

ROCHESTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT (Rochester Jewish community 1904-1975)

Interviewee Nelson (and Anne) Kirschenbaum

Interviewer Dennis B. Klein

Date(s) of interview June 16, 1976

Setting (place of interview, people present, impressions)

The interview took place in the Kirschenbaum home in an atmosphere of heightened curiosity--Kirschenbaum about myself and the project, I about Kirschenbaum and labor Zionism. Mid-way on Tape 1, Side B, Anne Kirschenbaum (Nelson's wife) introduced herself and talked about her experiences with local manifestations of anti-Semitism and the importance of Israel. The pace of our conversation was often fast and furious.

Background of interviewee

Mr. Kirschenbaum's important contribution has been in the area of Zionism, first as a labor Zionist (1930+), then as Director of Israel Bonds (1950s+). He had been instrumental in the local Poale Zion and in the establishment of the Pro-Palestine Summer Camp in Kendall, NY. His activity in the 1930s helped to consolidate the local Jewish Community.

Interview abstract

A highly unusual interview, this conversation often revolved around issues of commitment to Israel, Labor Zionism and anti-Semitism. The most valuable segment for a direct appreciation of the Rochester Jewish Community begins on Tape 1, Side B; but, because of Nelson Kirschenbaum's importance in the Zionist Movement, the issues ~~dismissed~~ elucidated the position and nature of local Zionism.

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

Social history **

Jewish community ***

Family Little

community relations None

Demographic/residential None

Religious life *

Economic *

Jewish education *

Political/civic None

Anti-semitism ***

Zionism/Israel ***

Interview loc.

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

--see following page(s) --

Nelson Kirschenbaum
June 16, 1976
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 - 2. Secular: education
 - 3. Work (Neisner Bros.)
- B. Parents
- C. Shtetl life (1913-1920)**

II. Labor Zionist (Poale Zion)***

- A. Impressions: intellectual, non-religious **
- B. Ideology (rebuild Jewish people) ***
- C. Naehum Syrkin, Chaim Greenberg
- D. rebellion against Shtetl Life
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- B. Settlement (Aliyah) (אַלִיאָה)
 - 1. 1930s ***
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NELSON AND ANNE KIRSCHENBAUM

TAPE 1, SIDE B

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VII Importance of Israel -- Jewish commitment ***

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IX Miscellaneous

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- E. David Ben-Gurion, Golda Meir in Rochester *
(labor Zionism)
- F. Labor Zionism: small group in Rochester
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- H. "Young Israel"
- I. The Depression
- J. Yiddish Theatre - Labor Lyceum **
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Interview I
Tape 1
Side A

(Transcriber's Note: Mr. = Nelson Kirschenbaum)
Ms. = Anne Kirschenbaum

Q. Talking with Mr. Nelson Kirschenbaum at his home on June 16, 1976. I suppose we will begin with your biography, brief sketch of your background.

Mr. Born in Poland, came here at the age of 7, had a public school education. Attended an Orthodox seder, one room. . . attended seder. . . you know what that means, seder? It's one room, Orthodox, with an old-fashioned mulamet, old-fashioned teacher. Learned to read Hebrew, Homosh Bible, and Tenach. Did not learn language. I learned a little Hebrew. I had to do that later. Lived in a completely Orthodox home where Sabbath was completely observed. Went to synagogue every Saturday. Was Bar Mitzvahed in a small synagogue called the Onshay Poland, which means all of the. . . most of the members there came from one section of Poland. In the old days the synagogues were organized as. . . people came together, came from the same place, felt that holding together, and organized their own synagogue 'cause they had. . . to a certain extent they had their own menhage, their own traditions, and they felt comfortable with each other. I learned in seder everything was part of Yiddish, through Yiddish. My rabbi couldn't talk English, so that in the process of . . . of getting a religious education, which it was strictly a religious education, I also learned Yiddish. And we spoke Yiddish at home, so that I'm as familiar with Yiddish today almost as I am. . . it comes as natural to me as English does. I can think in Yiddish when I'm speaking it.

Q. I just want to ask like some dates and places. Where are we and when are we?

Mr. Well, I came here in 1920. Went through school, graduated East High School in 1930, then had to help in my father's store, which was a fish store in the

Mr. (Continued) heart of the Jewish section on Hudson Avenue. Took all kinds of extension courses at the . . . when you. . . at the University of Rochester. Did not yet receive any degree. In 1929 or '30 I joined the Labor Zionist movement, the Poale Zion, and I was the only English-speaking member of the group. All their meetings, their lectures, were held in Yiddish. That was a tremendous intellectual experience. Intellectually this group was head and shoulders above the average immigrant. They came as a rule from the old country, were very well educated, in the Hebrew sense and in the secular sense. And. . . and then most of them had joined the Poale Zion in Russia and came here I would say that at that time I knew the Palestinography much better than I did the map of the United States. And since then my organizational interest and intellectual interests have concentrated on Palestine and then Israel.

Q. OK. Now you say you came to Rochester in 1920?

Mr. Right.

Q. From where?

Mr. Poland.

Q. From Poland.

Mr. With my mother. My father had come here in 1913, left me when I was six months old, my mother and I were caught in the war. And we came right after the war in 1920.

Q. Where in Poland?

Mr. Near Warsaw, a place called Yitzk.

Q. I think I've heard of that.

Mr. Little town on. . .

Q. Were there a lot of Jews there?

Mr. Again, as a kid my impression was not a lot of Jews, it was a Jewish community,

Mr. (Continued) Jews huddled together, but of course surrounded by non-Jews. But the interesting part about . . . and I don't know if you want this, is the difference. . . one, I always wondered why Jews didn't assimilate. And if you analyze it, Jews were surrounded by very ignorant peasants. There was nobody to assimilate with. That's where the expression came from is "Damas are goy." They're. . .the . . . until the Jews came here and realized that they weren't the brightest, that there were non-Jews, Gentiles, who were educated. Because their whole association in the old country, if you lived in a small town, was basically with a very ignorant peasant.

Q. Wasn't one form of assimilation, though, in the Eastern European pail, to as Solomon Myman, as he travelled west, he decided to leave entirely the Eastern European situation and to go west. He went to Berlin. And that was the form of assimilation he followed.

Mr. Yea, but today the ideologists of the Labor Zionist movement were led by a man by the name of Naehum Syrkin whose daughter still teaches at Brandeis, is a professor at Brandeis, Marie Syrkin, you've heard the name I'm sure.

Q. Oh, yea.

Mr. And the other one was . . . I'll think of it. And they, of course, left the pail and as you said went to Berlin and they got a secularist education. And there was a combination in these people of secular knowledge I'd say tempered by their very deep knowledge of Talmud and Bible and fascinating people. One of the most intellectual human beings I've ever met is a man by the name of Chaim Greenberg. I have a couple of books of his essays. Who to me symbolized the best in both cultures. One of the finest minds I've ever met in terms of. . . he was the first one I remember. . . some. . . we were arguing a group of us about that Socialism will solve our problems. And he was the first one that I heard say . . .

Q. OK.

Mr. What he said was Socialism will solve our animal needs, then our problems will become human problems. And if you realize. . . see, our generation thought that if we solved our economic problems everything would be hunky-dorey. But it wasn't that way. We solved our economic problems, then the problems became totally different, human problems, psychology problems of getting love. It's the same thing . . . to my business I. . . I do. . . I work with very rich people as a rule, and I had to find out that there are just as many rich people who are unhappy as there are poor people unhappy. They're unhappy for different reasons, but they're unhappy.

Q. Were you yourself. . . did you come from impoverished background?

Mr. Not impoverished, I was in. . . We lived during the Depression especially, from hand to mouth. But I never lacked food or clothing, never.

Q. What about in Poland? The small town in Poland?

Mr. Poland. . . I don't. . . I was seven. . . I don't remember, but background in the shtetl of the small town had to be impoverished. We lived in a home without a floor. Those are the things I remember. Of course, I'm very vague about it.

Q. I guess I raise it because so much of the feeling for the importation of Zionism into this country comes from. . . from immigrants who have experienced such poverty.

Mr. Well, poverty and pogroms and. . . and one of the best. . . stop if if you wish.

Q. Go ahead.

Mr. One of the best things that you don't have much time to read in this. . . in this biography by Samuel Hanes, there's one chapter here. . .

Q. On Chaim Weitzman?

Mr. Yea. There's one chapter here . . .

Q. Who wrote the biography?

Mr. By several names. It's a biography. . .

Q. David Ben Gurion . . .

Mr. A number of people. There's a chapter here by. . . by Maurice Samuels on the shtetl. He said the "Road from Motl" it's one of the finest descriptions I've ever read.

Q. On shtetl life?

Mr. Shtetl life, putting the shtetl in perspective. 'Cause we idealize. . .

Q. Especially today.

Mr. Yea. It's idealized, it's completely out of proportion.

Q. In other words, the shtetl wasn't so. . .

Mr. It was a horror in terms of physical conditions and in terms of paganisms and what not. And other people could get a good perspective is you find out that a lot of our so-called Jewish traditions date back to paganism we picked up from Seventeen and Eighteen Century Poland and Russia. There's a novel by Satan and Gurray about Eighteenth Century Poland where you pick out . . . by this very popular guy now. . . when you get a lot of things that we consider Jewish have no basis in anything Jewish. But, one of the great places to see that. . . Have you been to Israel?

Q. Yea.

Mr. In Maya Sharem. Maya Sharem in Jerusalem is a replica of Eighteenth Century Poland. It has nothing to do with anything Jewish. I mean the cottons they wear ahd when it's a hundred degrees outside they wear. . . that's the feudal lord in a Polish village wore that. It has nothing to do with anything Jewish. And to get back to Labor Zionist, basically rebelled against the . . . the . . . are you recording?

Q. Sure.

Mr. Rebelled against the paganism that the . . . paucity of . . . of intellectualism in the Jewish community. There were not the secular community, and they rebelled against observances and they left entirely. So the group, the first and second aliyah went to Palestine, devout completely. My first visit to Israel was in 1949 and I walked into a kibbutz where I had friends, and that was the only place you had a choice in Pesach between bread and matzoh. Today you wouldn't find that. But they rebelled against everything in the shtetl.

Q. Especially the religious life.

Mr. Yea, the religious life because the Jewish life in the shtetl was completely religious, everything was religion. Everything you did, your whole mode of life, an Orthodox Jew's religion is a way of life, not observing certain things. Everything he does in his everyday life is connected to . . . to Orthodoxy.

Q. That was starting to break up though well into the 19th Century already? I mean that. . .

Mr. It was breaking up in the larger communities, but . . . in the Moscow, the few Jews that were there, Warsaw. But, not in the shtetls. In the shtetl it remained to some extent right to the 20th Century.

Q. So I mean your knowledge of this comes from reading?

Mr. Reading, family. And it's fascinating, it's fascinating. But, I've read very extensively on the beginnings of the Zionist movement. It's very difficult to understand even Israel if you don't understand the people that Ben Gurion . . . Ben Gurion had an upbringing. . . completely rebelled. Have you ever read Golda Meir's biography? Fascinating stuff. And see what you read. . . what you get in terms of Zionist propaganda is very superficial. Zionism has a great past.

Q. My understanding of Zionism comes from my studies of Western Europe. Not so

Q. (Continued) much of Eastern Europe.

Mr. Did you read Eddie Herzl when you. . .?

