it wasn't a very detailed operation. Now, as I indicated to you, my dad was a, had an inventive mind, and he had in the meantime my aunt, my mother's twin sister, married a man who was also a boyhood friend of my father's in New York City. This man also came over from Europe, not at the same time that my father did, from Russia a year or two later and he wound up eventually in the watch importing business. Now how he got into that field, I don't know. Because he originally had been trained as a machinist and my father and he were boyhood friends in Russia. If I recall

correctly now, I could be wrong on this, it was through my father's friend that my father met my mother because his friend had met my mother's twin sister. As time went on they were producing these several products as I mentioned, the capper and the vice. His friend in New York who became my uncle my marriage was in the watch importing business and he mentioned apparently to my father that there was a need for a plastic watch crystal for watches because glass crystals broke easily. So my father worked on that idea and developed a plastic crystal and this plastic was the first known plastic produced in the world you might say by one of the companies who was making plastic was called nitrate. You're probably familiar with that. Nitrate plastic was the first plastic developed. Prior to that they used glass or eisen glass.

- Q. I was speaking with Dr. Meyer and discussing . . .
- A. Yes. That's the same idea. Nitrate is an explosive, the basic part of it, and was very volatile. But that was the first sheet plastic material and from that sheet plastic my father developed, together with Mr. Simon, the idea of cutting out circles so that they would fit into a round watch and then you would have a plastic crystal that wouldn't break.
- Q. Were watches standardized at that time so that they would all fit?
- A. Yes. There were very few different shapes, mostly round watches. Small number of sizes which they developed out of plastic nitrate. Nitrate had some bad characteristics. Its number one important characteristic was that it wouldn't break. It was pliable, flexible so that you couldn't break it. However, it turned color. It would be produced with a bluish caste to it and it turned yellow and green and it scratched easily and it shrank so it had a lot of bad attributes. But it was a plastic crystal and it served the purpose for which it was intended. Prior to the invention, and my father got a patent on that, prior to the invention to the plastic watch crystal, all watches were glass and they were imported. They were made in Japan or France. Now Japan during World War I was cut off because they were an enemy.
- Q. Well, it was hard to get . . .
- A. Yes, of course. France was obviously in a position where they were not producing crystals. There was a market in this country for a crystal and I'm just trying to recollect . . . gradually, they produced for themselves a market for the plastic crystal. They would make up a series of sizes, put them into a small little box, developed a numbering system for them, developed the piece for inserting the crystal under pressure through the watch and they would make up a few little sets. My father had a friend in Rochester who was a travelling salesman for a hardware wholesaler and he and Mr. Simon would make up a few of these little sets
- Q. A sample case?
- A. Actually, not a sample case, but a little assortments of the crystals. My father would travel with this salesman, pay him so much a day for the use of his car, and wherever this man would go to sell his hardware supplies in many small towns, my father would go with him and look up the jewelry store or the watch repair man and he'd go to the watch repair store and try to sell him this set of crystals and try to get paid at the same time. He had to have the money to go back and produce some more. That also paid the expenses while he was traveling. My father became the first salesman. Now gradually over a period of time, this product became more acceptable. There was a tremendous amount of resistance on the part of the watch maker to use plastic crystals because his immediate answer was, well if I buy your plastic watch crystals and put them into my customer's watches, I'm going to kill off my glass watch crystal replacement business. Over a period of time, though, the

plastic watch crystal was more accepted because it was more easier to put into a watch. The plastic crystal, you merely compressed it, and snapped it on. They were really the only manufacturers of the plastic crystal. There was a great amount of detail in the book. As the crystal business became more successful, they stopped making the other product, the vice and the capper, because this looked like a better route to go for them. For a very important number one reason: There was a replacement business. They retained the name up to this day: Germanow-Simon Machine Company.

Q. What does the company produce today?

A. Just watch crystals. Over a period of time, the plastic industry developed newer and better material and each time a new approach or new material was placed on the market, the company bought that material. Today, we use a material that you cannot, as a layman, tell from glass.

Q. Until now, I had always presumed it was glass.

A. Look at this watch. That's not glass, that's plastic.

Q. Is it really?

A. It looks like a piece of glass. That material is what's used today. In primarily 99% of the watches that you see anywhere, plastic crystals.

Q. Is it also relatively scratchless?

A. Moreso than it was in 1916 with nitrate. But it still has a softer surface than glass. But the clarity is there, the breakproof feature is there, it does not shrink, it doesn't fall out or discolor.

Q. It's overcome all the basic problems found in the beginning.

A. Right. All in the process of the improvement of the plastics industry. First there was nitrate and it had those bad features. Then, from nitrate, acetate developed by some of the major plastics companies. Acetate had a yellowish caste, permanently. It did not change color but it had a yellow caste. However, it shrank more than nitrate. Then, Roman House Company and Dupont Company developed an acrylic plastic which is called plexiglass by Roman House and lucite by Dupont. They came out with a material that looked like glass but was almost breakproof. We would adapt this material if we felt it was what we wanted.

Q. That raises another series of questions. Could you begin to relate your own interests to the beginnings of the company? Also, how did the company remain under control of its share of the market?

A. Well, I, of course, was born in Rochester together with two brothers. My brother Norman was the middle brother and my brother Irving was the youngest brother. I went through the local schools.

Q. What neighborhood did you live in?

A. Originally, I was born on Martin Street. You know where Bausch and Lomb is down here? Well, as you go towards Clinton Avenue there is a street named Martin Street. It's about half of what it used to be. That was sort of the heart of the Jewish neighborhood.

Q. Wasn't the Joseph Avenue area?

- A. Joseph Avenue, exactly. That's where the ethnic Jewish group lived. When I was five years old, we moved, by then my father was becoming a little more successful and like all ethnic groups, as some became successful, they all moved out of their neighborhoods into other neighborhoods. So my father, at that time when we lived on Martin Street, where I was born, we lived in a two-family house, and he rented a flat. Then he bought his own house on Laburnam Crescent, which is on the other side of the city, off of Monroe Avenue. He bought a two-family house because in those days, immigrants, that's the way they advanced.
- Q. That was a good investment.
- A. Yes. They always bought a house in which another tenant could live, help pay part of their costs of the house.

Tape 1
Side B

- A. I guess the reason I chose the Warton School was primarily to help me because I knew my objective was to come into my father's business which was a very simple viewpoint and purpose. By that time they were quite successful and had become the major producers of watch crystals in the U.S.A.
- Q. During the Depression, you graduated in 1934-35.
- A. That was a rough period.
- Q. I was curious. Did it interfere?
- A. Yes. It didn't interfere with my schooling but it made it very difficult financially. Because just to backtrack somewhat, we went from 1916 with my father and Mr. Simon becoming more successful in the watch crystal business. They moved from Mills Street. Incidentally, I should relate, the reason they moved from Mills Street were two: One, their business was growing. Two, they got burned out. They got burned out because of the material they used: nitrate. It was a very explosive material. My father was out traveling and Mr. Simon was turning into the inside production man. My father was handling the sales and the front financial end of the business and Mr. Simon was turning into a very good production engineer and he had never gone beyond the third year of high school.
- Q. Did the relationship between the two remain good?
- A. Remained 100% beautiful. There was never an argument between them until Mr. Simon passed away a couple of years ago. It was like brothers. Better than brothers you might say because they never had an argument. They had a perfect relationship which is very unusual in business partnerships. My father was away traveling trying to sell watch crystals and he got a telephone call at the hotel one night and Mrs. Simon had told him they had a big fire in Rochester and the place burned down. One of the employees had pulled out a plug from the wall and there was some chips of nitrate around there and it went up like that. The whole place burned down. It was in the middle of winter and I recall in my mind seeing pictures somewhere of this fire and these huge icicles hanging from everything else. So they had to move. So they moved over to West Avenue. That building on West Avenue is right opposite the Round House.

I don't know if you're familiar with West Avenue down near the Buffalo Road. There's a big railroad Round House and that's the building that they bought. So they bought that building which gave room for expansion and in that building these pictures were taken. By then they were doing a worldwide business and they had agents. My father did the developing of that business. He developed all the agents in Europe. He came to this country in 1906-07, I'm not certain. He started in the business in 1916. By 1921, he was already over in Europe setting up agents to sell these watch crystals. Scandinavian countries, England, . . .