Q. Exactly.

Mr. The Judenschat or Zylon?

Q. Exactly.

Mr. All right. That can give you. . . Now he. . . he had, you might say, an instinctive feel for Zionism, but completely lacking in ideological background. His Jewish background was nil. He came to Zionism by the way of the Dreyfuss Trials that he covered as a reporter for the. . . for the Vintage Press.

Q. Right.

MR. So you can't. . .

Q. Well, as you say he had that instinctive feel for Zionism through the political means, I mean, he knew there was anti-Semitism. He knew it was. . .

Mr. He saw it at the Dreyfuss Trial. And some. . . and what he did that the. . . that the old line. . . that the Dupinskers and the Sergets couldn't do is he brought it into modernism. Because Herzl was not a observant Jew. Jew with very few roots in Judaism.

Q. Well, you read his diaries and there's nothing in there. . .

Mr. Nothing, but they're fascinating. Now the Labor Zionists their approach was not only should we build a Jewish homeland, but we should rebuild the Jewish people. That the Jewish people in the diaspora lived in an inverted economic pyramid. That is whereas the average land has a basis of workers, peasants, artisans, Jews were completely turned around. They had very little, very few workers. Most of their. . . most of our population consisted of "luftemenshon" to quote Herzl, of people who made their living from services, living off each other almost. Very few were basic industries. Of course, the reason for that was that they had to. . . why did Jews go into moneylending? There were. . .

Mr. (Continued) they were thrown out from one country to another, so they had to deal in something they could take with them.

Q. It was also because governments wouldn't allow them. . .

Mr. Certain countries where Jews couldn't own land. And there were certain countries where Jews couldn't join guilds. Where the. . . in the middle ages the artisans were controlled by guilds and Jews weren't allowed to join guilds so they couldn't become artisans. Well, the Labor Zionists wanted to change that around. When you got intellectuals like Ben Gurion, Ben Znee, these names they were real intellectuals who went to Palestine and became. . . well, became agricultural. . . agricultural workers.

Q. OK now, let's back up for a second. Why was that such an important. . . I mean, why did they want to re-invert. . .?

Mr. Well, I think Bialy once said the Jews will own. . . will have as much sky as the land they work. The whole approach, and it's true today, the Israelis still operate that way today, putting up settlements and building facts. A country is owned by the people who work it, not by the people who own it. That the person who owns. . .

Q. That's a basic Marxist. . .?

Mr. Yea, but the people. . . and it isn't basic Marxist it goes in history. You don't have to be Marxist to believe that. The people who work the land they may. . . the rulers may change, they may be under. . . but they're the ones who live there. They work the land, they. . . they own it. In other words, the superficial owner, the landlord, may be someone else. If you analyze that you find that. . . that's a maxim. And these intellectuals went to Israel under the worst circumstances. Palestine then was governed by the Turks and corrupt, incompetent, almost anything bad you can say. And these intellectuals started working, wanted to go to work on a farm. And there already were Jewish

Mr. (Continued) settlements. I'm talking about the labor aliyah, the second aliyah. You know what aliyah means? Immigration. Was in 1903, 1904 or '05. It followed the Kischener Pogroms in Russia. There were already colonies in . . . I think Roschepina. These names mean anything to you? Mischoletsiov. Where Jews originally went to work but became with the help of Rothschilds, helped them out, they were in trouble, they became landlords. And the Arabs were working the land and these young Jewish intellectuals, they wanted jobs. And you could hire an Arab for ten to what the Jew would pay. These kids worked for practically nothing in order to live. They lived. . . they lived in groups outside of these settlements where they would, in order to be able to pool their meager resources. And then. . . then they formed their own groups, that's what the kibbutz movement, the cooperative movement began. But you probably want to get back to this country, I could keep you going. . . I have made my life. . .

Q. Keep going too.

Mr. I've made my life. . . Well, in the thirties I thought I'd join this movement and the Poale Zion movement, the Labor . . .

Q. Let me interrupt you for a second. It seems to me that when . . . when Jews came over to America they had to work at the base. In other words. . .

Mr. Because they were forced into it. They took. . . what did they go into? They went into the tailoring.

Q. Right.

Mr. Why? Because the first group started it. Then the Jews began owning shops.

Q. Right. This is German Jews.

Mr. Landslide. After all the great part of this was around New York.

Q. Right.

Mr. And they went into. . . but interestingly enough they made a firm. . . don't

Mr. (Continued) forget, as early as 1912 there were Jewish strikes in the . . . in the . . . in the garment industry. Had a very interesting session with Abe Chapman a couple of days ago because we're running a function with labor, and we gotta purchase from their local, and I've grown very fond of that big, bright guy. The origins of the labor movement, the so-called Jewish labor union. Today of course they're a joke. In Rochester at one time 70% of them were Jews. Today I don't think you'll find a dozen. But they went into these. But luckily. . .

Q. But in the . . .

Mr. If you don't mind my going off I'll tell you.

Q. Beautiful. I'm gonna go off on tangents, too, that's the problem I think.

Mr. Poor Abe Karp.

Q. I'll be fired from this job. But I mean my interest here is that . . . I don't quite understand. They got into the working class immediately when they came to America.

Mr. Because they had no choice.

Q. Well, for whatever reason though they have already reinverted this pyramid.

Mr. Yea. Well, but also in basic interests, peripheral. Basic industries they didn't go into cold agriculture. There were groups that you find even today around Jersey who came here. . . they were a product of a group in Amolam, of a group out of Russia. They came here specifically to go into agricultural work. And even today you find chicken farming to a great extent around Lakewood, Tom's River, around Jersey is still in the hands of Jews.

Q. But you didn't find that in Rochester? That was isolated.

Mr. Well, in Rochester the Jews, the average working Jews, were in tailoring. Rochester was one. . .

Q. So it's not really fulfilling then that sense of. . . of. . .?

Mr. No, they. . . here it was necessity, there it was. . . Here you gotta. . . you got out of the labor group as quickly as you could. And I don't know anybody's son who went into. . . into tailoring. But in Israel it's an ideological. . .

Q. OK. And they were in control in Israel?

Mr. They were in control.

Q. That is the difference.

Mr. It was ideological. The brightest kids went into the kibbutz and went in for agriculture. It was a diff. . . and our job as Poale Zionists here were to give support. We raised money for. . . for the agricultural settlements. We raised money for their social services, the hope. . . the movement in Israel around the whole labor movement is the Histadrut, the general federation of Jewish labor. We were supporters of that. I was active in that. I was on the National Executive of the Histadrut until 1960 when I simply didn't have time. But the work here. . . we got on Ben Gurion one time, we had a mulam, a local on 27 Buchan Park, it doesn't exist today. We had speakers like Murray Samuels, Ben Gurion, Ben Zvi, Barads, the founder of the. . . Ganya, Chaim Greenberg, Marie Syrkin, Golda Meir. Well then in the thirties I decided I wanted to settle in Palestine. So I joined the ahilutch group and began studying Hebrew. And in 1936 I went to a haschraha farm, a preparatory farm, to train to go to Israel in Creamridge, New Jersey. And there we had a shaliach. A shaliach is an emissary from Israel. By the name of Dr. Ezo Sereni, who I could talk to you about for hours. He, unfortunately, he ended his life by being. . . did you ever read Blessed in Demand by Marie Syrkin?

Q. I haven't. . .

Mr. He was one of those who parachuted. . . parachuted into Italy to work with

Mr. (Continued) the partisans and has remained for founding daha. But this man was Dr. Ezo Serini was the son of Victor Emmanuel's personal physician. A family that lived in Israel for a thousand years, completely assimilated. And he ran into an interesting Jew from Palestine who came for the badge to Israel to Italy, became fascinated. Moved to Israel, founded a kibbutz called Gevat Brenner, which is near. . . it's in the . . . it's today one of the infest kibbutzim in the country. They were one of the first groups to have. . . to go into agricultural industry. They turned out canned oranges, in '49 they were doing it when I first went there. And I was at the farm for a year where I. . . where I did agricultural work. We raised about 85 acres of tomatoes which we sold to Campbell's. And one. . . this stuff interesting?

Q. Go ahead, yea. What year is this now?

Mr. 1936. We. . . our tomato crop. . . our contract with Campbell's ran from 15th of August, they would pay us anywhere from five to twenty dollars a ton depending on the. . . on the quality. It started to rain the first of August, and we were wiped out. And we were completely self-supporting, no other money. We had to make our own way on this farm. Does the name Ben Haupman mean anything?

Q. Yea, sure.

Mr. I drove Ben Haupman to. . . to Boston. Ben Haupman was a member of the haschraha farm. And when we were in trouble he said when I graduated Harvard I got an interview with Justice Brandeis, and he said if I ever was in trouble I should call on him. He says, I don't think I'll ever be in bigger trouble. We went to see Brandeis. I'll never forget the guy. And ben told him, we were. . . we were about 32 of us, boys and girls, preparing to go to Palestine, worked very hard and our cash crop failed. Looked very. . . very. . . fascinating face, I did very little talking, I just sat. And he said how much would you need. And we said between five and six thousand dollars to

Mr. (Continued) pull us out, which was a tremendous amount of money in those days. And he said young men I think I can take care of it. You won't. . . But I never want this mentioned. I want no one to know, no publicity. You will get a check from someone within a month. And we did. We got it from a man by the name of Robert Zorn. It's a fascinating story.

Q. What would you have done if you didn't get that? That would have been the end.

Mr. We'd have gone schnory.

Q. Yea.

Mr. And then I had to earn. . . we had to have a certain amount of money. You know, to go to Palestine was dependent on the certificates that the man that taught gave, and they gave Americans certificates very grudgingly. Because there were people dying in Europe that had to go to Palestine already in the middle thirties. So I. . . nothing was happening so I left. My parents needed money. Can't see. . . today your parents don't need to depend on you. In our generation our paychecks went to. . . You went to Detroit to work for your friend for a night. . . for two years.

Q. You ran a store there?

Mr. Ran a store, yes.

Q. Did you get that through Neisner's here in Rochester? Did you know. . . ?

Mr. No, no. I went to Detroit, and I got a job originally. . . I had a. . . kind of an interesting story. I had a cousin who was. . . anything working with your muscles couldn't quite suit him so I got a job for him through a union man I knew working as a laborer, which paid damn good pay, relative to. . . and so forth. Somebody would ask me what are you doing, I would say I'm working. . . contracting. But then I went to work for Neisner's for a few years, and also was active in the Labor Zionist movement.

Mr. (Continued) But you wanted Rochester, what Rochester was like. Now during the period I worked here in the Labor Zionist movement, we organized the youth movement. And at one time we had about 250 kids.

Q. OK. When was this?

Mr. In about say '32, '33, '34. And doing various age groups, we'd talk about classes in Jewish history, taught them Hebrew. Sort of a . . . to a great extent a scouting movement based on Jewish. . . a Jewish scouting movement. It was based on Palestine. Palestine, Zionist idea. In fact, we had a camp about 40 miles from here in Kendall, New York. About 100, 110 kids. And an Israeli would come and completely handled it. We did all our own work. And a fairly strong Zionist movement so that when we had elections, for instance, to Zionist Congress. . . that mean anything to you? The Labor Zionists would get a majority. And I, being sort of the only English speaking member, I represented the Labor Zionist movement in community . . . in the Feder. . . in the Jewish Community Council and the Welfare Fund. I was fairly young.

Q. This is in Rochester?

Mr. Right.

Q. Was it a regional thing?

Mr. In Rochester.

Q. But, I mean it was for the area. It wasn't a national. . .?

Mr. No, not a . . . we always had a fairly good community.

Q. And the interest in Zionism was always there?

Mr. Yea. Then when I came back from. . . I left Neisner's for a very peculiar reason. I was running the store. . . I was running the store of about \$200,000 . . . hey, cut that off, I don't want to. . .

Q. Go ahead.

Mr. About \$200,000, I was getting \$35 a week plus 10% of the . . . now Neisner Brothers are a profitable corporation. There's the Neisner Realty Corporation consisting of the family that owned the real estate. Do you know Detroit at all?

Q. No, not really.

Mr. I ran the store on 12th Street, which today is not the same. And I found out we were paying Neisner Brothers. . . Neisner Brothers was paying Neisner Realty 13% of the gross. I found out pure by accident, they were renting the place I was running for \$7500 a year.

Q. You were running this place?

Mr. I was the manager.

Q. Oh, I didn't. . . OK. Detroit?

Mr. In Detroit.

Q. Oh.

Mr. I worked in four different stores. I was fairly. I'll tell you one thing, after working in Neisner's for two years, you've never had a tough job. In those days eighty hours, during Christmas we didn't even go to bed. Slept downtown. Those. . . I've never had a tough job after that. I found out that for instance we were paying them 13% of \$200,000, that's \$26,000. They were paying \$7500, so that's \$18,000 of which \$1800 was mine. And I was a naive kid. Today, everybody knows that but I became angry and quit and came to work in Roch. . . came back and worked as a. . . in the window covering business, place called Weiss, Middleman & Son. I became active in the community, and I worked for them for 18 years.

Q. When was this?

Mr. From 1940. . . 1939. . . 1940 to 1957. I'm very active in the community, active in the Histadrut campaign and the Welfare Fund and the Labor Zionist movement,

Mr. (Continued) when we had a movement. In fact, I had a group on. . . when the kids came back from the army in '45 they asked me to organize a group on the campus. We had a group of about 70 kids and some very fine. . . the chairman of that group is now the head of the Department of Oriental History at the Hebrew University. Josh Goldberg in physics in Syracuse University, doctor somebody at your place. Hofstraff, and there's a. . . very bright kids. Emanuel Auerbach here. A good crew, they did a lot of work. If someone were to ask you what were the most active and numerous group in the city they would tell you the Labor Zionist group, good movement. Fought the good fight for Israel, fight for Palestine in '48, '49. And then I still. . . my idea was still to go back and settle. So in '49 my wife and I. . . I took a leave of absence from my job and went to Israel to see what I could do. I spent 11 weeks there, and we hadn't had any children. And I wanted to be. . . in those days people just were not accepted in kibbutzim. And my training was completely. . . Am I disorganized? Does this make sense?

Q. Beautiful.

Mr. And my training was holutz oriented. And in '49 a woman raised, brought up here, my wife is a very cultured girl, three years in the University of Rochester when they didn't take Jews, and first or second in her class. And cultured, Israel, Palestine really was a rough place in '49. So we came back, and I began looking around how I could work to. . . before going there. So in 1956 I went to work for the State as an Israel Bond director. I've been there like 20 years.

Q. So we made it through your life. You made it through your life.

Mr. Yea. Now you go back and. . .

Q. Go back and. . . I've been jotting down notes, questions. Well, let me begin by asking I suppose a basic question, which is you became interested in

Q. (Continued) Labor Zionism in 1929 you mentioned.

Mr. I became interested too in. . . I was very much interested in Palestine. I was interested in Socialism, and this group filled a double need for me.

Q. Also, I mean that's. . . those are the two major ideologies.

Mr. Right. And . . . and the ideology. . . once an ideologist said we're building a new country, let's build it on the right principles. Let's not build a capitalist society that we will have to dismember. Let's build on a Socialist basis. And this basically was done until after the Holocaust. When. . . when we could pick. . . You see, the one good thing that resulted from the certificates, we could pick the people we sent to Israel. We could train them so they wouldn't go there trying to make the fast buck. And then, of course, after the concentration camps there was a mass immigration. Then the whole character of the country changed.

Q. Did that mean that this. . . the ideological basis changed, too?

Mr. Well, it's a mixed up deal. That there's still kibbutzim, kibbutzim today, about four or five per cent of the population, and another thing that you should remember, should know, when we were in Israel in '49 they were coming in about 12,000 a week from. . . from Cyprus from the concentration camps. Now this is hard to say, but it's the truth, nice people didn't live through the concentration camps. The biggest miracle of Israel is not production, not the army, what it did with the refugees. A nice person couldn't live through a concentration camp. If you've read. . . done any reading on the . . . on the Holocaust?

Q. Well there's just a book that came out called Survivors.

Mr. Read Rico. . . no, read something basic, guys who were there, read the Ricoman's tales of the Warsaw Ghetto. Read it slowly because it'll . . . And I'll never forget one of the first people I met who went. . . who went into Warsaw, who

Mr. (Continued) got into Poland right after the war, was a Labor Zionist by the name of Zarubobel. And he made a statement that did not. . . that I didn't understand until I read Regelman. Regelman incidentally was an historian who wrote throughout, until he got killed of course, and buried the stuff in a milk can that was found a few years later, and sent out word to a courier that he was burying the history of the Warsaw Ghetto. And the whole book is impossible, but there's a good English resume of it, where. . . where this guy says something, the Warsaw Ghetto can be characterized by some people ate so much that they vomited and others ate their vomit. And the biggest miracle of Israel was what it did to these human beings. You have to remember even the Arab immigration into Israel, the Algerians who had money didn't go to Israel, they went to France. The Moroccans who had money. . . Israel always got the lowest common denominator. The immigration into Israel. . . And if you don't understand that and know that, you can't understand Israel today. Israel's a very complex society. And so that in Israel you have some of the world's greatest ideologs, ideologists, dedicated. . . the most dedicated Jews in the world. And then you have the groups who came out of the. . . out of Warsaw who got through the concentration camps. . . and the. . . You. . . you can't live through. . . nobody could live through concentration camps. . . I suppose sometimes when Eli Weizel working in Binghamton, and we stayed in the same hotel. I was up with her most of the night. You can't be. . . there's no such thing as a normal person coming out of that type of existence. And Israel was built with these people.

Q. So that's. . . so in the forties and in the thirties Israel really. . .

Mr. In the thirties Israel was built by. . . by idealists. You see when we were in Israel in '49. . .

Q. Let me interrupt you for a second.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A (Interview 1)

Interview with NELSON AND ANNE KIRSCHENBAUM
June 16, 1976
By Dennis B. Klein

Interview 1
Tape 1
Side B

Q. This is Dennis Klein talking with Mr. Nelson Kirschenbaum. This is Tape 1, Side B. OK. Go ahead.

Mr. Now Rochester, as I remember as a kid, the JY, the Jewish Community Center, was an Americanizing agency. In other words, it took immigrant kids and try to make 'em Americans out of 'em. And what's interesting today you have to do the opposite. We. . . we have to fight the assimilation. We practically Judaized the JCC instead of what we were doing in the old days. And the community was divided into so-called German sector and the Ashkenazi sector. And in fact it had double agencies. There were two. . . there was at one time a Hebrew . . . the German Jews used the word Hebrew. Because see to them Judaism, to the assimilated Jew, Judaism was an American of Jewish persuasion. And the. . . the. . . if you. . . the saying was it came from the German, the German. . . Except Hitler sort of got out, but this went three generations whether. . . whether you had converted or not had nothing to do with your being Jewish. And there was two orphan asylums, two Jewish Family Services, two Federations. It was only in the thirties, after Hitler, that they began

Mr. (Continued) . . . that the Ashkenazi community became active. One of the fascinating guys, Joe Silverstein, who sort of went from one to the other. And who. . . he and Joe Goldstein are your best source of the origin of the . . . of the Rochester Jewish community and its organization.

Q. Were you involved in that organization yourself?

Mr. Yes, back in the . . . when I came back here in 1940 I was active in it, I was active in the Welfare Fund, the Jewish Community Council, and especially in the Zionist Council. And we had a Zionist Emergency Council that I was very active in. Julia Berlove was a big part of that. If you mention my name in the Zionist Council she'll follow through on you. Well, we organ. . . then I concentrated on helping Jews get to Palestine. The only way Jews got to Palestine was through aliyah then, through the illegal immigration, money, sending people, volunteers to work on the boats. And then of course when the war started we collected money, we collected ammunition, we collected guns, we did everything we could. And then in '49 I went over. The Jewish community here was more or less always for Israel, pro-Palestine oriented. I don't ever remember having any really strong anti-Zionists.

Q. Does this include the twenties, too?

Mr. Well, again the twenties. . . twenty. . . there was a small group of non-Zionists, but not any vicious anti-Zionists.

Q. How about the Workman's Circle, though?

Mr. The Workman's Circle was a Socialist group, active with the Bundt. It was not anti by the time I became active. At one time in the old country they were anti-Zionist. Here they were neutral and then became very pro-Histadrut. They wouldn't back Labor Zionists here, but they would back the labor movement. They would support the labor movement in Israel.

Q. OK. I see. But the emphasis was much different?

Mr. And also in the Labor Zion. . . yes, yea they were Yiddishers completely. And the Labor Zionist movement was pro-Hebrew oriented. We had two separate school systems. The Workmen's Circle had Yiddish school system. We had school system that duality in language, both Yiddish and Hebrew. By "we" I mean the Labor Zionists.

Q. Was that the Folk Shul?

Mr. The Folk Shul was the. . . the Folk Shul was the Labor Zionists. They called them shul in Workmen's Circle, too. We had camps for kids in both movements. Had. . . Hyman Mills where the kids lived their life in. . . But, completely secular. Both. . . both Labor and the Workmen's Circle were completely anti-religious to the extent that the Workmen's Circle would have banquets on Yom Kippur. Again, you have to understand most of them had good background. They did it ideologically, not. . . Today the guy who doesn't observe is ignorant. See, you got a non. . . no knowledge. I had a very famous teacher who taught in the Folk Shul. I remember once. . . it's an interesting story, sitting and talking with him at the JY and a meschulach came in, a bearded guy, called him over. He said what. . . what do you. . . told him what yeshiva and he gave him \$10. Now the man I'm talking about his name was Harber Mykonapolsky, a veritable walking encyclopedia, very educated man in almost anything, in every phase of education, of culture. Very cultured guy. So I said look, where is it. . . I couldn't. . . I talked from the Yiddish, we couldn't decide whether you should give him money. He said, Nelson, you don't understand Judaism. He said in order to be a agnostic or an atheist you have to know what not to believe, and if you don't know you're an ignoramus. Then a. . . a Jew. . . without knowledge you can't be either an atheist or a devout Jew. A devout Jew has to know what he believes in. An agnostic or an atheist has to know

Mr. (Continued) what not to believe in. But you had to know, it's basic. And I think that's very true. And education will prove it as far as Judaism is concerned. But we're involved with to a great extent is an ignorant generation of people. . . I don't believe. . . what don't they believe? Now the Folk Shul did a lot of good, and we used the Folk Shul as a basis for organizing the youth movement.