- Q. We were discussing a period in 1930 as the beginning of advertising and sales. Now we were in particular discussing that the company had become internationally known and national sales were beginning were beginning to be pushed and it should be noted that there were a series of newspaper ads from various countries particularly in Europe which are particularly fascinating. So we were discussing the period of the 1930's.
- A. Yes. And you had asked me what prompted me to go to the Warton School. I told you at that time that because I had wanted to come into my father's business. I felt that a training in the Warton School would be a good background. There I majored in Accounting and various of other types of courses, Insurance, etc. But you also indicated to me that it was a period of Depression which is correct. That was our first period of Depression that I had experienced and my father like most people in the country at that time were invested heavily in the stock market. Just about everybody played the stock market no matter who they were. Those days, it was very easy to get into the stock market because all you had to do was put down 10% and the balance you borrowed from the bank and you could buy anything you wanted to. Then the crash came along and he was pretty well wiped out, he and Mr. Simon were both pretty well wiped out.
- Q. Mr. Simon ...
- A. Mr. Simon also invested heavily in the stock market but they, the banks sold out whatever stocks they had and they owed the bank a lot of money. It took them about ten years after the crash to finally pay off all the banks the money they owed the banks because they had no desire in any way to declare bankruptcy.
- Q. Obviously, because Mr. Germanow was trying to put you through college.
- A. At the time he was trying to put me through college. So while I was in college of course I realized the severity of the problem and I had odd jobs put together with some of his help and I got through. I was not any different from the thousands of others who were in college at the same time. As time went on, President Rossevelt came in and gave the country new hope, new philosophical approach, you might say. Business gradually started improving then and I came out of college and went into the business. I came in, and of course I used to work in the during the summers, even while I was going to high school, summer vacations, I always worked in the factory from the age of about 14 or 15 on. I always liked to work here. I came out of school, I took a number of months off and came to work for them because that brings us into another company, Tel-Tru Manufacturing Company.
- Q. I would think we need no structure, if you just want to move chronologically . . .
- A. O.K.
- Q. We're at about the time the second company was being formed.

A. Now, when I came into the company, which is in 1935, maybe 1936, as I explained to you the Germanow-Simon Machine Company was by that time was a one-product company, making watch crystals, plastic watch crystals. And it had become the dominant company in manufacturing watch crystals in the U.S.A. as well as in the world. There were several small competitors that started up in this country, but they were very small and you might say that the Germanow-Simon was dominant. Then, my father again, and Mr. Simon realized that they shouldn't be dependent on one product in one company and they sought to diversify and they, today the words of conglomerate, litigation, was used by everyone. In those days, the idea of diversification was not that popular. It wasn't particularly desired.

Q. Others thought they had a sure thing.

A. Yes. But they felt they had to go into a different direction, entirely, away from the . . . They wanted to get away from the watch crystal industry, from the narrow path of the watch maker and the watch material distributor and the watch field. They wanted a material or company that was entirely different. Well, in 1935, there was a small company in Rochester that manufactured thermometers and these thermometers were all metal. This company was being run by a man who had formally worked for the Rochester Manufacturing Company. This company does not exist today in Rochester. Many, many years ago the Rochester Manufacturing Company, a family by the name of Hastings, owned it. They made bi-metalic household thermometers for ovens, refrigerators, indoors, outdoors, etc. They made only the bi-metalic type. Prior to that time the only type of thermometer that existed for the house was the glass tube thermometer. The Rochester Manufacturing Company made these bi-metalic thermometers. This man worked for them, he was a tool and dye designer and he decided that he'd like to go into his own business. That's the way America was built. So he started his own company that made thermometers. It was during the Depression years, it was tough, 1935-36 were still very tough years. He got it going and he was producing and selling but not getting ahead. He was going into debt. He put this little company up for sale. My father and Mr. Simon learned about it and they bought it. They bought the company and he came along with it. He developed more models and they marketed this line of thermometers under a name which they developed, Tel-Tru which is their trade name and the company name today. Mr. Michael Vicanti, who was the man who originally started this company, came along with it to run it because Simon and my father had no expertise in making thermometers. That company, that equipment was brought over to this building, the building we're in now, 408 St. Paul Street and was placed up on the fourth floor of this building. That floor is about 4000 square feet. Up on that floor they had a small punch press department, a couple of punch presses, a tool and dye department, and an assembly department, a spray department, all very, very small because the sales were limited. Gradually, over a period of time, they developed that company. That's when I came into the picture.

Q. That's important, and I do think you did a good job driving the points, companies together.

A. So that's when I came in and my training then became involved with the two companies, the Germanow-Simon Machine Company and how to make and sell watch crystals, and how to sell and make thermometers.

Q. Did you employ someone, or did you advertise on your own?

A. No, when it came to advertising, for Germanow-Simon and for Tel-Tru, we always employed an outside advertising agency. The first advertising agency that my father

ever used was the Ed Wolf Advertising Agency and the Ed Wolf and Associates is still in business today. We don't use them anymore, though. So they always did that. But, my father and myself were always very much oriented and in when it came time to develop the ads.