Q. When was this? When was the. . .

Mr. Howard Axelrod, a psychiatrist at the University of Rochester, is a product of my youth group.

Q. When was this?

Mr. It was used. . .

Q. When was the. . .

Mr. In the early for. . . in the middle forties.

Q. I didn't know it was that late. I would think they would have had it in the thirties.

Mr. In the thirties, but we kept it up. It didn't die I think until the fifties. Until the early fifties or the late forties. My dates may be kind of. . . There was a very large Yiddish movement. You'd get Yiddish theatre here, you'd get. . . you had lectures. And then it gradually died, and it was replaced by Israeli singers, lectures in English coming out of Israel. But always we concentrated on training people to move to Israel and raising money for Israel. Our work was in the Federation. Today Jews comm. . . was always Israel centered.

Q. OK. Let me ask you this question. You mentioned that there was really no anti-Zionist sentiment in Rochester, any significant. . .

Mr. Well, not. . . there wasn't a vicious anti-Zionist sentiment. People who didn't believe in Israel. I'm a good American that kind of. . .

Q. Well that was the basis of the . . . of the split within the community. . . it was an anti- . . .

Mr. It wasn't really a split.

Q. Well you had two. . . you had two separate schools. . .

Mr. Yea, but that was already before my day. When I came in those things were disappearing.

Q. So when you came in was in the thirties then?

Mr. Yea.

Q. I see.

Mr. They were disappearing already. And the community became. . . When Joe Silverstein became President of the Jewish Community Council the Ashkenazi became. . . began to attain. . . Now you know what's left over from that group, an Arthur Lowenthal. You heard the name? He's a leftover from that group. A guy like that, did very well, very charitable, but he doesn't own an Israel Bond. It's interesting. See, to give charity the kids hungry in Israel, why shouldn't you feed 'em? Or if he's hungry in Rochester you feed him. But, Israel Bonds would invest in the future of Israel, that's a political statement. And an ideological statement. And I still find people, the old-timers, who are anti. . . in the neg. . . if you told them they were anti-Israel, oh, they'd. . . but it's almost a psychological thing. Try to sell 'em a bond and it's a strange animal. Whereas the Ashkenazi Jew they used to come up when we first started with saving \$100 because they wanted to invest in the Jewish homeland.

Q. Why. . . well this is. . . this gets into a. . . a series of questions and I'm gonna pursue it now at this point. To invest in the future of Israel is a political and ideological statement, as you said. But if somebody decides not to do that, that's not necessarily apolitical or non-ideological.

Mr. Well, not. . . because there are very few people, Jews, today who will tell you that they're anti-Israel. I think since '49 you don't find. . . that's already the lunatic fringe.

Q. Well, today what sentiment you do find I think, at least some of my own feelings about this, that there are Jews living outside of Israel and that the notion of the diaspora has a connotation which implies that we are living in exile and that our homeland is in Israel. So that we are living really a transitory existence outside of Israel. This is the. . .

Mr. You're giving me the Bill Green argument. (Laughter) I spent an evening with him.

Q. I have talked with Bill Green, but this is my own feeling, too.

Mr. Yes. Well, again, you look at it historically. See, I believe in the centrality of Israel to Jewish life, which doesn't negate the diaspora, doesn't negate in Hebrew called the Hutzlahrs, outside of Israel. Or it seems to me that without Israel today, picture it, the Jewish community without Israel would be very low. There's so much of our activity, so much of our Jewishness, is a result of our work for Israel, from reading about Israel. But, to a great extent I won't argue with you. But, historically again, we went through periods where we were accepted in various communities, but it's something that always changed. Now I don't believe anymore that Israel will ever contain the majority of Jews in the world. Not if it's a free society, and I want it to be a free society. If the people. . . and there are too many hardships, especially Israel in the circumstances of siege. It's difficult life, and it's very difficult for an American to settle in Israel. You down-grade your standard of living.

Q. Though it does fulfill that ideological. . .?

Mr. Well, let me tell you something, in '49 after we were in Israel about a week,

Mr. (Continued) I said to my wife. . . she's back in . . . my knowledge. . . her intellectual attainment, she's fluent. She speaks Hebrew much better than me and is a much better student than I am. What's different about it? I haven't felt Jewish for two weeks. It's the one place in the world where you don't feel Jewish. And it's very hard to explain. You're natural. If you want to yell, you yell. Again, what may be true of my generation might not be true of yours. We were always very uptight about our Jewishness. And your generation isn't. Now for instance it's almost. . . you listen to the television, there are so many Yiddish expressions today that Jewishness is part of American life. Don't forget we've gone through a period of what we used to call of cultural pluralism. Now when I was a kid that wasn't much of a phrase. You know who came out with that first? A guy named Louis Adamick, a Yugoslavian who wrote a wonderful book on Israel's labor called Dynamite. If you're interested in the labor movement. So that I can. . . and I still run into . . . cut it off, I don't want. . .

Q. Go ahead.

Mr. I'm running a function honoring the president. . . the Italian President of a bank in Rochester. And we first proposed this. . . I got this fellow to go to Israel, we came. . . his bank buys a lot of bonds, you know, about a half a million dollars worth. He came back enthralled. See, non-Jews think Israel's a little village. They think of it in terms of a pixy little village. They see it especially if you can get them to go to Jordan, Syria, and then to Israel. They realize it is a country 28 years old, and compared to the countries who've been there for years and years. And they're enthralled. They come back, what can I do? So we organized a dinner around him. The call I got that I had to call back first for, he sold \$100,000 to Monroe Savings Bank. That's also going on. See, so that Jews accept. . . you have to realize we

Mr. (Continued) undersell Israel. You see, I go into small towns, I have an area. Now I send in my card, in a small town you can't get a Jew to sell a bank, he's afraid, there's too. . . they have that instinctive. . . I send in my card and never to anybody but a President of the bank, and I've never waited more than five minutes, a representative of the State of Israel. They . . . and they've given us tremendous prestige, that's what Israel's accomplished. One of my favorite stories is in '67 . . . we sell a lot of banks . . . '67 war started and we didn't know what was gonna happen. I got a call from a Northern New York Trust Company that had bought maybe fifteen, twenty thousand dollars in bonds, and they have a right to withdraw and cash in their bonds. And oh we were worried, we had about fifty million dollars out. Today I think it's maybe a half a billion. And he said, Mr. Kirschenbaum, we usually come to you in the fall, I understand they need money, would you send us some forms so we can buy our bonds now? That made my week.

Q. Fantastic.

Mr. Huh?

Q. That's fantastic.

Mr. Fantastic, and you see we're having tremendous. . . we had a reception at Allen Wallace's home. Now if you know Rochester University like I know Rochester University, Rush Reese was there he was anti-Semitic as anybody living, and Dean Whipple.

Q. And now how. . . how. . . how does that. . . I mean how do you know that Rush Reese and Whipple were anti-Semitic?

Mr. Well, 5% Jews in there not one more. A friend of mine, who's a doctor, Morrie Shapiro, Phi Beta three years applied to U. of R. med school. They already had one Jew.

Q. How long did that quota last at the University?

Mr. Almost to the war.

Q. To the second war?

Mr. Yea. Then it was wiped out.

Q. Was that when Rush Reese left?

Mr. Well. . .

Q. I mean, was he responsible for that?

Mr. Well, Rush Reese was a different type of man. He was the kind of a guy that wouldn't co-education. . .he built a whole new campus. . . You know, in our class of 1934 there were two complete campuses, two complete faculties within four miles of each other, make sense to you?

Q. You mean women's. . .?

Mr. Women were downtown on University Avenue. Men's campus was on the river 'cause he didn't believe in co-education. Now today that's. . . I was kibbitzing around with Wallace and he informed me, saying it was a wonderful thing actually 'cause we would have had to move out of here. Can you imagine that?

Q. Well, I mean I think co-education was not the most popular form of education twenty years ago.

Mr. Yea, but to build a complete. . . this wasn't twenty years ago. . .

Q. 1932 was when they built that new campus.

Mr. Yea, well '30 was the first class. Class of '34 was the first freshman class that was. . .

Q. On the new campus.

Mr. . . . on the new campus.

Q. So you're saying it was kind of a. . . I mean, how do you relate that then, the split campuses. . .

Mr. Well, you had to. . . you couldn't join a. . . you couldn't join a fraternity.

Mr. (Continued) 'Cause there was only one Jewish fraternity and one Jewish sorority. Well, anti-Semitism. . . look you could begin an argument with . . . with a bright senior, he'd call you a dirty Jew. That was. . . it was that explicit. It's hard for your generation. . .

Q. It is, it really is.

Mr. Very different. And I'm not. . .

Q. I know, in fact it was a blessing. It's a blessing that our. . .

Mr. Of course it is. This is why the hard Zionisms doesn't mean that much.

Q. Well, and. . .

Mr. But, the Jew in Russia, Zionism is very important.

Q. Well, let me wait. I want to pursue this other thing for a second here.

You were accepted at the University of Rochester?

Mr. Well, I only took. . . I was an art bull, I took art courses.

Q. But, I mean you were Jewish and there was . . . they. . .

Mr. I was not accepted socially. My wife could tell you much more about that.

Q. I see. You went to extension school?

Mr. I went to extension school at night.

Q. That's something else.

Mr. I did. . . we didn't live. . . she. . . she didn't. . . I. . . she didn't live at the. . . we couldn't afford to, but you. . . but you weren't accepted socially.

Q. Was that kind of a general feeling?

Mr. Shut it off and I'll call her in.

Q. No, let her come in, I'll keep it on.

Mr. All right.

Q. Sure.

Mr. Anne. Anne.

Q. I want to hear this story.

Mr. Dennis wants to know why I think the University of Rochester was anti-Semitic?

You went through four years. . .

Ms. Well, this is a long time ago.

Q. Before we go into it, why don't you give us your name.

Ms. Oh, come on. I'm Anne Kirschenbaum. I was born Anna Schriber and I was a student at the University from 1930 to 1934. And there was a quota system enforced where there was just a certain percentage of the student population that was Jewish. I don't know what the quota was.

Q. Well, you said it was. . .

Mr. Five to ten. . .

Ms. I don't know. I'm not. . .

Mr. I know.

Ms. I'm not statistical. . .

Mr. I know the standings. . .

Ms. I'm not statistically minded.

Mr. Well, which way did you know that anti-Semitism existed on the campus?

Ms. Well, it was only because of the small numbers of Jewish students and the fact that we heard stories of Jewish students having difficulty getting into institutions of higher education. And. . .

Mr. Could you join any sorority?

Ms. Well, there were. . . there was one Jewish sorority and the others were non-Jewish. . .

Mr. Could you get into the non-Jewish sororities?

Ms. No, of course not. But. . . but, one practical way in which this manifested itself, this was not so much a matter of anti-Semitism at the U. of R., but

Ms. (Continued) in a general milieu was that. . . I trained to teach and in those days there were not many jobs available in the city. You usually got started in small communities outside. And a teacher who took a position in a small town was really expected to blend into the general community, which meant that you were expected to belong to the right church, be a Sunday school teacher and so forth. Which eliminated, you know, Jewish girls really from taking those positions.

Q. Well, I want to. . . I want to hear more but go ahead.

Ms. Excuse me.