Q. I had suspected that you might be interested . . .

A. As a matter of fact, a number of courses that I took at the Warton School was in advertising and my father was always interested in expressing himself in advertising. We were always involved. The drawings and putting together of copy was put together by a professional agency. So I came to work for the two companies, you might say. At that time, the Germanow-Simon company was a big company, in its industry. After I worked in the factory, I don't know how far you want me to go as far as my personal .

Q. What happened during World War II?

A. Well, that's an entirely different episode. I might digress or backtrack for a moment. When I started work, we had two companies. One day my dad called me into his office and he said, O.K. Leon, I think you worked in the factory enough, I think you've got a pretty good background on how to make watch crystals and how to make thermometers, he said, but you know anybody can know how to make something, you have to know how to sell it. You will recall the stories I told you about my sales experiences as a young man with a limited knowledge of English going out on the road and trying to sell. It's not an easy job. This is the time for you to start your initiation in selling. My only experience in selling at any time has been when I was going to high school, I used to work in some of the retail shoe stores in Rochester. I said O.K., I'd never been out on the road and I'd never sold. He said neither did I but I learned from experience. You're going to train yourself. I said, where will I go, what will I do? He said, see that sample case over in the corner there? Take it and go out and try to sell thermometers. Go to Chicago. I said O.K. What about the crystals? Put some crystals in your pocket and go visit some of our jobbers when you're in Chicago. Also call some of the retailers and see what the market is for our crystals. I made a reservation on a train. We had a beautiful station. It was huge, like Grand Central Station in New York. Money was very tight in those days so I went to the YMCA which was downtown in Chicago, near the Palmer House. I paid 75 cents a night there for a room. That day that I arrived in Chicago I went to Marshall Field, the largest department store in Chicago, and thermometers in those days were primarily sold in optical departments, jewelry stores, gift stores. I said that I'd like to see the buyer of the optical goods. She said what have you got and I said thermometers. She said, that will be Dr. Ferguson. I still remember that. I went to his office, and in those days buyers for the department had the authority to buy. I told him I had a line of thermometers that I'd like to show you. He said, well, you saw my counter. I have a whole line of thermometers, I don't need anymore. I said that we had something a little different and he looked at them. He asked me to tell him something about them and I was so flustered when I was telling him. He asked me the prices, which I had memorized but forgotten because he had me so terrified. He said, son what's your name? I said Leon. He said, Leon, sit down in that chair. Now, look, he said, apparently you don't know too much about thermometers. I said, to tell you the truth Doctor, I don't. You're the first man I've called on with these thermometers. He said, well I knew that when you first started to talk. I'm going to give you a lesson on your thermometers. For twenty minutes, he went through and explained everything.

Q. And how to sell them.

A. Yes. And how to sell them, Give me a pitch, give me a line. Then, he said, Leon do you think you know a little bit more about thermometers? I said I knew a hell of

a lot more. He said, O.K. you got an order book? I said yes and pulled it out and he said, you write down what I tell you. He ordered the whole line. I thanked him very much for all his help. I told him I didn't think I was ever going to forget him. He said, I enjoy doing what I do. When I walked out of that store, I was a new man. I felt I could sell. Now I didn't fear going in. I had good products to sell, the right prices, and I can talk man to man.

Q. And Marshall Field had bought them.

A. Yes. So from there I went across the street to Pierce and Conrad. Then I had more confidence. I asked for the buyer. I gave him the pitch and he didn't buy but he said the next time I need some of these models I'll send in an order. He said, you've got a good line and I'll need some in about a month or so and I'll send in an order. Sure enough, an order came in. Then I started going to jewelry and hardware stores. I spent about two weeks in Chicago and that's where I got my breaking in period. In the meantime, while I was there, I called on some of our watch material distributors. Of course, there I have a little more confidence because there we were major and they needed our line. With him, I had no fear.

Q. Was your father satisfied?

A. I came back in a few weeks, and he was very satisfied. And from that time on, my sales experience grew to the point where I was on the road training salesmen.

Q. It seems as though he trained you well.

A. He did. He was a remarkable man in one very important aspect. He allowed his sons authority.

Q. Which included authority to make mistakes.

A. Right. Exactly. That's the important part of it. As long as the mistake didn't put the company on the way out. My brothers and I were given authority without having constantly to say, should I? When I first started out and I wanted to do something, I would go up and ask him. He appreciated that. But after a while, he said to me once, Leon from now on unless it's a major decision which really affects all of us, you go ahead and handle it the way you think is best.