Mr. Not only . . . not only in the schools, Kodak had. . .

Q. OK. So this was just a general atmosphere?

Mr. Yea, oh sure.

Q. Not only in Rochester but throughout the country?

Mr. Yea, oh. . . Jobs within the. . .

Q. There was anti-Semitism in this country in the twenties and thirties?

Mr. Of course, right.

Q. Well you'd be surprised at the number of people who denied that who lived in the twenties and thirties.

Mr. Well, there have. . .

Q. I've been surprised talking to some people that they say no anti-Semitism.

Mr. Suppose you ran your own little store or if you were a lawyer and you did business basically only with your clientele who's maybe 90% Jewish. For instance, you didn't find a Jew in any large law firm until after the war.

Q. Then we have the segment of the University of Rochester, but I wanted to ask you did you feel out of place? I mean did you feel that you were being discriminated against as some black may feel in the sixties when they were in the minority and they were clearly. . . ?

Ms. Well, you knew. . . you. . . you were very well aware that you were not part of the majority culture, you were, you know, the minority culture. And that socially there were two worlds. Socially you were not accepted. I would say academically there was no discrimination at all. You could make your own way and you could be accepted. . .

Q. In other words. . .

Ms. It wasn't on the. . . it wasn't in the classroom situation. It wasn't on the part of the teachers certainly. It was just a matter of socially, I would say, you were very conscious that there were two. . .

Q. I assume that your closest friends were Jews and. . .?

Ms. No, as a matter of fact they were not because I happened to take a year off after I got out of high school to get money to start school. I did not proceed with my class. As a result I was thrown into a strange, you know, group of people that I did not know that well. And it happened that my two closest friends were not Jews. But they were not. . . they were not the typical Christians. In other words, we were sort of the . . . sort of a rebel element socially, let us say.

Q. They didn't like the situation either.

Ms. They didn't feel that comfortable with the emphasis on the social scene there. And. . .

Q. OK. I mean, you mentioned that Rush Reese was . . . was. . . I suppose as a student you wouldn't have much contact. . .?

Ms. No, I. . . I do have an episode to relate. This doesn't have to do with the University of Rochester, but with my employment if that is pertinent.

Q. Yea, where was this?

Ms. At the public library. I had worked as a typist in the Catalog Department when I got out of high school for a whole year. And when I got out of. . . during

Ms. (Continued) my college years I would spend summers working in the library system in one capacity or another. When I got out of college there were no teaching jobs available, it was in the depths of the Depression. And a job was offered to me in the public library. And I worked there for several years without having a professional librarian's certificate. In other words, I had to go on to get a Master's in Library Science. And the. . . you felt that the system then was that you were not allowed a leave of absence, you had to resign and it was a matter of chance whether you got a job back when you got out of school. So I went to Columbia University, got my degree and I will never forget the interview I had with John Adams Lowe, who was the head of the public library system. And I had to have an interview with him with regard to my re-employment. And I had several years of very good experience in many capacities there, so there was no problem with my record. However, he looked at me and said will you tell my why I should give this job to you when there are so many women of fine family background looking for this work? And I'm lucky that I don't have a temper. And I looked at him and I said, you know very often people who are not born to advantages make better use of them than those who are.

Q. That's a good response.

Ms. He liked the response. He liked the response and I got the job. But I had not an inkling. . . not a shred of respect for him from that point on. And I felt very, very deeply the chasm between the Gentile and the Jewish world.

Q. I mean that statement, his. . . his. . . his, you know, was really out of place, so I mean. . .

Ms. It was out of place because there was nothing wrong with my family background.

Q. Well, that's true but I mean if this was the milieu, I mean if. . .

Ms. Yea.

Mr. I agree with you.

Q. Then everybody was . . .

Ms. Yea, but however he took. . . no, he took it for granted that somebody of Jewish background did not come of good stock.

Q. OK. But I'm saying that this was a general sentiment.

Ms. Yea, yea.

Q. In the. . . in the . . . during the thirties.

MS. Based on complete ignorance.

Mr. Remember Harold's famous story when he was interviewed for grad school?

Ms. Yes.

Mr. One of the brightest people I know now who's the Head of the Department of Oriental Studies at the Hebrew University was graduating the University of Rochester with Phi Beta. . . the highest honor, very personal, very bright. One of the brightest human beings, we both know him. He applied to med school. He was interviewed by Whipple. He said where did your family come from. Russia. Russia!? This guy's very bright, he says white Russia, Dr. Whipple.

Q. Right.

Ms. He didn't look Jewish so Dr. Whipple was a little bit thrown.

Mr. A shivra could have been taken.

Ms. And he was. . . Dr. Whipple was very much impressed with him, he was a very interesting character. Is there any foreign languages spoken in your house? And he looked him straight in the eye and said, yes, Yiddish. And Dr. Whipple was really thrown by that.

Q. Wow. He didn't. . .

Mr. You talk to Dr. . . Dr. Axelrod, Dr. . . who's now a psychiatrist.

Ms. Howard. . . Howard Axelrod.

Mr. Howard Axelrod was part of that same group who applied for med school, was

Mr. (Continued) thrown out, got a degree in psychology then went to war. After the war went back to school and got his medical degree.

Ms. Did you tell him about Dr. Shapiro's experience?

Mr. Yea, yea.

Ms. Morrie Shapiro. But you felt very definitely that there was great. . . an outcast world. . . that there was a world that it was proper to belong to and a world that was shameful to belong to. And, of course, with the. . .

Mr. It's hard for him to understand. . .

Ms. . . yea, 'cause you lived. . . you didn't live through it.

Q. Well, what you're saying is this changed about the war, the second war?

Mr. Yea. . .

Ms. The rise of Israel which I think gave Jews the background. . . gave the Gentile world a different concept of what it was to be. . .

Mr. A Jew wasn't cowardly, the Jew was fine.

Ms. It was all part of. . .

Q. Also I would think the Holocaust and the sympathy. . .

Ms. I don't believe. . .

Mr. Holocaust had the reverse effect.

Ms. No, the Jew was in the position then of being a helpless victim which did not necessarily inspire respect. You can't depend on pity and compassion. . .

Q. To gain respect.

Ms. . . to gain . . . you know. Some people. . . there are people with conscience whom that would affect but I will say that people have respect for the victor and the one who can manage his own fate and be on top.

Mr. The hardest thing for your generation to understand is this. . . the difference that Israel made to the Jew. . .

Ms. To the Jewish. . .

Mr. Yea, the stature it gave it. . .

Ms. The self-respect it gave them.

Mr. The Jew is no more the guy who's gonna. . . who's getting beat up.

Q. I mean this goes back to an element of the discussion we were in before that Israel definitely played a very important role.

Ms. Extremely.

Q. It comes out of Nineteenth Century, it goes right into the Twentieth Century.

Ms. And it did. . .

Q. But you're saying that our . . . for our generation . . .

Ms. Yea, it's had a positive. . .

Q. Well, why are you surprised that people in our generation are not thinking about Israel?

Mr. No, I didn't say all the. . . we're going back to the Bill Green argument.

Ms. Well, . . .

Mr. Well, this is not. . .

Q. This is my argument, too.

Ms. The problem is. . . the problem is that you don't pick up enough history from reading. Since you haven't lived through it yourself it has no validity for you. And people are not that much aware of what they haven't lived through themselves. Even though it's there in the record for people to. . . to experience through other people's records.

Q. Myself being in history I wouldn't deny that. But I also am living in the present and have a sense of the future, would like to fashion that future on the basis of my experiences. As well as my appreciation of the past.

Ms. Yea, yea. And your experience is that you feel very secure in American society.

Q. I feel that there's a great future in American society.

Ms. Yes, and you feel a complete acceptance and no. . . no possibility of return to the. . .

Q. I have no indication that there's going to be the same kind of anti-. . . anti-Semitism that occurred in Europe. There is no indication. . .

Ms. Yea, yea, to me. And there wasn't to the German Jews either.

Q. I know that.

Mr. Historically though. . . do we have the Rosenberg book?

Ms. I don't know if we have a copy. I don't think so.

Mr. He gave me a copy.

Ms. I. . . I know but I. . .

Q. What did Rosenberg say? What do you mean?

Mr. No, no that has nothing to do with that.

Ms. I don't think we have it. I don't see it. You may have given it to somebody to read.

Q. You have demonstrated library skills here.

Ms. I don't. . . you should see what we are missing, what we. . . and I don't know.

Mr. People borrow books.

Ms. And I think I'm gonna remember and I don't, it's shameful.

Q. Yea.

Ms. No, I don't see it.

Q. I mean hasn't there been a decline or has there not been a decline in interest in Israel? After. . . after. . . well, the fifties and the sixties and. . .

Ms. Well, I think it's no longer a matter of vital concern, that it's not. . .

Mr. No, no, let me give this one. There was a sort of. . . in '67 there was a tremendous outburst. People came out of the woodwork to want to go to fight.

Mr. (Continued) It was at. . . your own University, kids with very little background suddenly their Jewishness came to the fore.

Q. I can remember this.

Mr. Yea, tremendous in terms of fund raising, in terms of everything. Going to Israel. It was. . . I don't know if you were a kid wasn't it the "in" thing to go to Israel for the sabra? We were in Israel in '70 cause the place was. . . it was side to side, wall to wall American kids.

Q. You're right, there was that interest.

Mr. Now, '73 the war, the Yom Kippur War had. . . had a. . . had a completely different affect. And it also reflected the attitude of Israel. And it got across to the American Jew. And then of course you've got. . . don't forget it, the left movement. The Communists, of course with Russia trying to get to Israel, send a lot of kids to Israel to fight with the Communist left and the Trotskyite left, which there is. They don't call themselves that, but that's basically what it is. It became. . . it became fashionable to be. . .

Q. We have a lot of Jewish followers.

Mr. Yea, which means of course these kids are not knowledgeable. They don't know. They don't know Jewish history. They. . . Israel the aggressor. I mean everybody knows Jewish history. . . I mean look at a map of the Middle East, how can Israel be the aggressor?

Q. But let me inject an element of the Bell Green/Dennis Klein argument. Which is to say that again history is important but there are distinctions to be made. And I think that even the term anti-Semitism is a misleading one in the context of this country. This is my opinion, and this is the opinion of many people in my generation. Which is to say that it does come out of Europe after all. And European society is such a different society, the basis of the social structure is entirely different from the American structure. And the sense of

Q. (Continued) the so-called American dream is such a part of the fabric of our nation. And it's just not, you know, . . .

Ms. It's not indigenous to the American scene you feel?

Q. I feel that even the term anti-Semitism. . . which is not to say there isn't an anti-Jewish sentiment 'cause you were just talking about that I mean in a very real. . .

Ms. Well, how do you distinguish between anti-Jewish and anti-Semitic?

Mr. No, let me. . . let me interject something else. I think one of the reasons that we haven't found anti-Semitism, I'm a firm believer to a great extent, scratch a Gentile to a great extent you'll find an anti-Semite because it's been taken against the black. The blacks have taken the heat off of us.

Q. That. . . that may be plausible.

Mr. See, people. . .

Ms. And our economic situation isn't necessarily. . .