Q. He slowly instilled confidence in you.

A. That's what he wanted to do. I did the same thing with my brothers that my father did with me. I still do today because I am much older today and they are younger and Mr. Simon's son came into the business and they have their responsibilities and I don't interfere in their decisions.

Q. It's interesting to see that you all have confidence in one another.

A. Yes.

Q. It's a good way to run a business.

A. Yes. We're small but . . .

Q. You're a family business.

A. That's right. So that was my sales experience and how I got started in sales. Tel-Tru Manufacturing was developing and developed a line of thermometers that we

sold very successfully to all types of outlines handling thermometers, etc. Then, World War II came. It was obvious that all nonessentials, consumer products had to be eliminated or cut down considerably. And thermometers were one of them. We were making two types of products: one was a service oriented consumer oriented watch crystal and one was a luxury item. We had to stop manufacturing the luxury item because we couldn't get the materials.

Q. Sure. But there was a call for watch crystals.

A. Exactly. However, watch crystals were an essential consumer item because if you lost the crystal out of your watch your watch was useless. So we operated the Germanow-Simon Machine Company manufacturing watch crystals under a monthly allocation of plastic materials from the government. Our production was civilian oriented for the watch repair trade and war oriented. We had huge orders from the watch companies making watches for the military. By the millions. Every soldier had to have a watch. We supplied the watch crystals for those watches.

Q. That must have been a considerable growth to your company.

A. Yes, it was. And that was the only product we made at that time. However, that's not to say we laid back and didn't do anything. Tel-Tru Manufacturing Company diverted it's total production to the manufacture of war goods.

Q. So what would you make?

A. O.K. During World War II, Tel-Tru Thermometer Company manufactured literally by the thousands, 30 and 50-caliber bullet dyes, bullet case dyes. Every bullet is a brass case. That case has to come out of a dye. These dyes that we made were made of a very hard steel and they were precise. They had to be perfect. We developed a method here on our own, through research, of producing these dyes faster than any other company in the country. We received government orders for these dyes. Our entire production facilities was turned over to the production of these dyes.

Q. So you subcontracted . . .

A. We subcontracted many parts for major manufacturers who had war contracts and we had primary contracts of our own for bullet dyes. As I said, many of the parts we made, we didn't know where they went or what they were for. Most of the military contracts we had were high precision work.

Q. I see the total lack of imperfection for this work.

A. Yes. That's what we did during World War II. At the end of World War II, like every other company, we had to go back into our own markets to keep the company going because war contracts were cancelled and the war was over with and there was no need for military hardware anymore. Tel-Tru had to go back manufacturing thermometers. We had to buy a lot of equipment that we no longer used and make room for equipment used to produce thermometers.

Q. You had to dispose of equipment. Wasn't that a loss?

A. Yes. Just because there was such a tremendous surplus. Everyone was doing the same thing. Gradually we got back into the manufacturing of thermometers and got back into our markets again.

Q. Did the market expand in a relatively continuous process?

A. The market of Tel-Tru Manufacturing Company, we started going into making other products. We felt we wanted to diversify away from thermometers only.

Q. What were some of those other products?

A. Well, we were always looking. One of them, for instance, was a product we could offer to the office supply trade, the eraser placer. The eraser placer was a little gadget which attached to the side of the standard typewriter used in an office in those days and it worked on a spring arrangement. You had your eraser on the end of a coil, you pulled the coil out, erased your mistake, and then the coil simply pulled the eraser back in place. Of course, your mistakes are eliminated by insertion of a small piece of paper on the roll. So the eraser placer had a market and we sold thousands of them but gradually the typewriter manufacturers changed the outside cases to point where the eraser placer as we made it couldn't be used anymore. It turned out to be a dead item.

Q. It seems that in the course of our interview that one of the keys to success has been the fact that you've been adaptive.

A. Yes.

Q. A particular period comes along, and you tried to adjust to that particular period.

A. Yes. I have to backtrack for you again. Directly after World War II, you did ask me what happened. We have to go back further, how did we get into the manufacturing of war materials? We were primarily a punch press oriented factory. In order to produce the types of products that were necessary for war purposes, such as the bullet dye and various types of parts, to be made on lathe and milling machines, we didn't have a great abundance of that type of equipment. It was very difficult to go out and buy that type of equipment because everyone was out there. You had to buy used equipment, otherwise, you couldn't find it. We needed a few lathes. There was a small company in Rochester named the Hubb Machine Company. The Hubb Machine Company was located down on South Avenue. All those buildings are gone now. It was owned by a man who owned the Leo Automobile Agency.

Tape 2
Side A

A. Now we have to revert back to Germanow-Simon Machine Company. The Germanow-Simon Machine Company being the largest producer of plastic watch crystals in the U.S.A., used a considerable amount of raw material for their products. One day we learned that a small plastic manufacturer located in Connecticut had developed a new formulation for plastic materials to be used for watch crystal purposes only. I might explain it this way. We had been buying all of our materials from Roman House and Dupont. There was a straight acrylic material, it looked like a piece of glass, but it had one bad characteristic: under any kind of pressure, it would show cracking lines. Now if you compressed the crystals, you wouldn't see it at the moment but about a week later you would see it. That was inherent if acrylic plastic sheet materials. You couldn't eliminate it. But it was the best material on the market at that time because it looked like a piece of glass. Now this man claims that he had developed a new plastic material for watch crystals with an acrylic but with some additional elements added to it so it would crack. He came to us and showed us the material and sure enough, it did exactly what he said it would do. He was making this material in a

small garage behind his house. He had set up all his chemical operations out there. We started to buy some of it but obviously he couldn't produce enough. So we said to him, look, we'll buy you out and you run the company. We'll supply the capital and you'll expand because he didn't have the borrowing capabilities. he said, no, he wouldn't do that but he would be willing to sell 50% of his company and he would run it. We said, O.K., we'll do it that way. You will agree as 50% owner that we will be the only customers. So we made the deal. My brother Norman, my middle brother, moved to New Jersey because we rented a larger plant in New Jersey and we moved his operation from Connecticut to New Jersey. My brother Norman, who lived in Rochester at that time, moved to New Jersey to undertake the management of this new operation. He was going to handle the front end of the sales and this partner of ours was going to handle the production. That's what we did. Gradually, as time went on, that company called the Caste Optics Corporation, got its name from the fact that the sheets were caste in glass molds as a method of making them. And they called it optics because it had an optical quality, it was clear. We developed that company originally, primarily and only making materials for us for watch purposes. But, that was an insignificant tonage compared to what the tonage was in the fields that Roman House and Dupont was running under. So we said, look, you're making the material for us, that's fine, but how about expanding this operation and going into competition with Roman House and Dupont? It was decided that we would do so.

Q. And the other fellow agreed?

A. Yes. A young fellow, my brother's age. We, at that time, had a fortunate occurrence for us. The Dupont Corporation decided to stop manufacturing sheet Lucite material. This left Roman House the only manufacturer in the States. Dupont was, knowing us, knowing that we had a company down there, wanted to perhaps in the back of their minds, maybe I'm giving too much credit to ourselves, wanted Roman House to still have a major competitor in that field. Seeing the possibility of supplying the raw motimer to us because they made the basic raw motimer, we had to buy the basic raw materials from Dupont. It was a liquid form. So Dupont agreed to sell our company, Caste Optics Corporation, the basic motimer and they decided to manufacturer straight acrylic sheets like Roman House along with the special formulation for ourselves. Gradually, that phase of the Caste Optics Corporation business grew like that. With Dupont out of the market, that left only Roman House. Consequently, over a period of a number of years, developed the Caste Optics Corporation to the point where it was a major secondary competitor of Roman House, they were still the major producer. We became the largest purchaser of raw motimer from Dupont Corp. They shipped in two tank cars a day to our plant in New Jersey. From the initial plant of about 4,000 square feet, where they started to formulate the special formulation for watch crystals for us, we wound up after a period of 8 or 9 years, with a total manufacturing capacity of around 200,000 square feet. All these were brand new plants located in an industrial park who leased the plants, we didn't own them. Each plant was about 50,000 square feet. Each plant duplicated the other plant so should you have an explosion in one plant, you wouldn't be out of business. We wound up making the acrylic in about 50 or 60 different colors. Acrylic sheeting is supplied to the sign making industry. All the signs in the gas stations are made of acrylic. We were a major producer of sheet acrylic.

Q. I didn't know there was such a market for it.

A. Yes. We became a very large manufacturer of it. We had distributors all over the country. However, we had one basic weakness. We did not make our own motimer.