Mr. Last week, Sally Banks. We had a reception at the President of the bank of the New York State Bankers, Bill Weber, a guy by the name of Mynie Bergan was there. What the goyes do at a reception, they drink. See when we have a cocktail party at a Jewish home there are some drinks around but you have all kinds of hors d'oeuvres. You have a reception at Allen Wallace's home you have ten bottles of liquor and some pretzels. So this guy Bergan got drunk and he says Jews are taking over and he started talking. . . So don't. . .

Q. OK. I mean. . .

Ms. I think it's basically the economic security that takes pressure off the Jews, too, that it's. . .

Mr. Do you remember the Brown statement or. . . or Agnew's statement? What is that?

Q. All right. But let me give you my reaction to those statements and my impression.

Mr. You know what I'm talking about when I say Brown statement?

Q. Brown. . . I don't.

Mr. General. . . the Chief of Staff of the United States Army said. . . who said that we are much too pro-Israel because American press and banking, all the power is held by the Jews. And I'm paraphrasing it. It's fairly accurate.

Q. And. . . and I do know the Agnew statement that you're mentioning and I think this happens from time to time. But. . .

Mr. So that it's dormant.

Q. It's there.

Mr. It's there but it's dormant.

Q. OK. But. . . but. . .

Mr. I'm not trying to win the argument.

Q. Yea, who wants to win this argument, that's true. But, you know, my feeling is that the distinction is not so much whether there is indigenous anti-Jewish sentiment, to go back to your point, but the American. . . the large reaction to statements like Agnew's or like even Carter's, his impurity statement. The reaction in Europe is almost a kind of. . . had been and maybe today, I would argue today it's true, you know, that they. . . they kind of enjoy that kind of statement 'cause it's really true. That's really the way it is. And America. . . America, the Americans say well that may be the way it is, but somehow that rubs against the ideology of America and so people come down on Carter very hard. And they come down on Agnew very hard.

Mr. Yea, yea. Not too hard. Of course, Agnew's a discredited character today to begin.

Q. Well, and so already he's a discredited. . .

Mr. So that he's a. . . but when it came from Brown the Jewish organizations came out. Well, it's. . . it's not acknowledged, but again you get it historically.

Q. Yea.

Mr. The Jewish community of Germany was much stronger and much better. . .

Q. More cohesive. . .

Mr. . . . cohesive than the Jewish community here. We still don't have any basis in basic industry. Nobody. . . no Jewish Vice-President of Eastman Kodak.

Q. Well, do you think Kodak is anti-Semitic?

Mr. No, but there is. . .

Ms. Do you mean that we're not necessary to the economy of the United States, if someone could annihilate us it wouldn't make any difference in the mainstream of history?

Mr. Going back to Labor Zionism ideology. . .

Ms. Is that what you mean?

Mr. Yea. Going back to. . . to . . . to Labor Zionist ideology, we always. . . we were never a pre-requisite to the economy of any country. We were always on the periphery, on the fringes of the economy. And I think you're finding here almost the same thing because you're finding Jews are. . . are going into the professions.

Q. That's a fairly recent thing that's happened.

Mr. Yea, but the generation whose fathers were in business.

Q. Right.

Mr. Whose fathers ran plants. See they don't want . . . see, money-making. . .

Q. Or the clothing industry.

Mr. Or the clothing industry are going into fringe so that let's hope it doesn't happen, but I'm not thinking of Israel. . .

Q. So you think that. . . so you think that. . .

Mr. . . . as a saviour that you and I will have to go and save our lives. I'm not talking. . . I think we need Israel in terms of a center or something to

Mr. (Continued) identify with and to go if we have to.

Q. You see it as a center. Does that mean that any other Jewish community or Jewish communities outside of Israel are secondary, tertiary. . .?

Mr. No, no. No I think what you're gonna find is there's gonna be a give and take. And I think the Israelis have come around to it. That it isn't a one-way, that Israel is. . . we're gonna give them money, they're gonna give us identity. That isn't true. You find Israel brings in scholars, Jewish scholars, all kinds of scholars in every field from outside of Israel because it needs that. I think there's gonna be an exchange. Of course, our first problem is to give Israel a chance to become something because if you know the situation, the "Zvi" mentality you can't judge Israel. Israel isn't doing what it should do. And I attribute it to a tremendous pressures of living in Israel.

Ms. The military pressure.

Mr. The siege. . .

Q. Doesn't this represent a kind of change in your own thinking over the years about Israel? I mean in that you're saying that it isn't the only home for Jews.

Mr. Well, I never thought that. The Labor Zionists never thought that. We didn't think . . . there always would be what we call the "bahutzlar" outside of the country. I don't think anybody ever dreamed of having fifteen. . .

Q. Well what about the tradition of kadima? You know, of going to. . .?

Mr. Well, yea, yea. You go to Israel, it's aliyah, you go up. If you leave Israel it's yehrita, it's to go down.

Q. Right.

Mr. So that. . . but then I. . . I. . . it's a. . . it's an ideal. There's nothing like for a Jew to live in Israel. There's a feeling of freedom. I don't care how free you feel. If you spent a summer in Israel you'd have a different

Mr. (Continued) feeling.

Q. It's not only the center, it's. . . it's vital.

Mr. It's vital. It's vital. It's not. . . and . . . and when a Joe Green. . . Bill Green we had the blood almost flow because. . . well, I have a different way. I don't like his tutor, his mentor. A guy by the name of Noisner.

Q. Right.

Mr. But the difference is Noisner is a non-Zionist but a knowledgeable Jew. Bill Green is a non-Zionist, so I says what the hell makes you Jewish? He says I learned Talmud, I says so does Father Brennan. I mean knowledge doesn't make one Jewish. You have to have some sort of commitment. A Jewish commitment has various facets. You can be committed to. . . to religiously committed, Zionist committed, culturally committed. You got all kinds, but you have to have a commitment. You're a Jew, there's really no definition of what is a Jew in terms of. . .

Ms. Well, he has a commitment to the basic text of Judaism which he loves to study.

Q. This is. . . you're talking about. . .

Ms. Yea, yea. In which he's found an endless fascination.

Q. Talking about Bill Green?

Ms. Yes. And a life-long. . .

Mr. He's a fascinating precocious kid.

Q. Yea, yea.

Mr. Very bright, a tremendous teacher.

Q. I'm sure he'll be glad to hear that.

Mr. I'm very open with him.

Q. Sure.

Mr. But on the other hand, when it comes to commitment. . . So you see, what he

Mr. (Continued) does is he takes kids like you and he gives them a negative approach to Israel. Now, without giving them anything positive in return.

Ms. Do you agree with that insight?

Mr. Now what he does. . .

Q. We get into arguments, too.

Ms. Do you feel that you get anything positive?

Q. From Israel?

Ms. No, from him. Nelson says that he takes this away from you if you have it.

Q. Well, . . .

Ms. He doesn't give you anything in return that's positive.

Q. It's difficult to say. I mean, one has to put the thing in the proper context. We're in. . . we're in an academic community where we criticize everything.

Ms. Yes, of course.

Q. I mean nothing is. . . Everything's criticized.

Ms. And if you consider. . . and if you consider it honorable if you can look down upon your own people and not argue from self-interest. This is considered a higher step. The academic world, you know. . .

Q. That's the ideal.

Ms. Yea, that's the ideal.

Mr. See, with Israel we're talking about survival. See, what I tell Bill Green is what. . . what do you mean, we have to think other than Israel? Israel, the people. . . if Israel is to survive it has to survive in strength. We got to. . . they're not going to take the next bus and leave come here, it means a second Holocaust. I mean what does it mean if Israel goes under? It's a phrase, but it's a. . . it's a literally a physical thing. Israelis aren't gonna run away. They're gonna fight and if they're gonna go under, it means

Mr. (Continued) annihilation. It means a second Holocaust in this generation. When I tell him that he's ready to climb the walls.

Q. On the other hand, you have the argument that with the formation of the Jewish state, the Jew has never been more exposed than ever before. I mean that is the other argument.

Mr. Exposed in Israel?

Q. Exposed to anti-Jewish sentiment.

Mr. Except that that hasn't proven. You know, the most interesting thing in the world. . . now I thought that the oil embargo would bring up a tremendous wave of anti-Semitism. We sold more goyesh banks that year than we ever did before. It didn't bring out. The Americans somehow or other haven't held it against the . . .

Q. What about the Jewish businesses that were on the list of those who were. . .?

Mr. Well that's business.

Q. Well, but I mean. . .

Mr. Chase Manhattan does business with the Arab countries. It also . . .

Q. But they wouldn't sponsor Israeli companies. . .

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B (Interview 1)

Interview I
Tape 2
Side A

Q. This is Dennis Klein talking to both Mr. and Mrs. Kirschenbaum. And we're on Tape No. 2, still June 16, I think. We may be getting into June 17. We're talking about Jewish business and my feelings that there was. . . there is an element of anti-Semitism involved in the embargo. . . in the oil embargo because of this boycott that when on, which Xerox I think was a part of. . . a part of this, or maybe I'm wrong there.

Mr. You're wrong.

Q. OK.

Mr. Eastman Kodak disavowed it completely. Everyone disavows it. But. . .

Q. Because that's the American way, you don't want to be involved in that.

Mr. That's right.

Q. Which I think is the important difference between the American reaction and the European reaction.

Mr. No, no. Don't you see but the difference is if this had happened before Israel when Jews were being boycotted, it was a natural thing. Now we got something to fight. And it's given us the . . . the hutzpah to get up and yell, why do you do that. To go to Congress to fight. See, when I was a kid we couldn't fight that way.

Q. Yea.

Mr. What you did is you sent a rich man to see a powerful non-Jew and maybe you can help us out, the Jews out.

Q. But now there's that effort to. . .

Mr. Now there's. . . it's again it's an open. . . much more open society.

Q. You know, I get the feeling that and I'll put this in kind of a negative way,

Q. (Continued) that . . . well, it's certainly not my own argument, this has been argued a lot, that Judaism is largely defined in terms of what you can fight for or in ideological terms, a sense of commitment. And that Judaism surfaces when there are obstacles. When there are problems.

Mr. I would tend to agree with that. I think what's kept the Jews Jewish in Russia is their vitalism. I think if the Russians had practiced what they preached I think there would be very few Jews in Russia.

Ms. You think they would have assimilated? You think they would have. . .

Mr. Assimilated.

Ms. Yea, probably.

Mr. Happening here now with intermarriages one out of four.

Q. It's very high.

Mr. Now Karp will give you an interesting analogy he says that most intermarriages add to Judaism 'cause more than half become. . . become Jews. And he has statistics on that, which is interesting.

Ms. The Jews. . .

Mr. Judaism is acceptable. That wouldn't have happened. It did in the old country, a Jew wouldn't become a Christian because he looked down on Christians. In the beginning here a Christian wouldn't become a Jew because he looked down on Jews. And now we've more or less reached a. . . a plateau. And also I think that to some. . . in some intellectual circles it's in to be Jewish. I listened to Bellows, was interviewed the other night. He didn't. . . what the hell's Jewish about me? Why did they put me in a ghetto? He's there's nothing Jewish about me. I wasn't raised Jewish, I was simply born Jewish.

Q. You're right about that though.

Mr. Huh?

Q. I mean even my work on Freud, I'm making him into a Jew. I mean, you know,

Q. (Continued) that type of thing. I'm doing. . .

Mr. You're thinking. What's your Jewish background? Are you doing the interviewing?