Q. What if Dupont shut it off?

A. Well, we would have been in tough shape. Although, it was possible that Roman House would supply it to us. But anyway, Dupont used to send their men down to our plant all the time giving us advice and helping us. Their research department was always at our disposal. We had a big operation. Alright, Electric Bond and Share Company which was primarily a holding company. They had a division called the Escambia Chemical Division which manufactured various types of chemicals. They had been experimenting on a new method of making the raw motimer for acrylic sheeting to go into Roman House and Dupont. They were a big company on their own. They built a \$25 million pilot plant. In order for us to have gone into the basic manufacturing of motimer, we would have had to have spent \$50-\$75 million. Of course, we weren't in that type of position. Now, Escambia Chemical had built a pilot plant for \$25 million to make this new method of making motimer. It was successful. If you're going to have a plant like that, you've got to have someone who's really going to buy your product. So they were trying to find a captive market for it. And they knew of the Caste Optics Corporation so they came to us and said, now look, we're making the basic motimer out of this new method and you don't make your own basic motimer. How about us getting together? We'll supply you with all the motimer. That would give them a captive user of x number of tonage a month and we would then also have a steady supply and own our own, you might say, be partners.

Q. Would this be a full agreement?

A. So we, after many months of maneuvering, finally decided to merge with them. We then, no longer, really owned Caste Optics Corporation although they continued to supply us with all the materials we required. They were buying the raw matimer from Escambia. Then as time went on, it was rather interesting, Electric Bond and Share tried to take over Taylor Instrument Company in Rochester. They failed because Taylor immediately ran to Sybron which at that time was called Reuter Dental. Sybron is a recent name. In order to escape Electric Bond and Share's tender offer, they ran to Sybron, and Sybron took them over. Taylor today is a business of Sybron. Well, Electric Bond and Share, Boise Cascade, which is a lumber business in other areas, perhaps you know, they own a company in Rochester. They decided to buy out Electric Bond and Share, merge with them. We, of course, on the Stock Exchange, deal, at that time, we were one of the largest stock holders of Electric Bond and Share and today we have a large holding in Boise Cascade stock.

Q. I'd like to ask you one more question about the business. What do you think of the future?

A. Well, let me answer it this way. When we had our recent Depression, recession, we had a sluff-off of business like everybody else. It came quite quickly. As a result of that, for the first time in the history of our two companies here, we had to lay off people. We never laid off any people since 1916. We always managed to keep them working. In the Depression years, my father tells me we never laid off anybody. We worked short weeks in the Depression years in the 1930's. In this last recession-depression, our production was so great and sales dropped off so quickly we tried to keep everybody working but our shelves were just getting loaded with inventory. We were gobbling up raw materials and putting it on the shelves. We're a conservative type of company. We expand within ourselves. We don't borrow from banks unless we have to for certain period of time. That went on until the first of this year, business started to show some life. At the present time, we're very, very busy and we've called back just about everybody we had laid off.

Q. What do you think about business prospects in the future?

A. With respect to the future, we're quite optimistic. The products that we make are service items, they're not for the luxury market and we don't have the ups and downs of the luxury market. We feel that whatever the general business conditions are, we will get our share of them.

Q. Do you think the government . . . (unintelligible)

A. I think so. Let's be realistic about it. There are many demands on the government, local as well as federal which are mandated. Welfare systems, social security, unemployment, those are all mandated. You can't cut it out. These costs are mandated and the government is forced to go along with them.

Q. You're Jewish. Your business has always grown steadily. Were you always accepted in the community? Did you ever have any anti-Semitism practiced against you?

A. Well, now you're asking about our lives and my life, businesswise and socially, outside our business.

Q. Well, even within the business community.

A. Well, within the business community, I can frankly say that I have never encountered nor do I feel my father ever encountered nor Mr. Simon, any anti-Semitism. We have always been active in the Jewish community.

Q. Could you very briefly, outline your work in the Jewish community?

A. Yes. In the Jewish community, I can say this. My efforts in the Jewish community stem from my father's efforts because not only was he a businessman who fortunately through good luck became successful. He always did his part in the community. He was active in Temple Beth El. I now belong to Temple Beth El and Temple B'rith Kodesh. I'm on the Board of Directors of Temple B'rith Kodesh. My father was always active in all the fund drives, as well as the Community Chest drives. I became very active in all our Jewish community efforts and in a number of the general community efforts such as the Community Chest drives, the YMCA, the United Jewish Welfare Fund, Israel Bond. I was on the National Cabinet of the United Jewish Appeal.