Q. (Laughter) Yes, that's right. Are they paying you to do this or. . .

Well, no I have a Reform Jewish background . . .

Mr. Meaning what? Ideologically Reform or. . .

Q. But I have a very superficial exposure to religion of Judaism.

Mr. What education?

Q. Well, you know, I went through Bar Mitzvah and I was confirmed, this type of thing. Jewish education.

Mr. Any Hebrew at all?

Q. My Hebrew, we were drilled with Hebrew, which I repressed since then because that's precisely my response to the religion.

Mr. See, you were drilled without knowing what you were doing.

Q. No. We were drilled and I learned it as a drill rather than as something to absorb and the culture of Judaism. Though, you know, it's not unusual for people who were turned off to Judaism go through a period. . .

Ms. Come back later.

Q. . . . of complete assimilation and come back later. The way they come back and the way I have come back was really in a cultural sense, not in a religious sense. And that's what you're talking about.

Ms. Common pattern, a very common. . .

Mr. Well, what affected you at the University in terms of a cultural sense?

Q. At the University?

Mr. Yea.

Q. What makes me feel Jewish at the University?

Mr. Yea.

Q. I don't think the University has any effect on me that way.

Mr. So what made you feel Jewish?

Q. It's a good question. I don't know what the. . . I don't really know.

Mr. You've got. . . you've given it some thought, but the way. . .

Q. Obviously there are a couple things I suppose that I can respond to. I mean for one thing I wasn't very happy with getting away from Jewish as it turned out. I felt that that would be kind of a nice feeling, and it was kind of all right, it was rebelling in some sense, it was an adolescent rebellion. When I come. . . I am still coming out of that period, I feel that there are some. . . some elements in my background, largely within the family, that was. . . had more permanence and sense of dignity than. . . than my experience without that element in my life.

Mr. Something was better than nothing, is that what you're telling me?

Q. Not only something, but it was specifically. . .

Mr. Judaism.

Q. Exactly. And I haven't gone back to Hebrew. I haven't gone back to Israel. I mean all of this is still. . .

Mr. You've been to Israel I think.

Q. Well, I have been to Israel. And that's. . .

Mr. What kind of tour? For how long?

Q. Ten days.

Mr. Did you get a feel at all?

Q. It was mostly what I observed.

Ms. What year was this?

Q. Last year, last year.

Mr. That was no good. Why don't you spend the summer there? Bill Green or I can help you out.

Q. Yea, Bill Green was in Israel for awhile.

Mr. For a year.

Q. Yea. Oh, you can help me out?

Mr. No, I mean get around, don't get into an institution. . .

Q. Well, it's. . . it's an option.

Mr. Do you like to work with kids? Disadvantaged kids? That's your field, psychology.

Q. Definitely disadvantaged. Well, we can talk about that later.

Mr. OK. Get back to your topic, what you're getting paid for, yes.

Q. Right. Let's go back to this. Well, OK. . . Where are we in all this? Let me see what I have written down here. There were a number of things.

Mr. All right, yes.

Q. Well, you still haven't answered the question that I asked you two hours ago, which is what really got you into this originally back in 1929 you made an important decision?

Mr. Yea, made a decision. I got to. . . my reading basically. I started to read Jewish history.

Q. What was your sense of Judaism before 1929?

Mr. Orthodox until '29, then I rebelled. When I lived home I had to remain completely . . .

Q. You went to shul here in Rochester?

Mr. Yea.

Q. Which one was that?

Mr. A small shul on St. Paul, I think I told you before. Lot of Polish people who came from the same section of Poland.

Q. And you rebelled against that?

Mr. In the beginning I rebelled against Orthodoxy and turned to Labor Zionism

Mr. (Continued) and found tremendous intellectual satisfaction and emotional satisfaction because people. . . we . . . working together, I could hitchhike from here to almost any city in the country and find a like group, call somebody just say I'm a Labor Zionist from Rochester, do you have a place to stay? People talked to on the same level. You'd have a common outlook, common ideals. You had a. . . almost a family feeling.

Q. But the religious element of Labor Zionism. . .?

Mr. There isn't any. . . there wasn't any.

Q. So part of that rebellion was simply against. . .

Mr. Was against religion.

Q. Was against.

Mr. But instead of just rebelling I took a positive approach. I became intensely interested . . . I had friends who went to Palestine. I always had a sort of a living link with the country in one way or the other. And my whole life was devoted to it, everything else was peripheral, wouldn't you say that's it?

Q. Could you understand now in retrospect how you got into Labor Zionism?

Mr. Well, I . . . I read Marx when I was a kid and I always considered myself a Socialist and I was Jewish. So that Socialist Zionism came to me as a revelation. I could be both. I could be. . . be a Jew and be a Socialist and there was no conflict.

Q. Well, there was no priority though in this, you were just both?

Mr. Yea, well basically I would say my Judaism took. . . took priority when in doubt, wouldn't you say so?

Q. Because on the surface there is. . . there is a big conflict between Socialism and. . . and Judaism on the surface.

Mr. Well, not in terms of Israel because the basic building in Israel was done by Socialists. The government today. . .

Q. Isn't Socialism imply at least some sort of eventual international community where there is no distinctions between religion and nations? I mean, isn't. . .

Mr. Well, that. . . that is already old. . . Oh, my G-d, Ingersoll Socialist goes back to the middle of the Nineteenth Century where we're gonna lose our identity. We're all gonna become homogenized. That has lost. . . Jews never really believed that 'cause you couldn't. . . as a Jew no matter what kind of a Jew you were you couldn't believe in losing your identity.

Q. I know that to get back in the European framework, Socialism. . . Jews involved in Socialism were a part of that because they didn't want to be Jewish.

Mr. Jewish, so one of the ways that they're losing their Judaism was the famous story that a so-called Jewish international. But the funny thing is most of the Jewish internationalists spoke only to Jewish groups 'cause even the Communists didn't accept them.

Q. OK.

Mr. So they had to have their own sect, see. . . the Jewish section of the Communist Party. Ever dawn on you why did they need a Jewish section? Communism was everybody alike, why did Jews. . .

Q. Why did Jews. . .

Mr. . . why did Jews. . . why the section? They tell wonderful stories that Syrkin, one of the ideologues of the Labor Zionist movement, was listening to a lecture on internationalism, he said the shoes came from Prague, the socks came from Belgium, the cotton came from Egypt. So Syrkin said, and the rip in the bag came from Russia. You know, which I think is over-simplified and the whole thing.

Q. I mean I think. . .

Mr. Jews were never allowed to forget they were Jewish.

Q. There's a funny paradox here even so because I mean it's. . . the fact that

Q. (Continued) could only speak to Jews they never lost the fact that they were Jewish, but it seems to me that was because the rest of Europe simply wouldn't realize that. . . that. . . that there is really an internationalism in force. And it takes a Jew to bring it to fruition.

Mr. Well, that's. . . that's somewhat outmoded. That was the old Reform group approach. You know American Jews of Hebrew persuasion. But, not Trotsky for instance he probably had as much to do with the Russian Revolution as Lenin did. Well, he was one of. . . he was a Russian Communist until they turned against him, then he was a Jewish Revisionist.

Q. Was this in the twenties?

Mr. The twenties when he was exiled from Russia and Stalin said he was a Jewish Revisionist. One time, there's a wonderful crack, when Einstein came out with his theory they, you know, big theory of relativity, praying the world. . . so take his own. . . it's a very simple way to. . . if my theory is proved right, the French will. . . the Germans will say I'm a German. The French will say I'm a man of the world. If it's proved wrong the French will say I'm a German, the Germans will say I'm a Jew.

Q. Right, yea.

Mr. This goes back.

Q. Yea.

Mr. You know, historically it don't matter which way you slice it, and even here when the business with Fortas was made to resign, you had a feeling of anti-Semitism.

Q. I. . . I don't think. . . well, I hate to get back into this.

Mr. I think that he should have resigned but I had the feeling that there was a . . . to take it up that high. . .

Q. I mean I don't deny the fact that there was. . .

Mr. Now Kissinger, read some things very carefully. You have tinges of anti-Semitism. He's not ours, he's a foreigner. But maybe I'm too perceptive. But I get a feeling that one of the reasons that. . . that he's. . . that a lot of people don't like him. Again, if he makes good he's a good American.

Q. Yea.

Mr. If he makes bad he's a lousy, no-good Jew. We. . . we haven't gotten away. America. . . I would say is the freest society we've ever been in, but that's again relative.

Q. It's still here. The phenomenon is still here.

Mr. I would say so.

Q. So without Israel there's a definite. . . a definite. . .

Mr. Well Israel gives us stature. Israel is not solving a lot of problems. Whether it. . . I don't think it's altogether out. . . I don't think it would ever be capable of solving all our problems, but it would solve 'em better if it was given a chance to. . . to live in a normal way.

Q. Let me ask you some other specific questions here. You mentioned that Ben Gurion and Golda Meir came to Rochester to speak. When did. . . I think Golda Meir came in '70. . . very recently.

Mr. Yea, she was here in '74.

Q. Now I wasn't here myself in Rochester at the time.

Mr. I spent the day with her.

Q. Did you have something to do with inviting her here?

Mr. Well, I. . . not inviting her here, but the Bernstein Chair is set up so that money that comes in for it goes into Israel Bonds and the proceeds pay for the Chair. So when. . . when they came. . . the group. . . Wallace called me in, I was on the committee that made the arrangements so that we were involved with her throughout the day. The reception and the dinner and

Mr. (Continued) then the convocation. And I'll tell you, I got tremendous respect from all this. They treated her. . . I've never seen anybody treated I mean. . . anymore finely, is that. . .

Ms. Respectfully maybe?

Mr. Yea, really. I got a lot of respect for 'em because I never really had any use for 'em. He's a Nixon Republican. But, see that was a lousy generalization. And since then I've gotten to know him, I told you we had a recent reception at his home, real gentleman.

Q. I respect him, too.

Mr. Intellectually very bright. But he doesn't agree with us politically.

Q. That's all right.

Mr. But Ben Gurion came here. He spoke to a group of people, maybe 50.

Q. When did he come here?

Mr. Oh, I would say that was maybe '31, '32. And then I heard him talk in '37 on the Partition Resolution on the Germany Zionist history.

Q. Do I know anything?

Mr. Yea.

Q. Some.

Mr. The Partition Congress in '37 and '39. And I'll never forget the little guy, I think we met at that hotel on 41st Street, and everybody was arguing ideology and he said, asprente, Europe is burning. Let's get Jews out any way.

Q. Why did he come to Rochester?

Mr. Because we had a small group and he was a Labor Zionist.

Q. So he was going around. . .

Mr. '31 there were very few Labor Zionists. I mean today you think of Israel,

Mr. (Continued) Zionism. . . we were a very small group, everybody thought we were nuts.

Q. Of course the thirties wasn't really a very ideological period, there were just a number of. . .

Mr. More Jews were Communists than Labor Zionists. That was the ideology of the Jewish intellectual. Which is hard for you to figure.

Q. That was more popular for Jews than the Labor Zionists, or even Zionism generally?

Mr. Yea.

Q. So you were. . .

Mr. The young intellectuals were to a great extent. . .

Ms. And particularly in the heights of the Depression they would analyze the reason for their economic distress, and this seemed to give them the explanation and something to fight for.

Mr. You see, and Russia was closed. We didn't know. . . Russia was an idealistic society 'cause we didn't know what the hell was happening. When the purges started and then guys like Louis Fisher and some others came out of Russia, began. . . some of us began to see. See, I was always anti-Russia because of the totalitarianism. I. . . I. . . I. . . my feeling was you couldn't be a Socialist and be totalitarian. I think I've been proven right.

Q. What about this Young Israel group? What was that?

Mr. Well, that was a. . . a completely reverse. When I was still an Orthodox, as a kid, organized an Orthodox group, classes in Talmud, had our own services in the. . . in the basement of the so-called Big Shul, a large synagogue. We decided when we ran our own services, do it ourselves, no rabbi, no adult. And basically it was a very good social group, lot of people married off.

Q. This is in the twenties?

Mr. In the late twenties.

Q. More social groups like that today where we can marry off some people.

Ms. Now they have to be on their own, find their own mates.

Q. Right.

Mr. You have problems?

Q. Yes. This is not my wedding ring.

Mr. After, Anne, you can find him a nice girl. You shouldn't be a problem.

Q. Well, this is again a Bar Mitzvah ring not a wedding ring.

Mr. Today they don't get married.

Ms. The choice is still up to the men. The aggressive hunting is still up to the men.

Q. Well, I don't know. Roles are changing, too.

Mr. We going back to the stereotype?

Q. Maybe.

Mr. There's not as much shacking up as there used to be?

Q. Well, there's certainly shacking up going on, but that's all that's happening. I mean there isn't. . . I mean, you know, like every institution today is undergoing questions and, you know, like Israel marriage. I mean, you know, what is it really? What does it mean? And is it serving the purpose?

Mr. Well, it seems to me that the colleges are more job oriented, motivated than they were. . .

Q. And I don't like that. I think that's a sad. . . of course, you're right. Because that's the only way they're gonna stay in business, they're gonna, you know, meet needs for people. And the need today . . .

Mr. Technology.

Q. Which I think is all right, but I mean colleges have to make the. . . the adaptation.

Mr. I think there. . . a lot of waste work in the sixties, too.

Q. There were a lot of openings.

Mr. A lot of human material wasted.

Q. Well, yea. But we've created an intellectual proletariat out of it, which hasn't. . .

Mr. That's a good phrase, I never heard that before.

Q. Well, that was happening in the thirties, too, actually don't you think?

Mr. Yea, but that was because of necessity. The sixties was a matter of choice.

Q. But what happened in the sixties, which is today in the seventies, I mean it hasn't disappeared.

Mr. To get jobs. . .

Q. It hasn't disappeared, it's growing. And I think in the thirties there is again that. . . there is an analogue. I think that if people compare the seventies with the fifties, I would make the comparison with the thirties. I think there's a closer comparison.

Ms. Economic situation.

Mr. No, no you have no idea what it was like. No, you see it couldn't possibly be that bad. You had unemployment, don't forget there was no such thing as Social Security, no Welfare. You picture our society without Welfare, without unemployment, without Social Security, that's what. . . If you didn't. . . if you went a week without work you couldn't eat. There were private soup kitchens and private charities.

Q. The degree was certainly. . .

Mr. Huh?

Q. The degree of. . .

Mr. There's no comparison.

Q. You're right in terms. . . in terms. . .

Mr. Don't be so. . .

Ms. And you really lived in a state of panic that you wouldn't be able to find work.

Mr. If you didn't find that, you didn't eat.

Q. At least I have this job, so I mean there are things. . . It's funny that oral history, the. . . the. . . the height of oral history for the seventies was in the thirties. I mean, you know, . . .

Mr. He had. . . he's a wonderful. . .

Q. Yes, he does. . . he does. . . he's reviving it in his own way, too. You mentioned the Yiddish Theatre.

Mr. I used to go to Yiddish Theatre when I was a kid.

Q. That was at the Lyceum , wasn't it?

Mr. It used to take place in the Labor Lyceum, where Amalgamated was. Did you know the Amalgamated on North Clinton? Near Kelly Street? Amalgamated had its headquarters until fairly recently, only built its building maybe ten years ago, maybe less than that. Used to have Yiddish Theatre come up regularly. And there were no babysitters, so my parents used to take me. And then even in our adult years we saw two we were married, Marie Schwartz and some others, very good stuff.

Q. It was very good theatre, it was very. . .?

Mr. Some of it. Some of it was corny. I mean, you know, the acting. . . the old Stanislavsky method.

Q. Didn't Boris Tomashevsky come to . . .?

Mr. Yes. You know, who. . . who's his grandson?

Q. Oh, I think I was told this. Who?

Mr. Wilson Thomas, the symphony conductor.

Q. Right, yea. Somebody told me that. Did. . . did you see him act in. . . in

Q. (Continued) Rochester?

Mr. Maybe when I was a kid, I don't. . . He was here a number of times, but I couldn't. . . I saw a guy once. . . Pitkin I've seen.

Q. Yiddish Theatre really catered to a . . . to the Eastern European Jewish?

Mr. Yea, only to the Eastern European otherwise you couldn't understand it. The plays were almost caricatures.

Ms. They were very melodramatic and they focused mostly on the problems of adjustment to American life and the ingratitude of the children to the parents and their not wanting to follow in the parents' footsteps, that whole generation gap really.

Mr. Also economic problems. You see our parents to a great extent thought our problems would be solved, they were solved economically. They didn't want their children to. . . to live the same life. No. . . no tailor wanted his son to go into the shop, very few did. And of course there's this tremendous difference between the Jews and the blacks is this tremendous family feeling. A feeling of responsibility for each other. Now the German Jew hated the Ashkenazi Jew, but he felt responsible for him. He set up institutions to take care of him. And I think historically that's been true of time immemorial.

Q. Was the JY included in that?

Mr. Yea, JY was originally set up by German Jews to help to Americanize the Ashkenazi Jew, Eastern Europeans. And they were vulgar, dirty, they're loud. But they felt responsible for them. Sometimes for negative reasons. They didn't want them. . . see, they. . . they were worried these Eastern European Jews that weren't taken care of right, they'd become bums, they'd become crooks, and that would reflect on them. That the. . . now the Gentiles didn't differentiate between Ashkenazi Jew and the German Jew, so what he did would reflect. . . They try to keep 'em out of the limelight of the general

Mr. (Continued) community.

Q. That was happening in Europe, too. There was that. . .

Mr. Yea. But, the fascinating part is. . .

Q. Did you feel. . . did you feel yourself a part of that coming from the Ashkenazic Jewry? Did you feel that you were being watched out by the . . .?

Mr. Well, not really because I'm. . .as a kid I was very Orthodox, I always had. . . I always had a positive approach to Judaism. I don't ever remember anytime in my life where I disliked being Jewish or I felt at all that it was a disadvantage. I simply didn't think that way. It wouldn't enter my mind that I could be something else and it would be better to be something else. Would you say that's honest appraisal. . .? It wouldn't ever dawn on me if I wasn't Jewish I could do this. I was Jewish. It was something like I got a right arm and a left arm.

Q. So you didn't feel that difference then between yourself. . .?

Mr. And also I never. . . I never had to try to hide in any way. I went to see a guy by the name of Feldman, who's President of Dime Savings Bank, Jew. . . something Junior. And I. . . we talked for about five minutes. He says, you know, I'm not Jewish, apropos nothing at all. Apropos. . . I said, who said you were? That ended that conversation, but apropos nothing at all. And you know I'm certain that any conversation he has with anybody within the first five minutes they know he's not Jewish.

Q. He makes that point.

Mr. He makes that point.

Q. Why does he do that?

Mr. Oh, hard as I guess, I can't figure. . .

Ms. Maybe 'cause his name is Feldman, sounds Jewish. But if it's junior it wouldn't be a Jewish name, of course.

Mr. Well, but that isn't. . .

Ms. Fine, but that's not a name. . .

Mr. It's hard to take junior. . .

Ms. Right. . .

Q. Yea, they name after the living.

Mr. Yea, right.

Ms. But they don't use junior though, they don't use that term.

Mr. They can. . . Nathan used to be the Judge in New York, Judge Nathan, he was something of a Jew.

Q. OK. Well, I'll ask this question now. You decided or made a decision in the thirties to go to Israel?

Mr. Right.

Q. And again in the late forties?

Mr. In the late forties we went on a visit and found that we couldn't make it.

Q. Well, let me go back to the thirties.

Mr. Yes.

Q. What prompted the decision to. . .?

Mr. Again, positive. I had not. . . I wasn't particularly well-off economically, but I was as well off as the other guy, so I don't think that was the. . .

Q. But why then not earlier or. . .?

Mr. Well, I joined the Youth Movement, I started a Youth Movement. I joined the Hahalutz movement that prepared you for. . .

Q. Did Ben Gurion sell you on this? Was it that type of thing?

Mr. No, before, much before I heard him. But general reading, people that I met. People. . . Israelis who came here who were usually fascinating people. Different types of people.

Q. So what you're saying is that it was positive and what you're saying is that it

Q. (Continued) wasn't really, therefore, because of whatever anti-Semitism may have existed?

Mr. No, no. Because I never. . . it didn't hit me that way, and I don't. . . my. . . my particular situation was. . . wasn't any worse off than my peers. And, again, two of my closest friends were going at the same time. We went to the farm at the same time. It was a very interesting experience, working the land. Of course, when the place needed money and I was a good salesman they sent me to try and find work in a furniture store, and my money of course, what I earned, went to the commune. It was completely. . . the farm was a complete commune. Everything was completely communal, no private bucks of any sort.

Q. You mentioned this Kendall. . . Kendall. . .

Mr. We had a camp here. . .

Ms. Kendall. . . K-e-n-d-a-l-l.

Q. Kendall.

Ms. Kendall, New York.

Mr. It's about 35 miles from here.

Q. Right. And there was a. . .

Mr. A summer camp for boys and girls. . .

Q. Right. Where Hebrew was spoken?

Mr. Hebrew was taught not spoken. But we tried to create a Hebrew atmosphere. And again it was completely. . . you did your own work. In this camp we did the dishwashing, you rotated your jobs, and it was completely communal.

Q. What was your involvement? Did you help organize. . .?

Mr. I ran the. . . I organized it, and I was the director. I didn't have a car and I worked in Rochester so I had to bum a car when we went. That's where I met my wife. She went to the. . . she had a brother in the camp and she went to visit him on Sunday and I met her there.

Q. I should take notes.

Mr. You want to go to. . .oh, my wife will get you married off.

Q. Yea. But. . .

Mr. Is that on the tape, too?

Q. It's all on the tape. (Laughter)

Ms. Now you'll hold us to the promise.

Q. This goes into the archives and I'll haunt you with this forever.

Mr. Forever, right.

Q. When was that. . . when was Kendall set up? When was the camp set up?

Mr. Let's see. . . I would say Kendall Camp must have run from about . . . for five years, about either five or six years. From '34 or '35 to about '41, '42 when the guys began leaving for the war.

Q. And that's when it started going down?

Mr. That was when we closed it up.

Q. Was that Israel-oriented?

Mr. Palestine-oriented.

Q. Palestine, right. Well, I don't know. I'm running out of gas here.

Mr. Fine. I'm running out of gas, too. We've been woozy for a quarter of an hour.

Q. Actually. . .

END OF TAPE 2, SIDE A (Interview 1)