Q. You were involved in the Jewish Home and Infirmary?

A. I was the President of the Jewish Home and Infirmary, I was the President of the United Jewish Welfare Fund, I was President of Israel Bond, and have always worked very actively in those areas.

Q. Are you actively involved in the JCC?

A. Not as active in the JCC as my brother Irving. He was President of the JCC. I never really was that active in the JCC.

Q. What do you think of the Rochester Jewish community?

A. I think the Rochester Jewish community is a very good one. I don't think it's unique. Some communities are better organized than others, based on the capabilities of the Executive Directors of the various organizations. If you've got a good paid staff, you've got a good organization.

Q. Do you think it's a closed community, or is it relatively open?

A. I think that the Jewish community of Rochester in the last number of years has opened itself up. This is to more general community activities. But again, as an ethnic group, primarily pointed towards its own ethnic activities. You will also find this in other ethnic groups. As third, fourth, and fifth generations come along, they open up more to the outside world.

Q. Would you say that this generation is as religious as your father's?

A. My father, one of the basic reasons why he left Russia was because of religion. His father was so Orthodox in his approach to religion, that my father rebelled. He used to say that my father wouldn't be any good because he doesn't study the religion. When he came to this country he became a non-religious person. He didn't join a temple until I was five or six years old and a friend came to him and said, now look, Leon ought to go to Sunday School and you ought to join a temple. My father then joined Temple Beth El. Today, I consider myself a good Jew. I'm not Kosher. Apparently, in their own way, a Jewish person is just as religious as the Jewish person was years ago but in a much broader, liberal sense. Our memberships in the temples seem to be growing and I think they're growing in the churches also.

Q. What do you think about the future of the Rochester Jewish community?

A. I think the future is stable. It's a mixture now, much different from what it was. There are more professional people coming into other areas, engineering areas, because of the large corporations such as Kodak, Xerox, there are more opportunities for Jewish workers here. Bausch and Lomb and Kodak were closed to various ethnic groups and primarily Jewish. Today, they all have many Jewish men. It has changed the ethnic group. I think it's a vital, dynamic Jewish community that takes part in everything, expresses itself, and expresses itself perhaps more readily than other ethnic groups. It's expertise in fund raising is unparalleled.

Q. They are also able to contribute to non-Jewish organizations.

A. That's right. We participate in all the fund drives and give to every fund. RIT, YMCA, Community Chest, whatever. I have a daughter, son-in-law, and three grandchildren living in Israel. My daughter went to college in Israel and met an Israeli. He has a machine shop. He fought in three wars so far.

Q. He's eligible to be called for military duty?

A. Oh, yes. He goes to camp training every other month.

Q. Have you been to Israel?

A. I've been there so many, many times.

Q. What's your impression of it?

A. Well, it's hard to express, of course. You see, I have to say it this way. The Jewish people have been dispersed for two thousand years, never had a country of its own. Now, in 1948, they became a country. When they became a country and they could fight for their country, there was finally a place where a Jew could go who were not wanted elsewhere. The establishment of a country or a state for any people gives that ethnic group a backbone. But, as a minority group, no one knows

what a minority group feels like except that minority. This applies to everybody, the blacks, etc. There are all sorts of arguments about the Palestinians and the refugees, that could have all been remedied if the Arab countries would have allowed those refugees to come back and stay in Israel instead of forcing them out. That's the whole story. The Jewish people finally had a country and they had people to fight for that country and it gave the Jewish people all over the world a sense of, a focal point on which to expend their energy for their fellow Jews with no place to go except but there.

Q. Are you an active Zionist?

A. Well, yes. The word Zionism is a difficult word to explain. I am pro Israel, I am for the state of Israel and if you call that Zionist, I am a Zionist. The Arab world, in some publications, are saying that Zionists are racist. Well that's baloney. We've built a community center in Israel in a small biblical town of Yahvney. There are Roman ruins in that town. It was inhabited mainly by North African Jews. In Israel, you have a total of 100 mixed groups of Jews that all have different customs and everything else. They were raising funds to build schools and community centers in Israel because the Israeli government didn't have enough money to do that. We were shown on a map of such and such a town didn;t have a community center and wanted one in memory of my father and Mr. Simon's children. We got together and provided the funds for building the center. Today, they have a beautiful center just like the JCC. I've been there many times. It has everything in it. I think they'll survive till the last man, let's put it that way because in the years to come, there's going to be more of an understanding with the Arab countries. They're tough enough.